

PATRONYMIC

No sighted person

Hasn't been affected by the action of
Wind on some kind of banner, streamer, flag, wind-
Sock, piece of fishing line left after a wind-

Chime has gotten knocked down or taken down or
Been blown down off of its hook under the eaves,
Or on branches bare, and branches bearing leaves

Such as sycamore, plum, black locust, scrub oak,
And branches bearing needles and cones, such as
Red cedar, cedar of Lebanon, spruce. No

14

Hearing person hasn't been affected, some
Time or other, by the sound of wind, of _____,
Of _____, of _____. Many have not remarked

Being affected thus.

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You know, Dad, I still

*Have the brown-and-white banded feather I found
Out at the old barn. The barn, vacated now.
I remember his description of the heat*

Coming off the galvanized aluminum
Siding (or was it tin?) when he alongside
His brothers nailed it to the frame their father

The Iowa Review

Had designed and constructed. A “natural
Engineer.” “Third-grade Education, but he
Could do our algebra problems.” “He couldn’t

Tell you how he got the answer but he always
Got it right.” That barn had, indeed has, “a
Self-supporting roof.” Fire took the foursquare

House this grandfather of mine (“Pop” to his kids)
Likewise designed and built with the boys’ help,
The girls bringing iced tea. Out in the country

Like that, once the town’s one fire truck runs out of
Water.... At least it didn’t spread to the barn,
Nor to the silo. I took the feather to

The hospital to show my father, one of
The last times I saw him on this earth. “Look, Dad,
I found this out at the Old Barn. Do you know

What kind it is?” See, because by then there was
So little under his command, I thought it
Would be good to ask him things I knew he knew.

Amount in ‘Bushel.’ ‘Gallon.’ ‘Peck.’ The steps in
Bringing in the wheat. The names of the different
Implements. Harrow. Disc. “Owl.” He was never

One to make a big deal over nature. He
Was glad he could provide the answer, though. I,
In the rapid speech pattern I learned from my

Mother and her mother, kept on, "What kind of Owl, Dad? Like a 'Barred Owl'? Or a 'Barn Owl'?" "Just 'Owl'," he said.



'Just owl.' He said. I think. But, as

I've been working on this poem forever (key-
Board slippage left of f, or keyboard slippage
Right—wind, or wing—"father" coming out "gather"),

It could be that only here does he say "just owl"
And in the actual air said something like
"I don't know, Sugar." Yet sensitive to me,

16

As always, "Might be some kind-of-a owl." His
Highest praise to me came when I'd made something
With materials—"Why, you're just as handy

As a pocket on a shirt"—his harshest
Criticism—"Don't be thattaway"—was for
When I was unhappy. Adults used to say

"Spittin image of her Daddy, ain't she?" and
"Smart as a whip" or "sharp as a tack." And to
Him, *Hello, Joe, what do you know, did you just*

Get back from Kokomo? Some see no need to
Remark being affected by a wind-swept
Field of vetch, or by a lone persimmon tree,

Or by, down a ways, rainy ditches with their
Cattails, cattails with their red-winged blackbirds' calls—
Emanations from the well-tempered shoulders.