

## LET'S TRADE

A POEM BY NAN HUNTER'S GRANDSON JON BRILL

Older folks are partial to the "good old days";  
and today's young people wonder why.  
There's a difference in experiences, values, and ways.  
Better seems always in the beholder's eye.

My Grandmother, while in her 10<sup>th</sup> decade, wrote  
"I want to keep step with the world of today;  
and to accept new ideas and new standards". Of note,  
she censured intransigence in her essay.

Further, she said "I want to be able to see young folks  
from a broad viewpoint; and to rejoice".  
She wanted to walk the walks, and talk the talks;  
not ignore the game and "turn off the noise".

She said to God: "I want to look ahead with hope for the earth,  
in the future of this old planet" – as you and I would.  
She wanted "to give of myself for the happiness of others". A rebirth  
that she hoped would lead to appreciation of the good.

With wisdom like that, how can we throw out bygone ways?  
Surely most of their traits, ideas, and mores are worth keeping.  
Can't we mix a little of past traditions in with today's;  
and pay homage to the values of those who lie sleeping.

Let's take some age-old fault that we can agree on;  
and replace it with today's best approach.  
Then bring back some idea from a past eon;  
and ash-can some new blemish that we all reproach.

### **a. Thus**

We used to put on our "Sunday best" for occasions large and small -  
certainly going to Church but also other events.  
When we traveled; when we dined out; when we "paid a call",  
that we all looked our best was of major consequence.

Some say that wearing nicer things disadvantages the poor;  
others promote the comfort of "casual" wear.  
What we've come to is the height of "bas couture" -  
no pride, no shame, no concern for those near.

Flaunting our sexuality is a new freedom we've won;  
but does it always show us at our best?  
Isn't respect more important than having our fun,  
at the expense of our dignity and our finest?

In other days, many of the amenities of life  
were categorized as separate and equal by law.  
Though assuredly separate, and kept so by strife,  
a conclusion of equal was impossible to draw.

There was always a denigrating term  
To use for a "put down" of the "lower than lows".  
The Black, the Jew, the Irish Catholic, the foreign  
Have all been subject to our looks, words, and blows.

And so,

let's trade the slovenliness that we see today;  
and continue to rid the world of prejudice and meanness.  
That most certainly wasn't our finest way.  
We should all admire today's growing tolerance and evenness.

## **b. Ergo**

"I don't give a damn" Gable said; and it made  
us hold our breath and added color to our cheeks.  
But, in today's genre, that's tame and staid.  
Listen to the way mass-media reeks.

We are taught by TV, movies, and other entertainment  
to use a four letter word when we can't rely  
on our vocabulary to provide words more salient -  
other adjectives, verbs and nouns that apply.

Today no topic is sacred, nor human condition inviolate.  
We call others "retarded", tho they obviously are not.  
We denigrate; we castigate; we are profligate  
in our discourse, our slang, our unkind argot.

Our parents, with us would not have "that talk";  
and thereby left us dancing in the dark.  
On the "facts of life" they, often, would balk;  
And leave us to learn at night in the park.

Hasn't the picking of "forbidden fruit" always been  
the result of denying our own true nature?  
But understanding and knowledge have shown us when  
we have arrived at the point of being mature.

Therefore,

can we put our Victorian hang-ups behind.  
We can be open and broadminded on things sexual.  
But "couth" is still "couth" to my mind,  
and shock language should be contextual.

### **c. Sic**

Back when all were judged by work ethic,  
some toiled for large companies - but mostly small.  
Early in our lives we found our niche;  
and expected that we would work there until the pail.

Today we feel like pawns in games of commerce -  
fearing that we will work until we're "Enroned".  
No loyalty by employers begat none by the work force;  
and where are those whose word is their bond?

We have gone from the time that the head of a company,  
with rolled-up sleeves, knew what a day's labor meant.  
He may have earned more in a day than the many;  
but deserved it for providing life-long employment.

Twenty-first century companies have turned the page;  
they reward from the very bottom up to the top.  
Enthusiasm is the dot.com hallmark in this day and age;  
when pessimism is waiting for the Chinese shoe to drop.

Give workers a piece of the company as a token  
of the fact that they deserve a better rating.  
Cut the CEO's perks and realize the unspoken  
truth - behind every one there are better ones waiting.

So,

let's trade the bygone sweatshops; dead end jobs; and dirty-dealings  
for the industries of today where all have a stake.  
But leave behind the pecking order, salary gaps and glass ceilings;  
reward industry, initiative, and positive give and take.

#### **d. Along these lines**

In the beginning we were a model of political proliferation.  
We had Tories, Whigs, Know-nothings and Democrats.  
But those who could be counted to steer our nation  
back from the precipice, were always the moderates.

There were usually enough voters, who didn't bow to extremes,  
that we never had to choose among Hitlers, Stalins, or Castros.  
When our leaders over-reached or had power-hungry dreams  
they were always brought up short with the strength of our NOs.

Why not applaud "middle-of-the-road" electors;  
for the race is not to the swift or narrowly bounded.  
Government needs to avoid the fringe vectors,  
and keep our country on the course it was founded.

We should always listen to those who deplore  
that we are less than a nation of all.  
Don't vote to pander to self interest and more -  
ignorance, prejudice, intolerance et al.

When a politician reaches for ways to consensus  
instead of partisan, dogmatic drivel,  
It avoids the rancor and conflict that demeans us;  
even better, it helps to keep us all civil.

So trade the vested interests and unfettered factions  
of today, for those who see nobleness in public trust.  
Listen to the extremes but temper our actions  
with emphasis, always, on doing what is right and just.

Be that as it may,

wouldn't the world be a better place if we could say when we are asked  
That we have honored the memories, and we have learned from the past?