

HOMESPUN POLITICS

When Grandpa bumped his wooden leg
against the outhouse door,
the Queen of Wasps fell from her hive
and bounced upon the floor.

With legs aflail, the paper wasp
trod air while on her back,
as Grandpa stumbled on a loose
dry corn cob from the stack

that stood beside torn catalogs
from Sears and old Buck Roe,
which—after they'd been read--served folks
like Gramps, who had to go.

To beat the heat, he hit the seat
so hard his peg fell off,
and as it passed the queen she gasped
so hard it made her cough.

She moaned; Gramps groaned.
The now-dethroned queen wasp then slowly rose,
and latching tight to knots and gnarls,
resumed her regal pose.

While Grandpa did what people do,
the bug did waspish things,
like fluttering her shear-sharp flaps
to activate for stings.

When Gramps reached for his wooden leg,
the wasp lit on his shirt
in readiness to pierce her foe,
but Gramps let out a blurt:

“Git off'n me, dang hateful thang!”
and with a cob of corn,
he swung and swore “Git out the door!”
Then young wasps, newly born

emerged tail-first from holey hive,
like angels sent to save
the sacred matron of their tribe
from almost-certain grave.

With stingers bared, they dived as one
mass swarm in platoon style.
Retreating then, they reconnoitered,
forming single file.

One by one, they struck, then died.
Their valor saved their queen.
My grandpa swore it was the “dangdest
miracle I’ve seen!”

For as he watched, his stung stump swelled;
it formed a foot with toes,
and Gramps strode home on his two feet--
or so his story goes.

But there's my Grandma's version, too:
“Retreating on his stump,
with britches dragging on the ground,
the wasps stung Grandpa's rump.”

The moral of this essay is:
Be careful who you've cursed,
or you might get your own butt stung
by those who lived there first.