

How My Uncle Broke His Back

A Lower East Side city boy,
son of a Jewish haberdasher,
Depression years in the Smokies
— a job with the CCC
offered by a government man —
he saw another America,

set his sights on being a country doc,
went to City College at night,
Edinburgh for medicine —
came home with a brogue,
a pipe, a taste
for haggis.

The only doc
in a town so small
his name on a letter
all that was needed,
he spent his summers
in a Finger Lake cabin,
a Snipe moored nearby,
whiling away his placid days
sailing or sitting on his dock
watching clouds build
over rolling hills.

Then once, to answer
an emergency call,
he ran barefoot,
bathing suit wet,
to his old Chevy,
tore down the road,
tires kicking up dust,
heading for town.

But a snapping turtle
placed by his son in the car
took a bite of his toe!
He swatted and swerved,
drove into a ditch —
never made it to the old man
collapsed in town.

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