

Poem: Ice Cream

Eric Edwards

Always on my birthday,
in mid-July's gold sun,
it never rained;
we were barefooted
and t-shirted,
shorthaired and wild,

and we made our own ice cream.

Only now, coming into
this summer-warm childhood
from a great distance
do I see my parents
standing against a blue sky
full of ocean air –
how they watched us
while leaving us alone

having made the plans
that would bring my friends
shy and laughing –

we were all the same,
we bore gifts for each other
that we chose and our parents bought,
not knowing how to feel
but coming to understand celebration
enough, barely enough
to enjoy giving and receiving

to enjoy making ice cream.



Some parent drove
the one minute
to the old ice house
still busy in the fifties
set downslope between the road
and Miles Pond.

Details! solid, invisible facts
that ran like the breeze
through our hair –

we looked into the cool
dark wood of it and watched
as some old man brought out
with tongs hung from one hand,
a twenty-five pound square of ice.

I have trouble remembering
the ice house, the people, the cars;
it was the ice that mattered,
and the instruments to carry it,
the cardboard to put it on,
ice picks to pick it apart,
slivers of ice for the mouth,
rock salt for the ice,
and a little salt for the mouth...

We never thought about it,
how it all hangs together,
pond, salt, and ice,
how we carry memory
like twenty-five pounds of ice,
how we made ice cream out of that day –

Only now do I recall
the hay where the ice slept,
the cold air swirling from the wooden doors,
that it was unusual,
a house for ice.



How the memory splinters
as we use it
taste it again and again
I can see right through it
until I drive the pick in...

We packed ice in the wooden bucket
around the steep cylinder
around the cream and fruit sugar;

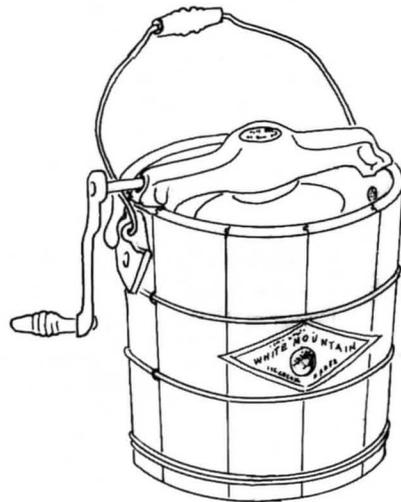
the crank was fitted on top
and we took turns cranking
in an odd challenging way

learning or unlearning competition
and desire, hunger and preparation;

my mother laughed outright
we were so resolute and callow.

We had to sweat to make it cold.

Eric Edwards is a Woods Hole poet



Drawings by Julia S. Child