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FIELD OF SKIRTS

by Jo Heying

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by
Jo Heying

Here is an unusual little book of verse that celebrates a craft from long ago: the original cornhusk doll. Jo Heying tells the story of how it came to be that Benj and Elisa, while walking through their cornfields, recognized the potential art of the cornhusk (Benj was the farmer; Elisa, the artist). From there the seed was sown, figuratively speaking, for creative work and imaginative play. The husk looked like a skirt, which became a doll, which became many dolls, and which turned into *Field of Skirts*, a memory book that preserves a long-awaited fantasy in the mind of Elisa.

Each doll is assigned a role that goes far beyond its costume or nationality; each takes on a vibrant personality, and Jo Heying breathes life into each creation.

*Señorita with the
eyes so Spanish,
I'm afraid you soon
may vanish.
Clicking heels and
skirts awhirl,
All too soon
will leave the floor.
Many hearts will
certainly pine
For those Spanish
eyes of thine.*

If charms lie in infinite variety, the cornhusk doll has them all: gypsy, Indian, Eskimo, nurse, farmer, Hawaiian, Amerasian, Chinese, Irish, French, and from prairie to sophisticated city doll. There may even be first lady dolls, although this is understood to be a glint in the still early American Elisa's eye.

A special section at the end of the book is devoted to paeans to the presidents' wives who've made an impression on the author: Eleanor Roosevelt, Bess Truman, Mamie Eisenhower, Jacqueline Kennedy, Lady Bird Johnson, Pat Nixon, Betty Ford, Rosalynn Carter, Nancy Reagan, Barbara Bush, Hillary Rodham Clinton, and an extra surprise—Marilyn Quayle. Whether there are actually cornhusk dolls of these women or whether they are dreams in the making remains to be seen. (Obviously they weren't in the consciousness of Elisa.) The book is illustrated with lovely examples of this homespun art.

(Continued on back flap)

FIELD OF SKIRTS

Jo Heying



A Lyceum Book

Carlton Press Corp.

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Compliments
Jo Heying

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*I enjoyed your book of poems very much.
I read the poems to my ten-year-old daughter
and she absolutely loved them! Your poems
are warm and sensitive and are sure to be
enjoyed by many.*

*Dr. Jeffrey S. Copeland
Department of English Language & Literature
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa*

Other publications by the author:

Hushed Moments in the Senate

Bedsercise

Bittersweet Years

This Man and This Woman -
Under the Golden Dome

♥ *An expression of thanks to:*

Colette Ameling, secretary Therese Slack, attorney

Dolores Buchheit, illustrator

Joyce and others for letting us use their dolls as models ♥

*Little children,
do you really know
Why the farmer
makes the corn grow?*



*And little children,
would you like to see
How some cornhusk dolls
have come to be?*



*This little book
will tell you much
About farm and food,
art, crafts and such.*

*Benj and Elisa lived on a little farm,
Elisa was an artist with great charm.*

*Benj planted fields of corn each year,
Growing corn for food was his career.*

*When the corn was ripe the husks would spread,
The fuzz on tip of ear turned brownish red.*

*Comes then the glorious autumn time,
The corn was now ready to combine.*

*Elisa and Benj walked to look at corn.
It was then the cornhusk doll was born.*

*A thought struck her as she saw a husk
Float to the ground, 'twas now near dusk.*

*She mused, it looks just like a skirt.
She stooped to pick it from the dirt.*

*Excited now, she picked some of the hair.
She dreamed of cornhusk dolls so fair.*

*She toiled without a thought of time or food.
Each doll she fashioned, had a mood.*

*So enthused, she worked from dawn to dusk,
Whispering to each, she labored on.*

ERRATUM FOR FIELD OF SKIRTS, Jo Heying

P. 2, line 19: dawn to dusk should be dusk to dawn

ANGIELIND HUSK

*Oh, you sweet Angielind,
Roaming in my garden fair.
While little wisps of wind
Blow softly through
your hair.*

You are a woman now—

*Just having reached
your prime;*

*Stemmed flowers
seem to bow,*

*And flirt with you
all the time.*



Happy

Years



SARAH HUSK

*Keep playing my sweet child,
With your raggedy doll.
Soon these days, balmy, mild,
Will end and we'll have fall.
The years will go so fast—
Enjoy them, little one.
These happy years won't last,
So run, laugh, and have fun.*

ANNALISA HUSK

*I know that you
are very chic,*

*Salesladies usually
are.*

*They roam the
countryside
to seek*

*And buy that stuff
from afar.*

*Bolts of softest silk
from the east,*

*And the aromatics
for a feast.*



WALBURGA HUSK

*Walburga, meine gütte Frau
Erase that deep frown from your brow.
America is a happy, happy land.
You'll find the German celebrations grand.
You remind me much of neighbor, Rose.
She always had such friendly "hellos."*

MARISA HUSK

*Like an angel of mercy
you stand ready.*

*Clothed all in white and
hands so steady.*

*A prayer on your lips
for the baby so ill,*

*It hurts seeing baby
lie so still.*

*I know that you will
watch and wait,*

*Even though it gets
real, real late.*



NAOMI HUSK

*You must be Eskimo, never cold,
Picture beautiful to behold.
Furry coat to keep you warm,
Coldest wind could do no harm.
I'll make mittens for you today,
Ere colder wind will come this way.*

BRENDA HUSK

*You've got to have roses,
A love child like you,
Before he proposes
And you'll say, "I do."
I can see that coy smile,
Your love you can't hide.
Soon you'll walk down the aisle,
A prince by your side.*



KAREN HUSK

*A birthday party?
And lots of punch?
Let's not be tardy,
Let's join the bunch.
Bring presents, too,
And fun galore.
The gift from you,
She'll just adore.*

Fun!

Fun!

Fun!



RONA HUSK

*Senorita with the
eyes so Spanish,*

*I'm afraid you soon
may vanish.*

*Clicking heels and
skirts awhirl,*

*All too soon
will leave the floor.*

*Many hearts will
certainly pine.*

*For those Spanish
eyes of thine.*



PEEWEE HUSK

*Little elf from the Netherland,
Did you bring along your Irish band?
You may yet find that pot of gold
On rainbow's end or so I'm told.
Accordions will keep on playing
While little fairies are sashaying.*

MIRANDA HUSK

*Flamboyant little gypsy girl,
Do not brush away that curl.
I see that magic in your eyes,
So fun to flirt with all the guys.
A moment shared with just that one,
Precious the memoried attraction.*

JOHN HUSK

*Mr. Farmer
you must produce,*

*Never time to
take a cruise.*

*Sweat on brow
from all the work,*

*With hoe and rake and
spade and fork.*

*We thank you for
your daily toil,*

*Harvesting the food
from the soil.*





SONDRA HUSK

*You must have a hat
And a parasol to match.
And a little of this
And a purse with a latch.
The "elite" you will meet
On your trip here this day.
Certainly you'll be discreet,
And weigh each word you say.*



COLETTE HUSK

*I see that angelic look—
Your features all aglow.
You'll have your very own nook,
While choir music is turned low.
And you have chosen, I can see,
Christlike bride you will be.*

H-m-m

the

Artist



CORINNA HUSK

*Well, what do I see here?
A sensitive mood, I guess.
Creative eyes and hands I fear,
Must hold artist tools, no less.
You'll dream each day and paint
And sculpt and draw your life away.
Bright hues and colors, oh so quaint,
You'll capture memories each day.*

Busy

Busy



TRESA HUSK

*Oh, you must be the busy one,
Always solicitous concern,
Working till the day is done,
Smiling sweetly, never stern.
Great love for parents very dear
Must motivate much of your life.
Great happiness must be right here,
For you are also a precious wife.*

RUNNING WATER HUSK

*Oh lovely little
Indian maid,*

*Standing in the
grassy glade.*

*Free as the prairie
wind that blows,*

*Quiet peace where the
river flows.*

*Smoke rings seen on
mountain high,*

*Is it lover's signal
in the sky?*



MANANA HUSK

*Italianos so 'luptuous all,
Aromas emanate from each bowl.
Oregano and garlic, jalepenos, yes!
We'll sup and enjoy this friendliness,
And long remember this very night—
Wine, music, all a great delight.*

LEILANI HUSK

*Aloha-oi—you'll swing and sway,
Wondering who will get the orchid lei.
The music speaks of love and dreams,
Those olive eyes watch you, it seems.
Soon he will take your slender hand,
Isn't life here on this island grand?*

SUSIE HUSK

*Little Amerasian girl
With skin of golden pearl,
Our bleeding heart so softly speaks
Our country loves, yes,
loves you heaps.*

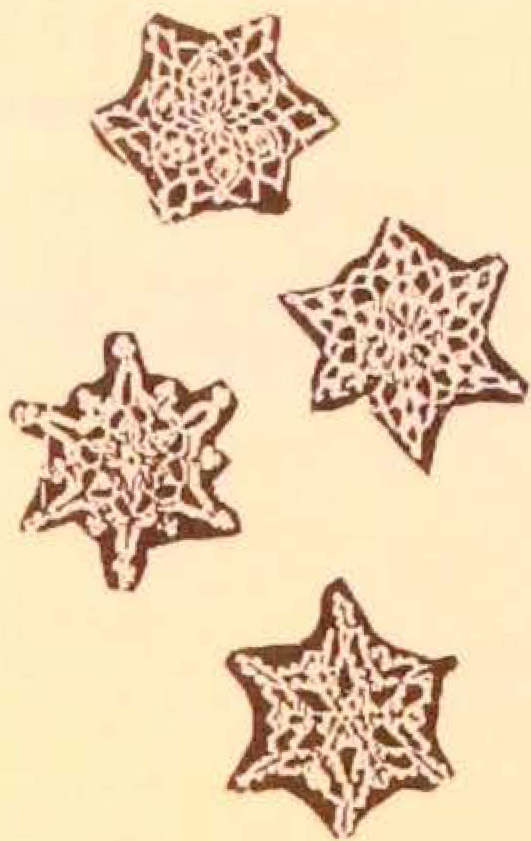
*You know not
who your father be,*

*We love you
for yourself,
you see.*



SHERRIE HUSK

*What is it I see—
You don't mind the cold?
But snowflakes are busy
Descending so bold.
I'll fashion a muff
So cozy and warm.
You'll stand in the fluff
A picture of charm.*





KRISTIN HUSK

*Wildflowers in your basket,
Wonder where you've been.
Wonder if I dare ask it,
Did you by chance meet him?
Your cheeks are all rosy and pink,
In your heart deep secrets sealed.
You'll meet him again, I think,
When picking flowers in the field.*

KINOMIE HUSK

*"Ah so," you lovely
china doll.*

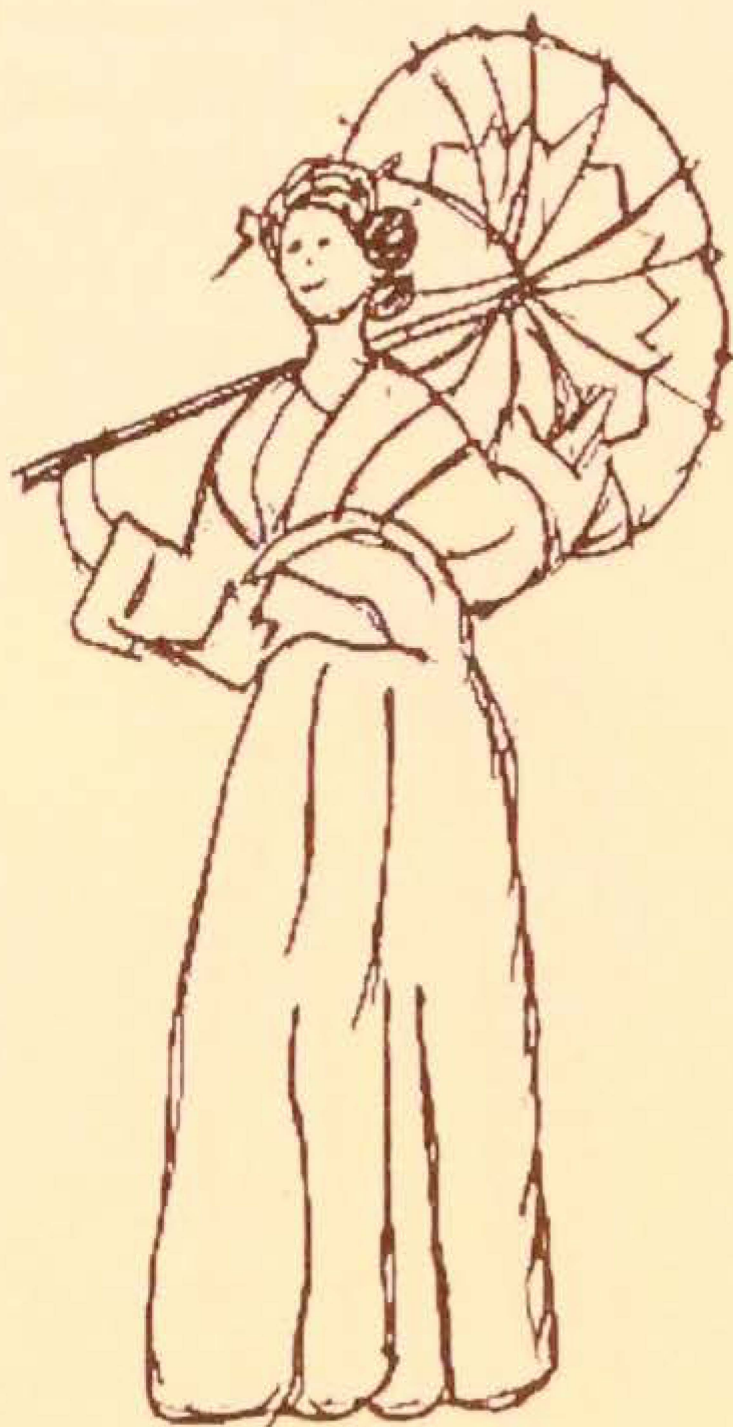
*You bow, fuss and
come on call.*

*Your fan, of course,
hides that coy
smile.*

*Hopefully, you'll decide
to stay awhile.*

*Everyone needs a friend
like you.*

*Wish I didn't have
to say adieu.*



HELENA HUSK

*Viennese lady whirling to waltzes,
With pearls and rings and all those flounces.
Romantic is the mood here this night,
No wonder he wants to hold you tight.
Kings and dukes seek you ladies fair,
There is none like you anywhere.*

BOBBI HUSK

*Oh, to be sixteen
like you again,
With a charming prince
to light the flame,
And make me dream
of youth and love,
So sweet and pure
as the morning dove.
Untouched your ruby lips,
I bet.
Oh, do stay that sweet
my pet.*



ROSALIE HUSK

*Sweet little Irish lass,
Oh me, oh my, you do have class.
You with the fluffy golden hair,
We do admire that Irish flair.
But the melody you hum is so sad,
Are you pining for that special lad?*

LOIS HUSK

*You've taken a lily
And put it in a pot.
I'll bet it's for Tillie,
Lying ill on her cot.
You'll brighten her day,
For deeds such as yours.
There just is no pay
Only love that endures.*

Get

Well

Soon!



*Elisa's eyes then got bleary
And hands became so weary*

*As she dreamed and slept
She saw them come,
Great ladies so adept,
But then where from?*

WASHINGTON???



*In comes Eleanor Roosevelt,
We all knew just how she felt.
Satchel in hand and on the go,
Slums no more, for she said so.
Society wakened to needs, I know,
For history books have told me so.*

*Along comes Bess the silent tower.
Her words were few, but she had power.
During President Harry Truman's years
She held his hand through bombs and tears.
Great lady, too, she certainly was
For that particular time, it was.*

*She then saw Mamie, and remembered well
Her living through those days of hell,
When General Eisenhower had marched
Thru swamp and rain and desert parched.
She showed all wives the bravest way,
Suffering in silence the war each day.*

*Other beauties then she saw,
Jacqueline Kennedy without a flaw.
Her years were good, the world adored,
Europe applauded, yes, they roared.
So soon it ended, life must go on.
Memories so sweet, and never gone.*

*Lady Bird then sauntered slowly by.
I pictured her walking thru the rye.
She did insist that nationwide,
"Make highways beautiful," she cried.
A prairie flower she was indeed.
She lived by President Johnson's creed.*

*I saw Pat Nixon never alone,
Somehow I thought of her as home.
So gentle, kind, and yet so strong,
She never did a single wrong.
Her family was always first in line,
She taught that lesson in her time.*

*She saw the President's lady, Betty Ford.
She had a small problem as you've heard.
Really felt that President Ford should stay
To steer the ship of state in the right way.
His ideas were suited for that particular time,
Maybe could have avoided much of cities' crime.*

*Sweet Rosalynn then came to us
With southern charm and helpfulness.
She had the Carter brain and knew
Just when to voice her advice, too.
Great insight, we could see she had
When she left the White House, all were sad.*

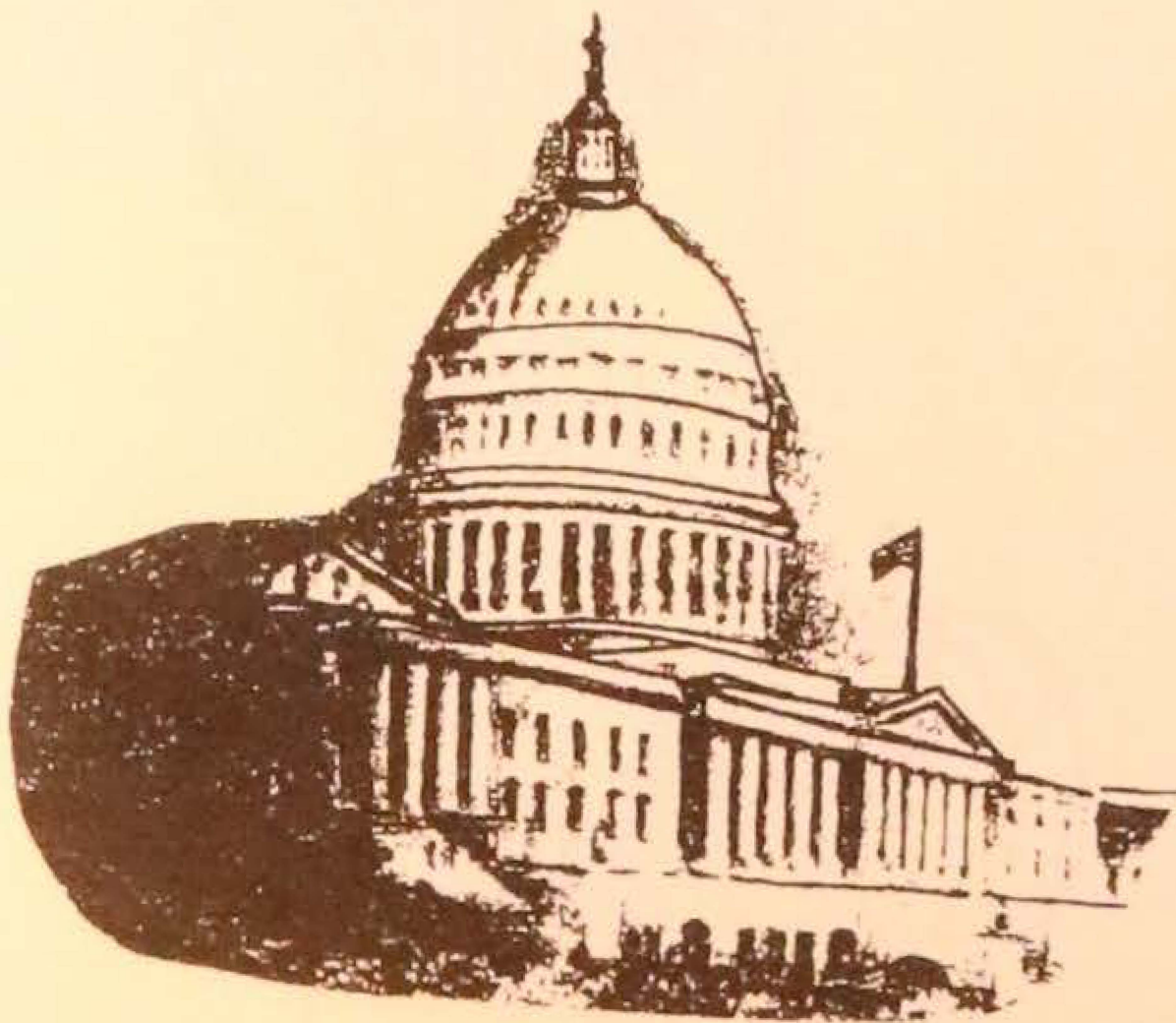
*Nancy, now on Ron Reagan's arm,
Nothing out of place—all was charm.
She served her president so well,
The pair did do a super-sell.
The country was in great, great shape
While the world stood agape.*

*She glimpsed then the gorgeous silver hair.
President 'Bush and 'Barb were quite a pair.
'Barb excelled when groups she'd meet,
Bouquets of roses fell at her feet.
Immortalized Millie, in a book,
A first indeed, do have a look.*

*A hippie girl on the Washington scene
Was Hilary Rodham Clinton's team.
A whirlwind hit the town for sure.
She was a woman, and had to endure.
The governed were soon at her feet,
She had the metal to take the heat.*

*Half asleep, she thought of one more
Who she felt had the power to soar.
Marilyn Quayle intrigued her ever so,
There was no doubt she was in the know.
She suffered much from dumb folks' scorn.
The day will come when she'll return.*

LET ME STAY AWHILE AMONG THE
GREAT
WHO ALL HELPED STEER THE SHIP
OF STATE.
SOME WALKED IN SHADOW, OTHERS
BOLD,
ALL OF THEM HAD A HEART OF
GOLD.
THE PRESIDENTS OF THIS DEAR
LAND
WERE GREATLY BLESSED, ALL
UNDERSTAND.





(Continued from front flap)

Arts and crafts have a special significance today in this world of ready-made things. They hold a place that is dear in the hearts of those who remember when, and are of even greater historical value to the young who've never seen a washboard or know what it's like to make their own candles and soap. Making dolls would be considered work by today's standards, but it was a thrilling pastime for girls who didn't have the leisure activities that we have today, such as watching TV, or the ability to do things beyond natural daylight hours.

The poems in *Field of Skirts* have a lighthearted charm that will touch the reader with their traditional values and sentiment which harks back to a time when creating one's amusements was not only necessary, but enjoyable, too.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jo Heying is president of Heying Firms, Inc., an integrated poultry operation which she and her husband, an agribusinessman, started as a young couple. Married over fifty years, she is the mother of four grown children. Mrs. Heying was hired by the state as a personal secretary in the State Senate. At her husband's insistence, she ran for a seat in the House of Representatives as an independent. She lost, but her husband was an elected senator for eight years. She wrote columns for daily and weekly papers in the five-county area. Her editorials were published weekly during that eight-year legislative term.

Her published books include: *Hushed Moments in the Senate*, *This Man and This Woman*, *Bedsercise*, and *Bittersweet Years*.

Jacket design by Russell Steffens

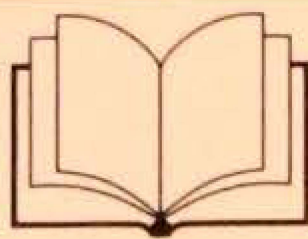


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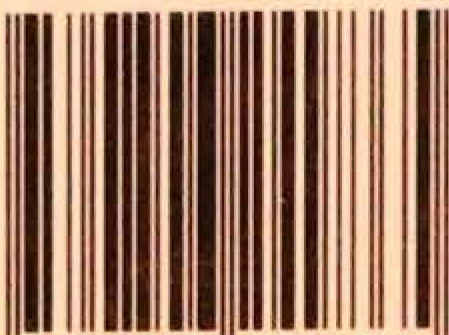
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