

Prairie Fire

It's been hotter than coal and cob stove.
No matter how many times I dip a rag
in the well, tuck it under my hat,
still feels like I'm sweating flames.

Sleeping outside every night,
only way you can cool down round here.
Tomorrow I'm gonna start framing
the rafters. In a couple more days

it'll look like a house. We're lucky
anything still remains. One week ago
the hinges of purgatory came unglued.
Up the hill the tall grass began to shake

with the buzz of a thousand rattlers
and snakes of fire struck down at us.
Wildfire fast as a bull
seeing red and snorting steam.

We stopped work and fought the blaze
with wet sacks and prayers for breath.
A touchy time for a while, one of the biggest fires
I've ever seen, took out the old house,

several haystacks and two hundred acres
of pasture sleek and clean.
We saved the barn, and
new foundation.

Hot just ain't the word,
t'was the pits of Hades.

—James Hall

