

Where I'm From *

I am from the home place, alone in a red dirt field,
proud, a little run-down
but once tall in the Oklahoma wind.
I am from the Chinese elms, guarding the old place,
chopping cotton in the summer,
green tomato pickles in the fall,
and sorghum popcorn balls for Christmas.
I am from paring knives and pyracantha bushes,
from Jell-O salads and raisin cookies,
from rocking chairs and the razor strap.

I'm from Carter, Oklahoma,
the Preskitts, the McIntyres, the Stowers,
Scotch-Irish immigrants in covered wagons,
from homemade quilts a hundred years old,
from hand-cranked homemade ice cream,
from Granny Zem's hand-carved moon,
its stair steps filled with angels,
from Grandpa Bert whitling big sticks into little twigs,
from Great Grandma Preskitt,
blind eyes seeking the lightning.

I am from the "Amen Brother"
of Southern Baptist Churches
and the "Amazing Grace" of country choirs.
I am from the open-air sleeping porch,
from bedtime stories under the stars,
from Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego
in King Nebuchadnezzar's Fiery Furnace,
from Jonah in the Whale's Belly and
Joshua at the Battle of Jericho.

I am from Lebanon or Syria, and a forgotten name,
changed at Ellis Island, all Andrews's now,
dusky and alien with their almost British name,
Greek Orthodox shopkeepers fleeing Muslim oppression,
just to become Arabs in America, shunned and ridiculed.
I am lebni started in saddlebags on desert camels,
treasured and passed down from daughter to daughter,
still spread on hand-tossed bread with calamata olives
and lemon juice.
And Grandma's "ha'dam, ha'dam, ha'dam."

I am from rock and roll and blues and jazz,
from the Beatles wanting to hold my hand,
from Eric Clapton's Hellhound on my trail,
from Bonnie Raitt making me cry late at night.
I am from the "Amen Brother"
of Southern Baptist Churches
and the "Amazing Grace" of country choirs.

I am from the open-air sleeping porch,
from bedtime stories under the stars,
from Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego
in King Nebuchadnezzar's Fiery Furnace,
from Jonah in the Whale's Belly and
Joshua at the Battle of Jericho.

I am from *High Noon* and *Gone with the Wind*,
from *I Love Lucy* and *Leave It to Beaver*.
I am from Altus Bulldogs,
red and white OU Sooners,
Millwood Falcons and Norman Timberwolves,
from Heidelberg Lions and Naples Wildcats.

I am from do-it-yourself
and stand-your-ground,
from never-start-a-fight
but finish-them-all,
from pick-your-own-switch
and take-your-punishment,
from it's all good
and no worries.

I am from America.

*Derived from the original by George Ella Lyons