

Visiting Sally

by Jack Swenson

We sit on the porch, away from the bugs and out of the sun. It's hot. 93° in the shade. Sally sits in a wicker rocker fanning herself. She's gained a lot of weight. She used to have a great body; not anymore.

She seems cheery enough considering. I haven't seen her since the previous summer. Harpo was still alive then. I ask her what she's doing for fun these days. She smiles. She has a boyfriend. Carlson likes to dance, she says. Polkas. She always refers to him by his last name. The thought crosses my mind that maybe he hasn't got a first one. Or maybe his mother named him Carlson Carlson. For some reason, it irritates me that she does that. I've heard other women do it, too.

I sigh. She asks me if I want a beer. I shake my head. She claps her hand over her mouth. "Oops. Sorry," she says. I smile and look away.

I look out at the street. It's mid-afternoon, and nothing is moving. No one's outside. Nothing stirs except memories. Harpo and I playing strip poker with his girlfriend in their dining room. Max and I "kidnapping" the teenage neighbor. Giving her a ride home from Dinkytown after work. Sitting on Harpo's porch, Max whispering sweet nothings into her ear. Taking her upstairs and taking off her clothes.

"So what are you going to do?" I ask. Same old, same old, she said. Buddy had a couple years of high school left. Then, who knows? Buddy was in a garage band. They were pretty good. "Soul Harbor" they called themselves. Maybe they'd hit the big time, and she'd become a roadie. I sighed and shook my head.

