AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Stephen Robert Jones for the degree of Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies in English, History, and Education presented on 7 May 1981.

Title: FAMILY DEED: A Collection of Original Poetry

Abstract approved: __________________________
Professor Roger Weaver

This Thesis is a collection of fifty original poems with
an Introduction completed during the Oregon State University academic year 1980-81.
FAMILY DEED:
A Collection of Original Poetry

by

Stephen Robert Jones

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies
Completed 7 May 1981
Commencement June 1981
APPROVED:

Redacted for Privacy

Professor of English, Roger Weaver
Redacted for Privacy

Redacted for Privacy

English Department Chairperson, Robert D. Frank
Redacted for Privacy

Dean of Graduate School

Date thesis is presented 7 May 1981

Typed by the author, Stephen Robert Jones
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction................................................. 1

II. Bloodbrothers............................................. 3
    Child's Pleasant Purgatory................................. 4
    Zebby's Bedtime........................................... 5
    Family Courthouse......................................... 6
    First melting snow......................................... 7
    Spoonless Kitchen......................................... 8
    Ed' Junk, ca. 1979........................................ 9
    As If The Bird Could Die In Flight.......................10
    Going Home In Daydreams..................................11
    Bazooka, Red Hots, Sour Apples, Cherry Humps...........12
    Possum Crossin'.......................................... 13
    Yuletide Amputation.......................................14
    Alone With The Hound.....................................15
    Preventable Fine Arts................................... 16

III. Chinook wind blows.......................................17
    The Kalapuya Talked.......................................18
    Rock lizard knows........................................ 19
    Coyote At Home Again.................................... 20
    Glint of sunlight.........................................21
    Come Swimmer..............................................22
    Two hundred feet of blackberry vine.....................23
    Marys River Kalapuya.....................................24
    Cloud-drawn Winter moon..................................25
    Kalapuya Visitation.......................................26
    In rain filled air.........................................27
    Among The Kalapuya.......................................28
    Flinty beach pebbles.......................................29
    Water Riddle...............................................30

IV. Barn owl glides overhead.................................31
    Far from home.............................................32
    Blacktail doe with fawn..................................33
    Moonless night............................................34
    Bent widgeon grass.......................................35
    Two pheasants strut and preen............................36
    Daffodil moon sets.......................................37
    Taps against the window..................................38
    Moistens the brow........................................39
    Black the stove.......................................... 40
    In white fluent moonlight................................41
    Green green marsh........................................42
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>Night-watching her swim.</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goat Lady, Seek Your Minotaur</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All twelve pumpkins</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Earth And Stone Mother</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not too long ago</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dinner Out In Old Spokane</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blackberry Roots</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bleeding With Zeb</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seedling Father</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FAMILY DEED:
A Collection of Original Poetry

Introduction

I am a carpenter who has built his own house using the best of past and present. I strive to join words as I do wood: with few unnecessary fasteners, avoiding ornateness and over building, striving for the strength and parsimony of mortise and tenon. I enjoy building with words for they are good lumber. Memorable lines can often ring with the truth of a well-driven nail.

There is an intuitive quality in poetry that is difficult to expostulate—something like the imaginative leap between a felled oak, and the strength and symmetry of a bent wood rocker. Lumber must first be transformed in the joiner's imagination to the graceful strength of the chair. That movement is a kind of poetry.

Apprentice poets, like carpenters, start building in a tradition. Writing first poems need not be regrettable—they may, in fact, be necessary to make room for better work. I have a friend who methodically sends work out of the house, in part at least, to provide "ease" for new creation, just as a carpenter would need to clear his shop even if he had no sales, only consignments.

The Oregon poet, William Stafford, claims to "distrust" language partly for its thinness. A poet can escape the thin veneer of mere words through an organic lamination of words and things. Through this joining, words can both give up their thinness and gain a necessity for existence.
This carpenter is deeply implicated by his family and their deeds. Also I am discovering a deeply abiding connection with the Willamette Valley Kalapuya, a Native American people who peacefully hunted, foraged, and told their delightful tales about Coyote, Woodpecker, Weasel, and the Frog Women. These proud Kalapuya were decimated by Anglo contact from a strength of over 3,000 in 1780 to less than 150 individuals by 1930. Thanks to Melville Jacobs, Albert Gatschet, and Leo Frachtenberg, a few of their charming stories are still available today.

My Haiku attempt to apprehend the "Haiku moment," to aggravate a glimpse of the eternal now. Women have been and will remain central in my life. Wife, Mother, and Grandmother teach me daily the boldly divergent thinking that goes far to re-create my world.
BLOODBROTHERS

I startle to see
Your fingers shaped as mine,
Like hands against a mirror.

Followed womb brother,
Listen to your hands,
Know the things mine do:

Shiver of nail in fir wood,
Drag of handplane,
And kris of chisel.

My hands sense
The buttons of your clothes,
Knots on your shoes,
And the warmth of a woman's skin
As she rises to your touch.

Father hands teach us
To reach into thirty years past,
Grope the gallused future,
And rifle family memories and prophesies.

Let's revisit Pig's Alley on Pike,
Pass between hands afternoon beer,
Ease weight from the bone
Of family blood.

CHILD'S PLEASANT PURGATORY

Pleasant purgatory,
Where age encloses childhood intact,
Growing days inside days.
Toy stacking boxes touch
Thirty years into a day.

Rude enjambement of swollen memory
Keeps our child close at hand,
And memories like body parts
Can not shake off:
Hot summer maudlin days;

"Mom, there's nothing to do.
Can we go to the beach?"
First night-romances;
Friction of single beds;
Father's sweatshirt six inches long of sleeve.

Appeared in: Montage: OSU Barometer, 10 April 1981.
ZEBBY'S BEDTIME

Every night shake out the Trolls
From your frumptious pillow cases.
Pummel them with cold cereal bowls
Till whiskers hang long from their faces.

Then from the closet chase all the Ghoulies,
Whose droopy ears hang low like old laces,
Hammer and saw them with Daddy's toolies
So closet monsters drag off their suitcases.
FAMILY COURTHOUSE

Follow Dante's inky hand
And grasp oak balustrades,
Heavily hung with misdemeanors,
Climb wide worn stairs backwards,
Wander from childhood landing to landing.

Third floor,
Courtrooms of flatulent fathers,
Where troubled air
Resounds.

Where hell is for children,
Stairwells echo with phrases of bedlam,
Still cast shadows in wainscoted rooms,
Bathe the wall-hanging portrait
Of the girl with the watery teeth.
First melting snow
drips from the cedar eaves... 
wisps of wood smoke climb
SPOONLESS KITCHEN

Bleached green paint
On hand sawn woodwork,
Corners scrubbed raw, soothed now
In the soot of burnt time.

Open silver drawer reveals
Stalk of blackberry,
Root cellar to kitchen,
Fruitless growth.

Woven garlic strands
Fall from heavy beams,
Sage hanks sweeten trapped air.

Broken window sun
Knives dust on dark stained
Butcher boards.

Memories cook here
An unleavened bread.

ED'S JUNK, ca. 1979

Accumulated body heat kindled,
And "Fast Eddy's" burned to the ground
During Newport's hot Summer, 1979.

Ed's Junk held the extra hardware
That boils out the sides of our lives,
Porcelain doorknobs clasped by hundreds
And rusted lock boxes dated 1880,
Unlatched by great-grandparents long dead.

Revive those black and white knobs,
Lubricate them again
With the sweet oil of grasping palms,
Broach those stubborn lock boxes
And let the grandparents return.

AS IF THE BIRD COULD DIE IN FLIGHT

Under care laden Seattle feet
Cobblestones lie like loaves of moldy bread,
And my day old socks,
Darned carefully with rye grass,
Fit too well the seamy ground.

I clamor through elbows of confusion,
Well positioned and pensioned,
Oh so cold to touch,
And vainly strive to assemble
Like a stainless steel chair.
GOING HOME IN DAYDREAMS

I walk into the first dive bar
On South Main in Newport, Washington,
Where fallow conversation drones
With milltown buck and boom,

Take my stool, order draft,
Search faces for old friends
Long after payroll hours
Have splintered our dreams.

Twenty years away and nothing's changed:
Sawyers, drivers, planer operators
For Diamond Match, thinning hair,
Mortgages, marriages, children.
BAZOOKA, RED HOTS, SOUR APPLES, CHERRY HUMPS,
Clutched in small handed brown bags.

Heavy handled door, once fifteen feet tall,
Swings me into thirty year dolor
Of compacted cotton candy air,

Jansen's Candy & News,
Childhood alchemy and corner store.

1958 pulp magazines luxuriate unread in racks:
*Vue, Saga, Knave, For Men Only,*
Espoused my first throbbing glimpse of woman flesh.

Candy pimping old man perched,
A mushroom on the cash register stool.

Tall oak breakfronts still carefully strewn
With sterling lace ID bracelets
And high school friendship rings.

Yellowed birthday and getwell cards are
Dream hoarded in back rows. All over town

Citizens vainly forestall old age and sickness
With unpurchased cards, and young lovers abstain,
Wait to exchange two dollar rings.
POSSUM CROSSIN'

Possum refuse to heed foul weather warnings,
Migrate to Oregon fleeing flop-eared hounds,
And raise families of glare-blinded young.
Ancient marsupials from Grendel's short night,
Dare not leave your briar keep,
You navel-eyed night walkers,

Who glean spilled trash and small dead,
When bright beams sear the retina's gauze,
Bedazzled and shambling from lane to lane,
Dead, even before metal stumbles through bone.
A row of four pups gasp to suckle
Life through fresh dead meat,

With winged skull smashed flat.
Flesh hammered, transmutes
To dust that remembers its dust.
Sweet humus thrown to asphalt
Coalesces flesh to bone:
Another possum heavy with young.

YULETIDE AMPUTATION

To the emergency room secretary,
His guide reports, "He speaks no English."
Fingers snapped from the hand,
Like overripe fruit,
By loading ramp cables.

Where's the consolation
For an unwhole body?
To donate limbs, moving
Christmas trees to L.A., San Diego,
Phoenix?
ALONE WITH THE HOUND

One hundred pound khaki-d GI
In the Seattle bus terminal
Squats in the Coke machine corner,
Where disco ricochets from
His Panasonic tape/radio,
Keeps him whole and intact,
Encamped within an envelope of sound.

Black sunglasses further protect him,
Hide his side-glancing eyes
From off-duty mothers.
US Army skill badges
Make brassy proclamation
Of teenage prowess with
Machine gun and antitank weapons.

PREVENTABLE FINE ARTS

And to write a verse, or even a piece of verse, however awkward and crude, that bears some mark, something characteristic of the author's true nature—that is, I insist, a considerable human achievement.

T. Roethke

Dillettanti, how can you avoid the poem
That should never have been written?

Because the artist did the best he knew,
Admire the painting
That should never have been painted.

You dwell in sayings
That should never have been spoken.

Art, even when regrettably bad like our dreams,
Fulfills various obligations.

Freud the Viennese dreamspeaker
Never offered to cancel them.

Chinook wind blows
Winter interrupted---
snow seeps into mud

To appear in: Portals, Fall, 1981.
THE KAIPUYA TALKED

That death comes easy to the body
When the old can no longer
Separate waking from dreaming.
Maybe early dead relatives
Will sing into my ear,
And no longer leave me behind
When I'm night rested.

In dreams my own dead ask me
If all is right in my heart.
When waking from dreaming
Can no longer be dismantled,
I may stay with them.
A shooting star will mark
Heart's path across the ocean.

Rock lizard knows,
even sleeping in Winter sun--
old tomcat stalks above
COYOTE AT HOME AGAIN

Shapeshifter lusts for his eldest daughter,
Saw how well formed she is there.
Adopting his most outrageous disguise,
God as trickster, captures her imagination.
Coyote forgets who he is,

Serves metaphors, her food for thought,
Mushrooms, toadstools, sweet pemmican words.
Come lie down here with
Coyote man just always traveling along,
Doing the best he can.

Oh Daddy, it's just you!

Appeared in: Montage: OSU Barometer, 10 April 1981.
Glint of sunlight--
not pushing the river
rainbow sided salmon

To appear in: Portals, Fall, 1981.
COME SWIMMER

(after a Kwakiutl salmon prayer)

Feed on Moonmoth as he glisters to water,
Take this sweet food, younger brother,
Hold it tight to your urgent body.

Now we are glad to be alive
That you have come to this good place
Where we can play together.

Your memory lives in kinfolk
Just as unmarked river paths
reoccur to those who follow.
Two hundred feet of blackberry vine
grows easily--
from 3 feet of root

MARYS RIVER KALAPUYA

Dreamspeaker, sound my blackberry heart,
My blackberry hunger, my blackberry dreams
When my breath rolls onto rigid winter wind
Whose blackberry tongue shreds my clothes.

Speak the cedar memories that rattle
When jackpine days stand desolate
And whistle with the wood knacker's blade.
Cloud-drawn Winter moon
slides through the night--
no one wakes

KALAPUYA VISITATION

Kalapuya dreamspeaker,
When you leave your mounded den,
Leap through lizard brambles,
Find my bed.

Since native wisdom comes hard,
Drip blackberry into my sleeping eyes
And cudgel sense into my skull
With nightwalker's moon-white thigh bone.

In rain filled air
crows fly heavily nestward--
Winter day darkens early

AMONG THE KALAPUYA

The blind made the arrow heads.
Small bird points blindly sought
And fell Teal and Grouse.
The blind did nothing else
But worry deft shapes
From obsidian chips for cedar hafts.
When no sight flies true,
Arrow points find Elk's heart
Dark in breath closet,
To winter feed the people.

Flinty beach pebbles  
rattle beneath my feet—  
Winter storm rakes the waves

WATER RIDDLE

Its name is peaceful
That drinks half the earth's water,
Sees Sol at high noon twelve hours every day,

Commands 10,000 miles at farthest stretch
Of four cardinal directions, and looms
Larger than all earth's land surface,

Bathes and swaddles Orca and Humpback,
Can swallow two Atlantics for breakfast
And sup on two Mediterraneans.

You who are cunning in thought
And speak true words,
What is this misnamed thing?
Barn owl glides overhead--
winter shadow crosses the path
on muffled wing
Far from home--
Canada goose in winter sky
another, another, another

Appeared in: Leanfrog, Fall, 1980.
Blacktail doe with fawn
down by the bent oak tree--
browse the blackberries

Appeared in: Dragonfly, April, 1980.
Moonless night,
hoot owl calls and calls--
no response

Appeared in: Dragonfly, April, 1980.
Bent widgeon grass--
against the gateless post
drifting snow leans
Two pheasants strut and preen
brown fallen leaves--
explode into frozen air

To appear in: Portals, Fall, 1981.
Daffodil moon sets...
with mist heavy on the creek
at final owl cry
Taps against the window
summer yellow wasp--
sun lights the floor
Moistens the brow--
gathered cordwood
warms the axman twice

Black the stove--
first Winter chill
and clean the flue

In white fluent moonlight---
the down swooping breast
of a midnight snow owl
Green green marsh--
early morning geese
rise and scrawl North
Night-watching her swim
the Australian crawl--
tied canoes bump gently
WOMAN

Marry me in the moment
of our passion--
spent, but not lost.

Woman, commodious of body
and soul, swing your hips,
earthen heavy with womanware.
GOAT LADY, SEEK YOUR MINOTAUR

Your calico wrapper
Smites me with movement,
To and fro, each way free.
Softly play our wooden music.

Your lachrymous mahogany lips
Change subtle colour at my kiss,
Body mead laves my mouth,
And calyx musk drunkens my senses.

Lay against me your runic curves,
Appled blackberry nipples, bittersweet
That tightens my skin.
(after Chiyo-Ni)

All twelve pumpkins
suckled by the fertile cord. . .
of a single vine
EARTH AND STONE MOTHER

Mother of earth and stones,
Daily bread stones,
Earth of tomorrow's promise,
My new life consecrated at seventeen,
Father home from Fort Lewis
As the Second War timely ends.

You grew again with each of five
Sons of lithe bone,
Daughter of gypsy eyes.
Birthing strong children
Never slaked your thirst.

Mother of earth and sun,
Morning classroom sun,
Your watercolor's power
Flows like mountain water
To an uncried sea of tears.

You move on garnet threads
Of moon-flowing blood,
Prism transparent warmth,
Mother of earth and stars.
Not too long ago,
she remembers--
moving quickly, without pain
DINNER OUT IN OLD SPOKANE

Mizpah, when your battered green Hobart
Churns our bread, I remember Mother's stories,
Your teaching black piano children in Joplin
For little or no charge.
We talked early, you shared
The androgyny of family wisdom
With your first born grandchild.
I thrived in your magnolia presence,
And memories yield companionship
With the flourishing dead.

Though choosing not to live single,
Mizpah found grown men bothersome.
While winter-pruning roses back to nubbins,
We ignored my puberty awhile,
Until my manhood betrayed us,
Just as menarche had once her.
Sofa convalescing, Mizpah's body
Often failed to meet her demands,
Womanware lengthened her countenance.

Mizpah Ping came for me last night.
She circled the block six times
To find a free park meter,
Her '56 Chrysler with beige leather
Gracefully eased to the curb so chrome
parking batons just scraped concrete.
Old light from cast-iron lamps
Followed us down the alley
To the "AA" Club she fondly adopted.
Inside, I stacked my worn felt hat,
And gathered lilac silk scarves, that fell
From Grandmother's shoulders like rain
When I took her camel-hair coat.

Runjy, Mizpah's mechanic and long time friend,
Said, "Hi Miz," began "Long Black Veil"
carefully on banjo.
Mizpah boldly chose our table.
"Mizpah, let's take your Chrysler to Seattle again,
Talk our way over Snoqualmie Pass
To visit Aunt Marjorie."
"Can you keep me alert at the wheel, Stephen?"

Lulls in family news turned conversation
To "Bear" markets and Cadillac cars.
"Mizpah, did you read Emerson
at finishing school in 1909?"
"Why Stephen, I'm here tonight
Through the likes of his 'transparent eyeball'."
"A sort of Jungian lense then,
To focus our shared consciousness?"

"Yes Stephen, Emerson was still lustrous in '09,
And even the great outlaw, Thoreau . . ."
Mizpah moved off like a sliding moon,
Many houses still echo her voice.
BLACKBERRY ROOTS

Two hundred feet of blackberry vine  
grows easily--  
from 3 feet of root.

Blackberry rhyme distracts our attention,  
And warm wind chortles our ears.  
Our fruited conversation jostles the walls,  
And webs of shared memory smear our doughy faces.

First cousins, like brothers,  
We wearily roamed blackberry catacombs,  
And now trade breath in the close air,  
Grow more separately together.

Remember those long noon days  
In the Great Yakima Desert, where we found  
The petrified log with stone wormholes,  
Shards of flint, and long time friendship?

Well within the periphery of affection,  
Our recent late telephone hour,  
Refreshed our reciprocal sense of balance.  
Remember Mizpah, watching between me and thee.
BLEEDING WITH ZEB

Unnecessary that bloody dishrag
Left on the floor, where
You called me thirteen miles from work,
For women of the house
Have unmitigated birthing rights
For carpet, bed, or floor,
And even the floors have obligations
To hold those stains.

Anna, you know Labor & Delivery,
Where phrases of bedlam and hours of pain
Deposit their stalactite shadows.
When the anesthetist began
To cozen your pain for an hour,
Letting it catch up later redoubled,
I saw death for an instant,
Frost on the walls,
Gone before it could melt.
Death, an unbidden spectre
Though emeritus on hospital staff,
Brushed your brow with bony hand.
Colour drained to blue ice,
Then your warmth returned my breath.
Without ambient anesthetic
My sight would have failed,
Vitreous muddied to original clay.
Holding idle hand and mopping your brow,
I almost missed his birth.

Of blood from blood born--
You missed one cry of protest when,
From womb-fathoms untimely ripped,
AAHH!
Not quite frantic,
More like one rudely awakened,
WHATINTHEHELL!--
Little penis and balls like calla lily,
And waxy legs bent and kicking.
Black shockheaded with hazel eye,
Zebulon Jay Roy out and about!

Bathed in his mother's magma,
I watched,
And learned more than I would know.
SEEDLING FATHER

One of few Washington attorneys,
Who learned early and held the law of trees,
The seedlings' promissory lilt,
To thrive like strong children.
The vagabond Blue Spruce of two feet

You brought to town from the Pend Oreille forest,
Moved the next year for the new walk,
Now towers thirty feet above the old house--
Arrogant with the trout sheen of mountain lakes.
Forest Service trail boss,

Coaxing 4-F'ers and younger boys
During your World War II high school years,
Pinecone and fir needle memory comes
A glowing coal, into your office
And tall years of trial law.