

At the 2004 reunion Jan Gilbert read a poem that she wrote, entitled "If I Were to Write a Poem" about her father, J. b. Mick (1906 – 1987) of Himsworth Township, near Powassan. He was the son of William Henry Mick and Alathea Proudfoot Coleman.

### **If I Were to Write a Poem**

If I were to write a poem about my father  
It wouldn't fit within the page  
His booming laugh would spill out into the margins  
Taking over and surprising me  
Like it did once in the quiet of a funeral home  
Embarrassing the circumspect teenage me

If I could write a poem about my father  
It would run right off the end of the page, not stopping  
Because he didn't stop talking  
Not even to eat  
Only to sing or sleep  
And in his sleep the snores took over  
Loud and commanding

I could tell of an eager student,  
Leaving school at eleven to work like a man  
To support a suddenly fatherless family  
Or an adventuresome boy of thirteen  
Smoking behind the barn  
And burning down the haystack

A young man  
Criss crossing Canada during the great depression  
Harvesting grain in the west  
Cutting trees in the east  
To earn money to buy a farm  
And marry Mom  
Writing her letters every day

On their anniversary  
Shyly, for once,  
Placing a box of chocolates, unwrapped, on top of the fridge  
And wordlessly, for once, glancing at Mom  
Then leaving the kitchen

Reading me a story  
Getting interested in the plot  
Words coming faster and faster  
Finally forgetting to read out loud at all  
In his absorption

Teaching me to fish in Graham Crick  
Fishing line tied to a long straight twig  
Pulling out suckers that I refused to touch or to eat  
Walking home contentedly through  
The soft June twilight

Singing as he rode the tractor  
On promising spring days  
Stooking acres of sheaves of oats  
On blue and golden autumn days

Telling stories incessantly  
Over cups of coffee  
Year round

Visiting me at my home  
Wearing brown leather jacket and trademark fedora  
Getting out of the car  
Bent and stiff  
Trunk filled with huge onions, potatoes and parsnips  
From his lush garden beside the apple trees

As a Grandpa  
Squeezed into a tiny chair  
Ridiculous small party hat on his bald head  
Surrounded by teddy bears  
Sipping tea from a doll size cup  
And slurping with enjoyment

If I were to write a poem about my father  
I would need large paper, bright colours  
And a sound card  
How can a life fit inside a poem, a page, a book  
Without spilling out?  
Does it have to?  
Memories have no margins  
And there's no bottom to the page.