

A Retired Farmer Working as a Greeter at Wal-Mart

-by Leo Dangel

The store went up last year outside of town.
There was a cornfield where I'm standing now,
smiling, saying hello, and handing out ads
for plastic purses, towels, and microwaves.
The job doesn't pay much, but neither did farming.
Pete, my old neighbor, wearing clean overalls,
comes in. I say "Hey, you lazy fart, I see
you're taking a day off to loaf in town."
And Pete says, "You should talk, getting paid
for standing around in an air-conditioned store."
While we talk about the rain last night,
the possibility of early frost, the price of hogs,
a dozen customers pass by ungreeted,
and I feel uneasy about not doing my job.

In one way, it's like farming – spending hours
on the tractor, with lots of time to daydream.
Now, I invent secrets I'd like to tell customers.
"Every third mineral water bottle is filled
with Russian vodka. Snakes have been found
in the cups of the imported brassieres."
But I only say, "Hello, how are you,"
and send them on their way down the aisles,
which are nothing like rows of corn.