

Gertrude Eleanor Martin Ramsay
A Woman of Steel

Hefting the hewn hickory handle, deftly
The metal of mattock positioned expertly
Feel and steel teamed seamlessly
Hardpan loosens to loam, now lovely.

Bending close down to earth
She works her miracle of birth
Dahlias decorate the roadside's girth
With flowery heads tossing joyful mirth.

SHAZAM

High heels hold her head up high,
The hostess gracefully serving pie
Competently clothed and chic, no lie
Creating an other paradise, oh my!

Strength of character needs no swords,
She whips her boys with pregnant words
Her steel strong arms shape butter from curds
She spins sons seldom swayed by herds.

As she aged she stooped,
Looped, bent to the earth
High heels retired along with youth
Dahlias replaced by generations of worth
Moral strands of steel re-borned.

by John Martin Ramsay

Gertrude was born December 28, 1904 in Bluefields, Nicaragua where her parents were Moravian missionaries to the Miskito and Rama natives. At age 11 she was sent to boarding school at Linden Hall, Lititz PA and in 1925 enrolled in Moravian College. She and John Gates Ramsay, a steel worker, married on November 27, 1926 and spent their working lives organizing, inspiring, and interpreting the lives of working men and women while raising a family of one daughter and three sons. After losing his job at Bethlehem Steel because of his leadership in the Union, John's salary came from the United Steelworkers of America. John and Gert were a team both in union work and in parenting. In 1981 they received the Pennsylvania History Society's Mother Jones Award "for early leadership and service in the labor movement and for forwarding the cause of economic justice." They leave a legacy of twelve grandchildren, thirty-six great grandchildren, and nearly fifty great, great grandchildren.

