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If my Grandfather were a Poet

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If my Grandfather were a Poet

Dr. Robert J. De Smith

There is a photograph of Robert Frost
Resting in a caned chair beside a tree—
Relaxed, left leg over right,
Wearing suspenders;
A pensive look—a poet.
Did my grandfather ever thus recline?
I remember him in a lawn chair and wind jacket,
Motor oil hat,
Aged and small, supervising the garden he could no longer plant.
But this is different.
He farmed for others, earning rent with chores
And had the boys to do it.
Rough, but with a trickster's twinkle,
He offered me my first beer
When, at 12, I watched those chore boys,
Now men, lay a concrete pad on the place
He finally gained as his own from his wife's family.
This reported fact, along with his crude language
And unlearnedness,
Led my mother to worry about his soul.
I worry about his mind.
What images did he conjure while warming his hand
On a cow's teat?
Or stepping back from the smelting oven where he labored,
Living Adam's curse,
To cool his brow—
Fire, blast, and pour.
He slept, I'm told,
On buggy rides home from the foundry.
He was not writing "Mending Wall" or "The Pasture,"
Though he lived both and more.
Did he reflect on hay,
Find wisdom in the Psalms?
Did he connect his daily bread or shocks of grain
With a communion loaf?
Maybe not, but let me do it for him.