

# TAKE HEART

## A Conversation in Poetry

*Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair,  
Maine Poet Laureate*

Today's reader's choice selected from past columns was submitted by Joan Amory of Portland. "Running through Douglas Woodsum's poem," she writes, "is the peculiarly American vein of practicality and earnestness -- a rich vein, found in much of our literature from Franklin to Thoreau to Frost, and even even in our art. Thanks to Mr. Woodsum for giving these echoes new voice."

### Splitting Wood in Winter

*by Douglas Woodsum*

You'll need a barn with a big door, the old-fashioned kind that hangs on wheels, slides open down a track. You'll need a bare bulb, the sun having sunk before your return from work. You'll need a splitting maul (the ax always gets stuck), a medieval weapon perfect for pillaging heat from the heart of hardwood. You can plug in the portable radio or just listen to the hush of the swing, then thwack...or thoonk, the soft clinks or cloonks of the splits falling from the chopping block onto the old, thick, scarred floorboards of the barn. You'll need your hands to rip apart pieces still connected by strips of unsplit wood. You'll need to load the canvas carrier thrice, enough to survive the dead of night. You won't need reminding, "Splitting wood warms you twice: once cutting it, once burning it." You'll smile walking through the cold, back to the house, your hot breath a harbinger of wood smoke.

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