



Penned by Lantern Light

This column will spotlight members of the Western Wordsmiths Chapter of the Western Music Association. It will highlight an invited poet guest with possible short biographical information of his/her works. If a member of the Western Wordsmiths Chapter and if interested in submitting one piece of original work for publication, please contact the Western Wordsmiths chapter president.

After the Fire

By Keith Ward, 2015

It wasn't just a barn you know,
Not just a storage bin,
Not just a place to feed the cows,
Or park the tractor in.

It wasn't just a barn you know;
When a little boy was there.
Fact is, it was never barn,
But villains best beware.

It was castle to my knighthood;
Silo turret rising high,
Where damsels could be rescued
Or I could keep a weather eye.

The milk room was my office
If I was Sherriff for the day.
It was fort when I soldiered,
Keeping enemy at bay.

It was livery for my stick horse,
Villain's stronghold when I spied.
Old hay made cushioned landing
If they got me and I died.

It wasn't just a barn you know;
Back when kids knew how to play.
It became, as if by magic
What was needed for the day.

It wasn't just a barn you know;
As I was soon to understand,
For it became a school house
For the making of a man.

Skills learned in that old school house
Would prove to serve me well,
But skill ain't all that makes a man.
My professors didn't fail.

How a boy should treat his Father,
How a Father treats his son.
Watching Dad and Granddad,
As they got the day's work done.

How a man should treat his wife,
How a man should treat his Lord,
How men should treat each other,
All these lessons we explored.

It wasn't just a barn you know;
Not just shelter from the wind.
Sometimes a place of privacy
When seeking council from a friend.

Sometimes a place of solitude,
When needing time to pray.
Sometimes a place to steal a kiss,
When she's checking on your day.

It wasn't just a barn you know;
Not just wood and tin.
Always adapting to the need
Of the work to do within.

The wooden silo log since gone;
Milk room no longer used.
Wooden stanchions hanging,
From their duties now excused.

Adapting through the years,
But still and always grand.
The memories, now awakened
Are sure to ever stand.

For I now see the life it gave me,
In the ash and twisted tin.
It wasn't just a barn you know,
When a little boy stepped in.



Keith Ward, Vilas, NC – I grew up on a farm in the mountains of North Carolina near Boone. We raised beef, hay, tobacco, pepper and various other vegetable crops, and also saw milled. Horses have always been a part of my life although we didn't have much time for "pleasure horses" as my Daddy called them. Just about everybody had work horses or mules used for working the crops. After I was grown and had married that pretty little red head, I quit farming and went to work in law enforcement. I kept cattle and horses as a supplement to my income (Policemen don't get paid much around here!). I quit police work after twenty years and now make my living as a "dude wrangler." I own and operate a guided trail ride business called Dutch Creek Trails. I have been writing poetry since my childhood. My background has given me lots of inspiration for my poems. Some are purely fictional and some are based on true events that have happened to me. I think I like the fictional ones best because I am always surprised by the ending.