

I AM FROM THREE ERNESTS, EVELYN, HELEN, ANNETTE, IDY RED, GRACE & LONNIE.

I AM FROM THE MAJESTIC GREENS OF IRELAND AND VERMONT, THE GRITTY GREYS OF THE INDUSTRIAL NORTH OF ITALY AND THE ROLLING FARMLANDS OF QUEBEC.

I AM FROM CONFSSIONAL CATHOLICS AND HUNTERS AND TRAPPERS WHO WORSHIP BOTH THE HUNT AND BOUNTY.

I AM FROM DIVORCE, STEPS, HALVES AND HOLIDAY DIVISION COEXISTING WITH 50-YEAR ANNIVERSARIES, RUCKUS PIG ROASTS AND UNRULY FAMILY REUNIONS SYNCOPATED WITH BANJO AND THE TASTE OF APPLE PIE MOONSHINE.

I AM FROM FARMERS, VETERANS, TEACHERS, BAKERS, POLITICIANS, MUSICIANS, PAINTERS AND POETS, DROPS OUT AND COLLEGE GRADS, REVERED COMMUNITY LEADERS AND ALCOHOLICS AND ADDICTS. A TWISTED FAMILY TREE THAT CONFOUNDS THOSE THAT DARE TO MARRY IN.

I AM FROM DAIRY COWS, GERMAN SHEPARDS, ARNOLD THE PIG AND BEAGLES CHASING RABBITS IN THEIR SLEEP BY THE ROUND OAK STOVE.

I AM FROM HANK WILLIAMS, MERLE HAGGARD AND ELVIS PRESLEY IN AN OLD PICK UP TRUCK WITH NO FLOOR BOARD.

I AM FROM STAY UP ALL NIGHT CONVERSATIONS AND EARLY MORNING COFFEE, DUST RISING UP FROM A DIRT ROAD AND THE ORCHESTRAL SOUND OF CRICKETS ON A SUMMER NIGHT.

I AM FROM RED MAN CHEWING TOBACCO, RAW MILK, AND PIES COOLING ON THE HOOSIER.

I AM FROM COMPLICATED LOVE STORIES, FAMILY SECRETS AND CONFESSIONS, SIBLINGS LOST AND FOUND, MY CUP RUNNETH OVER AND THE FARM IS GONE.

I AM FROM RURAL SOUL AND URBAN HEART, THE TOXIC DUST OF 9/11 MIXED WITH HOPE AND THE SINGED FRAGMENTS OF OUR HUMANITY FLOATING IN THE AIR.

MY OWN PLACE AMONG THEM, A CARETAKER OF OUR COLLECTIVE PAIN AND JOY, WITH ARMS WIDE OPEN, LITTLE FEAR OF LOVING TOO MUCH, OPENING THE DOOR OF OUR 200 YEAR OLD FARMHOUSE TO WELCOME WHAT IS NEXT IN THE WORLD.

Carey Earle, *Inspired by "I am From" by Mary Pipher*