

Field o Flowers by *Unca Lope** ©Dave Self 2012

(a "pome" set in aboriginal grasslands of California)

twuz some thirty yar ago or so,
down by the Laguna*, along side o
Todd Road n Llano.

I was studying bout buzzin bugs n insects n flowers
in college classes ... hours n hours.

I'd ran acrost a spot with a half dozen flowers so rare,
n dozens of others of every other color was there,
n six kindsa bunch grasses was a wavin their stalks in the air there too.

The site was rare beautiful ... Wow!
it'd nary ever been under a plow.
The ancient tapestry o life was still near intac'
that once spread from here and yon and back.
It was rich, vibrant, colorful,
kinda 'Persian Carpet wonderful'.

Weeds was thar too, but not so many,
and I begun collecting any
an' every sort a wildflower
in my power.

Twixt needlegrass bunches an' their purple panicles,
was blue wild-hyacinths an' purple sanicles,

Thin soil 'd often have dense blue bonnet on it,
an' a spot o royal blue larkspur er two.
an another thin place might yield
golden yellow of little gold-field,
an' that'd be inlaid
with yellow sun-cups an' magenta red-maid,
an' with 4 kindsa owls-clovers scattered all roun'.
purple ones, or white or yellow or brown.

On thicker ground, a ground squirrel might poke
out of a burrow (or maybe an oak).

An' there was badgers diggin some o the squirrels out,
an' the spoil ... of loose soil
was making just the right 'room'
fer golden poppy, mule-ears ... an' pink checker-bloom.

From high ground down ta low, it went from dry to barely winter-wet,
with meadow-barley, then to moister yet,
with oat-grass bunches, and then even wetta
with soggy, flowing swales, drain-ing
from meadow flats n down, then puddl-ing
inta vernal pool that stay wet late into spr-ing.

Many o these vernal pools was 'bubbling over'
with meadow-foam flowers an' purple clover.
coyote thistle was there,
an' Sonoma sunshine a glowin,
an' patches of sky-blue,
a Downingia,
was down in em too,

An' some o these spilled into the swales flowin,
with purple camass an' buttercups growin,

("But what's this got ta do with spiders?" I asked.
I'm gettin there ... Lil hare!)

Well, with high ground and low ground, and thick, wet or thin,
an' each type having its own weave an' spin
of grasses n flowers, rushes an' all,
well ... each had a merry myriad of insects there-in,
and all was a buzzin n havin' a ball.

Thar was 'bugs' a hummin an' a buzzin round each kind a flower,
I caught some, n some I watched hour after hour.
Long horn moths sippin on Johnny tuck,
with antennae longer n they was, n
shiny, tiny metal-green bees a buzzin
n thar was other tiny, an' middle, an' big bees, buzzin by the dozen.
an' they was flies with black and yellow stripes like a bee too
ta scare off me er you, er a hungry bird er two too.

Between bunches of grasses an' betwixt panicles n flowers,
an' occasional tree, or inside a burrow,
the insects was a buzzin an' humming.
And this great "harmony - to a spider" rose in every nook,
an' each kinda spider took a look
at a different angle,
to spin a fine web,
er a cob-webby tangle.

And each kinda web was carefully placed an' wrought,
whether wove over flowers, or from bunch-grass bunch to bunch,
or what not, ... all - to get bugs caught
fer spider-feastin, and ta munch fer lunch.

Thar was spiders ever-whars, in daylight and night hours,
thar was crab spiders thet matched the colors of flowers.
Thar was wolfy hunters and tiny jumpers.

Big web, tiny web, high web er low.
or no web atall, just a quick bite 'to go'.

Now in the midst of all this I was catching 'bugs' too,
fer entomology class at the school,
an' with such a thriving spot,
there were many a nice one thet I got.

One kinda fly was an extra surprise,
it had a tiny head - mostly eyes.
I caught em, n pickled, n pinned 'em too,
then I put one in my bug box, an' brought it ta school,
and prof said "wow, where'd ya get him? thet fellers, real cool!"

And I told him about all the flowers, an' bugs an' spiders ever-where.
an he askt, "Can we take the whole class there?"
Sure! says I, but what so special about thet fly?

n he says "why thets a spider-fly, n they're really rare."
n he was really hopin to get one in his bug box too,
n I says "he's yers, I got others"
n after thet we was practly brothers.

An he says "They're usually found when you catch a spider,
an' then a fly* comes out from inside her."
The books, say 'a she-fly lays her eggs most anywhere,
then the larvae goes hunting, an' jumps in the air.
an' when it finally catches onto the leg of a spider,
the larvae then climbs up an in thru the side o the spider
and settles down inside 'er.

Then thet 'thing' sits an' "eats in", sometimes for years,
and pupates inside - a "spider's worst fears"
Finally a new fly climbs out, an' goes sippin' all around,
drinkin flower nectar an' matin an' layin its' eggs 'on the ground.'

And so you have it, the 'bug' in Spider Paradise', is really a fly,
thet sips on wildflowers fer lunch,
then by an by ... launches hunter-seeker* babies
to find spiders to munch!

An the best place fer such a specialized 'spider-bug',
is rich, ancient grasslands, with flowers like a Persian rug.

FOOTNOTES:

***Field o flowers** (©Dave Self) was transcribed in Oct 2012 by Lil Rabbit. The poem was originally titled " Field o flowers like a Persian Rug, a Spiders' Paradise 'cept fer a Bug", and was created for Lil Rabbit, who'd had asked Unca Lope to tell a story about "Spiders" for the Davis Science Center. Check out the 'Stories and Poems' link on the Web of Words at

<http://www.explorit.org/csp/wow>

*A bit about Unca Lope: "I ain't no Ante-lope, they're an Old World Family. I'm a Pronghorn, an' my famly, is native ta the American west. We've been here fer eons. N sides I ain't yer Auntie." (Pronghorn Family: Antilocapridae). Despite an MA in Plant Ecology and his pure Native blood, he insists on calling himself "a cowboy poet" and "talkin like thet". Lope says, "Much o thet genre [cowboy poetry] is a lot looser, an' a whole lot more fun than most poetry, an' it honors great open spaces, wild places, an' the settin sun. Also it don't shun a verbal joke or shameless pun, an' I smile n laugh while I'm makin one".

*Laguna = the Laguna de Santa Rosa in Sonoma County, California. The site of the poem, at Todd Road and Llano, is a 75-acre Ecological Reserve operated by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CaDFW). It is NOT OPEN to the public. Visits require permission of CaDFW. An adjacent dairy occasionally ran cows on the Reserve during Unca Lope's studies, as rough replacement for the ancient, wandering herds of elk and pronghorn. The subsequent exclusion of dairy cows from the site has allowed "dead ol grass ta pile up an suppress the spring wildflower show".

*"The 'bug' in the 'Persian-Paradise' rug, is more properly "a small-headed 'fly in the ointment' " of the Family Acroceridae. I just wanted a rhyme with rug, hence my casual anointment of the fly as a bug," says Unca Lope.

*hunter-seeker is a 'high tech tool' used by assassins in the "Dune" science fiction novels by Frank Herbert.

Part of "Lil Rabbit Collects Acorns" - a Kids Book Project on Kickstarter
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