

My Dad was a ditch digger

by Walter Bjorkman

My Dad was a ditch digger

a humble farm boy
came over on a steamer in the roaring twenties
wore spats & tie-pin sticks

then the crash
he met my Mom in 1932
within the year they were wed

they moved from flat to flat in Sunset Park
where all the squareheads lived
men sitting on stoops
women earning the rent
by working as servants
in the rich folks yard

they held off on having children
not wanting to bring them into a poverty world

then the great war happened
and the economy boomed in its aftermath

he got a steady job digging ditches for foundations
Levittown - the first suburban sprawl
heavy overalls and a shovel were the tools of his trade

he was a mountain of a man
managed to buy a house on the edge of the toney Bay Ridge
neighborhood
built a bungalow with his own hands near the shore of the Long
Island Sound

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where I spent my first eight summers in pure abandon
no electricity, running water, no phones, no mail delivery

My Dad was a ditch digger who came home and read books
More silent than Gary Cooper
but would tumble with me on the floor

Then he got sick, came home from the hospital to die
He hung on to their 25th wedding anniversary

my Dad was a ditch digger and I wouldn't have it any other way

