

aMUSEment: Play in the Workshop

Lyrics by Julia Kasdorf

Music by Bruce Trinkley

1. Brush Valley Boys

Between Centre Hall and Linden Hall,
Lewis, Lester, little Vernon, on a farm
in the new century of machines:

gasoline, drilling rigs, diesel drives.
(Also two sisters, Gladys and Dorothy,
who must now slip out of this story.)

Farm boys love tinkering, making things,
making things go: moonshine
customers called “potatoes” on the party line.

Lewis made a snow-mobile from a sleigh,
4-cylinder engine, propeller carved from a log.
And airplanes, airplanes, airplanes!

After the Great War, airmail from New York
flew over Brush Valley, refueled in Bellefonte.
Even army surplus planes cost a lot, but

Lester worked night shifts at the silk mill
in Spring Mills and by day built his plane
from scratch. Then bi-planes, Piper Cubs, The Lark

took off from the airfield on Airport Road.
Lewis’s son Jack flew folks over the Fair,
flew Coach Paterno anywhere!

Vernon’s first carnival ride--
four airplanes with electric propellers--
he made in Lester’s barn.

2. Hephaestus of Centre Hall

In Greece they call the blacksmith god Hephaestus;
In Rome they call him Vulcan, crippled god
of motion, volcanos, and machines.

Maker of Hermes’s winged helmet,
Achille’s shield, Athena’s sword,
thunder bolts for Zeus to throw,
thrones to seat the gods, Apollo’s
chariot, gliding above like the sun.

In Centre Hall, a welder on the ridge
made a whistle for our fire hall,
thawed frozen pipes with his torch.

Made his darling Shirley a darling car
to drive Brush Valley Road to grandma’s farm.
Domer Ishler commissioned a kiddie train;

the rest was Vern's: air planes, carnival rides.

A lost finger kept him home; but Lewis
and he worked metal for here and the war:
cement mixers, trailers, sawbucks.

From one wooden horse, he cast a carousel
herd from aluminum scraps
found with kids picking the dump--
tea pots, pie plates, sauce pans, old cups.

Forgetting horrors in the Pacific or Europe,
boys who made it home returned
to ride the bright "toys of summer"
with sweethearts on carnival nights.

3. Beauty School

In beauty school you learn
to turn a mop into a do!

That same impulse can change
garages into shops,

or renovate old trailers
into kitchens for the fair.

An alchemist can craft
an Astro-top from tractor parts,

or spin sweet, pink bouffants
of froth from sacks of sugar,

tat golden, cakes of lace
from flour, sugar, fat, and eggs.

Vernon Garbrick piped the songs
of pet canaries, caged down home,

to turn his sooty shop
into a warbling beauty shop.

4. Forty Miler

(Donald Tice)

Born Bellefonte, August 14, 1964
two weeks later, my first Grange Fair.
Dad worked for the Garbricks,
fixing rides, running rides.

What's not to love about this life?

Carnie life is not a job;
you do it for the people,
no two towns look alike,
no two days go the same.

What's not to love about this life?

Met my wife on the flying saucer,
(that's up in the shop now)
wouldn't let her get off
'til she agreed to walk
with me on my break.

We married before I got out
of school. She's a keeper, Jack said.
Worked for him all my life, too.

What's not to love about this life?

I tried other jobs, but
once that silver paint
gets in your blood...

What's not to love about this life?

Work together, fight together,
the boss, our referee and father.
Jack taught me respect
and gave me family, this life.

5. *He Found a Way*

He Found a Way

But someone had to wash the socks,
Fry the spuds, keep the books.

He Found a Way

And someone else replaced the bulbs,
greased the gears, checked the locks.

He Found a Way

And who switched out the diesel drives
with new electric lines?

He Found a Way

This workshop was his place to play
and, choked in smoke, create.

He Found a Way

Beneath a ramp for runaways--
like any volcano it's okay

until it blows its top--
loses its brakes, bursts into flame.

He Found a Way

Beneath a ramp for runaways,
let's mend, invent, and change!