

**Generational Sadness/
St. Michael's August 19**

© 2006 Gail Grenier Sweet

We saved Grandma Hoerig's grave visit
until the last day.

We follow an order --
before the cemetery
we visit the family farmstead,
just down the road.

My eyes are ready for the
green stucco farmhouse,
a big square,
and the giant barn,
weathered red boards,
fieldstone foundation.

But this time is
different.

The fieldstones are there, still
piled on top of one another,
mortar sealing them.

But all around, rubble.
No barn,
just boards,
strewn.

My eyes start stinging

even though it was
not I who played in that haymow,
not I who milked the cows before school,

even though it was
not my world that blew apart
when Grandpa Arthur died
at age 41,

even though it was
not my dream that died
when my mother began doing a woman's work

inside the house at age 11,

even though it was
not my dream that died
when Grandma could no longer
handle the plowing and milking,

even though it was
not my dream that died
when she auctioned off the farm
and moved to the city
with my mother.

My eyes keep stinging
the whole time I pull weeds from
Grandma's grave.

I blink and I blink.

Finally I let it out,
standing in that graveyard
where my mother and her brother
mowed the grass in happier days.

I stand alone and
weep
loud and hard
for all the dreams that died.

###