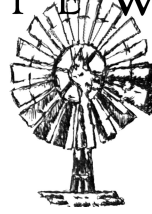


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Sandy Longhorn

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 SWOSUTM

Roofing the Barn

by Sandy Longhorn

The roof, stripped down to plywood sheets,
shone like the mahogany coat of the gelding
knee-deep in pasture, both swaybacked with age.
Spreading the tarpaper in great swathes,
we tasted sawdust and oil, anchoring it
with the repeated firing of the staple gun.
Next day the shingles slid in the morning cool,
rasped against the roof, themselves, our gloves,
and resisted the short, blunt nails.
By noon they stuck, silent in piles.
Nothing sounded on the roof's steep slope
but the thud of hammers and shuffling boots
trying to keep a grip. My father worked the edges
and around the vents, whittling curves and slants
and making sure the notches matched.
I climbed the peak and straddled the ridge,
looking out across the acres of corn.
The order of the fields, the way the corners met,
was a kind of faith, as reassuring as the line of shingles,
as a green that stayed straight all the way to the horizon.



Photo by Joyce Stoffers

