
Real Farmer

Sitting high and forward
on the scorching cracked vinyl
I feel the burn from the sun
sting my bare shoulders.

My skin has become dry and cracked
like the seat on this
1955 JD 450.

I keep my eyes in constant squint
to avoid the inevitable bombardment of arrow-like pollen
and dust from the upturned earth.

I refrain from wiping the sweat from my red eyes
because my hands are covered with dirt.

The sweat makes its way past my nose
to moisten my lips with a salty solution.

My knuckles have turned white
from my tight grip on the steering wheel.

My arms have become numb
as the wheel vibrates to the weary engine's incessant hum.

The putt
putt
train-like grovel
from this forty year old tractor
makes me believe I know what it is like to be deaf.

It is not a beautiful silence
that allows your mind to run free.

To be deaf, I believe, is to hear a constant buzz,
growl, or churn,
that causes your ears to ache.

It is a reality that I won't finish plowing these
thirty-six acres until tomorrow
because I can run faster than high gear.

I look west
and see the edge of my neighbor's farm.
He has more than one thousand acres
spread across two counties.

One hired hand pilots the 1991 silver International,
eighty thousand dollars worth of
washers and bolts, chains and wheels
and an engine that sings.

The shiny chrome body
led by halogen eyes
supports the air conditioned cab
and the soft leather captain's chair.

As I continue to suffer from the loud engine
that vibrates through my body
I imagine the Surround Sound quality
of the special-order stereo
and wonder;

What would it be like
to be a real farmer?

Deborah Rinker