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Imprint: Fragment from a Childhood

Dixie Partridge

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Imprint: Fragment from a Childhood

Elegy for Lee Henderson

Nearly three the time the thresher came,
I followed its deep ruts through the gateyard,
Watched giant gears churn
To the pull of seven horse-teams:

From my fence post, I pretend
To be the teamster on his platform;
Round and round I pace the teams
In toasting sun. Father pitches bundles.

Through cold days in October
I play in the thresher tracks,
Then they are gone with winter
And I forget them.

One day, not Sunday, we go to church.
Father isn’t there; I sit in front with Mama.
I look for him at home, crowded
Among neighbors and people I don’t know.

A morning next spring, I walk
Into the gateyard streaked with thaw,
And there are the ruts, solid as ever.

I set my foot into a track, step
Carefully to keep the pattern
Until it disappears
Under leftover crusts of snow.

Each day with the thaw
I watch the ruts come back
As if they never went away.

—Dixie Partridge
for my father

Dixie Partridge is a widely published poet living in Richland, Washington. Some of her poems have won William Stafford Awards in recent years, and her first book of poetry, Deer in the Haystacks, was published in 1984.