

JOHN PALEN

The Catch-All

When we cleared out the garage
for the last time, it was still there,
the grimy-white bookcase that held
paint cans, tools in a fishing tackle box,
jars of unsorted nails and screws.
He owned a store; she played organ
at church; they raised three children.
Only people who believed walnut
would always be plentiful in America
would have painted over it. Only people
who believed things don't fall apart
would have relied on one screwdriver,
a saw, a hammer and a pair of pliers.
Scrubbing, scraping, sanding,
I bring up the old, close grain.



ABOUT JOHN PALEN



photo credit: Robert Barclay

John Palen received a PhD in American Studies from Michigan State University. A retired journalist and journalism professor, he lives in central Illinois. He is the author of *Open Communion* (Mayapple Press 2005), *Small Economies* (Mayapple Press 2012), and with Li Tien *Drizzle and Plum Blossoms: Four Poets of the Song Dynasty* (March Street Press 2009). His work has appeared in *The Chaffin Journal*, *upstreet*, *Storm Cellar*, *Off the Coast*, and *Prick of the Spindle*. He blogs at *Midwest Writer*, johnpalensblog.blogspot.com.

