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Robert J. Briskey
College of DuPage

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The Porch

Ah, for the warmth of the old wooden porch
Running some forty feet or more,
From end to end across the house,
With wooden planks to form the floor.

My folks would sit and tell me tales
Of knights slaying dragons and the such,
Or giants and bean stalks and golden eggs
As we’d sit in the swing that I liked so much.

Later on, when I was six or seven,
I’d snatch up cookies that Mom would bake
And hide out underneath that porch
And stuff myself till my stomach would ache.

Then there were times when my friends and I
Would play cowboys and Indians and wagon wheels,
And pretend that the trellises were the spokes
And the steps to the porch were the horses’ heels.

I remember once around Halloween
We set up a spook house under the porch.
Oh, it was dark with blankets o’er the side
And we pretended a flashlight was a torch.

And then I reached that middle age
When boys would learn of something new;
Something soft and gentler than he,
Mine was a girl all dressed in blue.

We’d sit for hours upon that porch
And talk about the silliest things,
Or holding hands, say nothing at all
While gently swining in the old porch swing.

I reached the age of khaki clothes.
With my duffle bag and leather grip
I waved from the gate to the folks on the porch
And noticed a tear and Mom’s quivering lip.

But I’d signed my name on the bottom line
And had a duty I must fulfill.
I’d see that porch again, I knew
When my time was up, but not until.

Hooray, that day had finally come.
Let bugles blare and the flag unfurl,
For there on the porch with Mom and Dad
Was my sweetheart, that blue clad girl.

And shortly after my return
We sat in the swing as in days gone by,
And I asked her if she would take my name.
Why, she was so happy she started to cry.

So we were wed and settled down
To a cozy porch of our very own,
With a house attached across its back
And white picket rail with steps leading down.

It wasn’t long and I was forced to build
A gate to close in front of those stairs
After our little boy nearly tumbled down
And my missus and I realized our fears.

But pretty soon he was in control
And off he’d dash to gather his champs.
Then under the porch they’d disappear.
The porch was a bridge for railroad bums.

Rather strange, but it happened that very day
That a whole cherry pie found a place to hide.
He didn’t know where the pie had gone,
But his tummy was hurting him inside.

Yes, I watched him play and I watched him grow
And I watched him court a girl in blue.
They didn’t see me in the window pane
And I smiled when they stole a kiss or two.

So today they brought my grandson by.
He’s four years old and likes to play
Upon, beneath, and around the porch
Just as my son and I in our youthful day.

Arthur W. Johnson