Winners of "The Great War to End All Wars" Contest

Commemorating the 100th Anniversary of World War One (1914 – 2014)

POETRY (UNRHYMED)

1st		
Irwin D. Milowe, M.D.	Coconut Grove, Florida	*Any Wall Will Do*
2nd		
Maurine Killough	San Mateo, California	*Comfort Women*
3rd		
Zee Mink-Fuller	Burleson, Texas	*Gratitude from Foreign Soil*

Honorable Mention

Marsha Kay Ault	Nacogdoches, Texas	*POW as of 8/22/17* *In Memory of Papa Ernest Lovell*
Von S. Bourland	Happy, Texas	*A Soldier's Dream*
John Davis	Overland Park, Kansas	*Who Will Take Me Home?*
Gail Denham	Sunriver, Oregon	*War Effort* *…for Wilma McDaniel*

Honorable Mention

Dena R. Gorrell	Edmond, Oklahoma	*Long-awaited Homecoming*
Beth Staas	La Grange Park, Illinois	*Family Album*
Loretta Miles Tollefson	Eagle Nest, New Mex.	*Meditation on Veterans Day VII*
Mary Langer Thompson		*Truces*

POETRY (RHYMED)

1st		
Larry Hand	Woodstock, Georgia	*A Ballade for the Magic of* Whoa!
2nd		
Norma J. Pyle	Springfield, Missouri	*I Didn't Want to Die This Way*
3rd		
Raymond Reininger	Murfreesboro, Tennessee	*Home of the Brave*

Honorable Mention

Lee Pelham Cotton`		*Jasper and Lloyd Go Over the Top*

PROSE (FICTION)

1st	Dennis Maulsby	Ames, Iowa	*Frozen Chosin*
2nd	Robert Walton	King City, California	*Finished Business*
3rd	Anne Fox	Oakland, California	*Suitable Memorials*

PROSE (NON-FICTION)

1st	Faye Adams	DeSoto, Missouri	*An Undeclared War*
2nd	Lynn Veach Sadler	Pittsboro, North Carolina	*Robert Frost on The Great War to End All Wars*
3rd	Anrhony Michael Villanueva	Folsom, California	*Fun and Games*

Honorable Mention

Linda K. Carpenter	Huntington, Indiana	*War after War*
John Q. McDonald	Pleasanton, California	*Fragments of Metal and Time*
Marilyn K. Smith	Fair Grove, Missouri	*Home Guards During World War I Provide Great Service*

1ST PLACE
FICTION
FROZEN CHOSIN
By Dennis Maulsby

Publication withheld at author's request.
Dennis Maulsby's *poems and short stories have appeared in print, on National Public Radio's Themes & Variations, and in online literary journals. He lives in Ames, Iowa.*

2nd PLACE
FICTION
FINISHED BUSINESS
By Robert Walton

"Mr. Kelly, please lift your leg."

"No."

"Please cooperate."

"Screw you."

Betty Hollis sighed. "Max?" Max, heavyset though tall, appeared in the doorway.

"Mr. Kelly is not having a good evening. Will you help with him?"

Max stepped close to the tilted bed. "He didn't used to be so mean."

Betty shrugged. "He never was a peach."

"Still, he's a lot worse than last week."

Betty paused. "We moved him. He says we lost some of his stuff."

"What?"

"Some papers."

"Did we lose them?"

A frown creased the smooth, chocolate-colored skin of Betty's face. "Mr. Kelly is ninety-eight years old. He came to us from another institution six months ago. He brought with him a cigar box containing some personal possessions. That box is in the drawer beside his bed. Now, Max . . ."

Max looked down.

"I'm sure those papers existed sometime in the last eighty years, but they aren't here now."

"Sorry."

Betty turned away. "No problem. You'll learn."

Max looked down at Mr. Kelly. Sparse, silvery hair straggled across his bald, freckled scalp. A scar wrapped around his head from above his left ear to within a few centimeters of the right. Its cruelly bubbled flesh looked as if it should hurt still.

"This has to be done?"

"It's for his safety. Get the middle one."

Max tightened the canvas strap on the bed-frame.

Betty nodded. "That's good."

"What if he has to pee?"

"He's wearing an absorbent pad." She bent over. "Good-night, Mr. Kelly."

~ ~ ~

A bullet screamed off barbs above Kelly's shoulder. He lay still in a tangle of wire and hoped the gunners would think he was dead. A German, eye sockets empty, stared at him from paradise—a shell hole a few feet to his right with a foot of putrid water in its bottom. A bayonet scraped on dirt behind him. Teal's large head appeared.

Kelly, hit?"

Kelly's throat was shroud-dry. "No."

"Good. Stay still. I'll cut the wire." Teal went to work. Parting wires tinkled like small bells. Sweat trickled into Kelly's left eye.

"There's one more. When I cut it, go."

The wire pinged and Kelly flopped free. He dove headfirst into the shallow hole. Teal slithered in beside him. Machine gun bullets spattered mud behind them.

Teal rubbed his forehead. "Well, Kelly, we're pinned. One gun is straight ahead. Another's over by that barn. We can stay here and get cut to pieces, or take out the guns."

There was silence. The distant din of battle continued, but this small bit of war had become quiet. "Let's get the guns, Sergeant."

"You go. I'll cover."

Kelly crawled to his left. Mud sucked at his arms, pulled him close like a lover. A bullet took his boot heel. Another ripped his pants, removed a patch of skin from his right buttock.

Teal fired. The Springfield bullet entered the German gunner's left eye, plowed through his brain, and exited through his coal-pot helmet.

Kelly flopped into the shell hole.

"Are you okay, Kelly?"

"Shot in the ass, Sergeant."

"Bad?" Teal persisted.

Kelly laughed. "Not even a medal's worth, Sergeant."

"Good. Have you got grenades?"

"Four."

"Now we get them to play tennis with us. You move; I move, back and forth. Got it?"

"Got it."

"Go."

Kelly went. Then Teal. Then Kelly. Kelly saw the flash of a muzzle as he flopped to his right. "Sergeant?"

"Yes, Kelly."

"It's to the left of the barn, open pit."

"Got it. My turn."

Two more rushes brought them within forty yards of the Spandau's muzzle.

Teal called, "It's my turn. You go. Get close enough to use your grenades."

Kelly pulled the pins from two grenades. Holding one in either hand, he shouted to Teal, "Ready."

"Wait, Kelly. They'll be expecting something after we shout."

A minute ticked by. Teal poked his gas mask above the rim of his hole. The Spandau gunner shredded it. "Go!"

Kelly leapt to his feet. The gun's conical muzzle swung toward him.

Teal rose, fired, worked the bolt of his weapon, steadied, fired again.

Kelly ran, stumbled and pitched forward. Bullets cut the air where his liver should have been.

Teal fired for the third time. The Spandau fell silent.

Kelly rose and ran again, ten yards, twenty. He released the grenade clamps and the fuses ignited. He counted to three and heaved the first grenade. He ran two more steps, threw the second and dropped.

The grenades exploded a second apart. Kelly leapt up. Teal, his service .45 in his right hand, was already running and reached the gun pit first. He fired three times. Then he stood staring, his automatic smoking in his hand.

Four machine gun bullets cut a diagonal path up across Teal's broad belly and chest. He fell without making a sound.

Kelly dropped to his knees and looked at Teal's outstretched body. The Germans had a third gun. He crawled to the southwest corner of the barn and looked around the corner.

The gunner lay not far from the barn's other corner, still looking at Teal.

Kelly pulled out a grenade, tugged the ring free, released the clamp, and counted to five. He pitched the grenade underhanded. It exploded almost before he'd ducked behind the barn. He loosened his Springfield's shoulder strap, lifted it free, stood and walked around the corner.

The stunned German lay across his light machine gun. Kelly saw golden fuzz on the boy's round, dirt-flecked cheeks. He raised the Springfield and fired a full clip, five rounds.

He walked toward Teal, not caring if Germans saw him. He had been fear's plaything, but fear had passed on. He knelt by Teal. There was little blood, only four ragged holes about three inches apart. The enormity of this death burst into him. Kelly swayed with the pain of it. Then for the first and last time he touched Teal.

Teal's eyes opened.

Kelly, shocked into stillness, recovered and began to lift his Sergeant.

"Don't move me." Teal's voice was hushed, as though it came from a great distance.

Kelly's hands fell to his knees.

"West for me."

Kelly nodded.

"Pocket." Teal forced his lips to move. "In pocket . . . letter . . . my wife. Please send it."

Kelly removed a folded paper from the blouse pocket.

Teal tried to speak again, but a gout of blood poured from his mouth. A look of surprise stole over his face as his head fell back.

Kelly stared at the suddenly transformed face. Teal had been his Sergeant, his friend, but now he was a stranger.

Kelly opened the paper and read, "Dear Stella." A nearly spent bullet struck his head at an angle above his right ear, failed to penetrate his skull, carved a path beneath his scalp and exited above his left ear. He fell senseless across Teal's chest. Teal's letter fluttered away from his open hand, lifted on an afternoon breeze, tumbled across shattered earth and nameless wreckage.

~~~

"He cut himself free with a razor blade." Betty shook her head. "Wonder where he got it?"

Max shrugged. "It doesn't matter." He looked down at Kelly. The old man lay as if asleep on a patch of grass. A breeze moved a few wisps of his hair.

Betty continued, "I wonder why he crawled out here?"

"It's nicer here than in there."
~~~

Betty did not answer.

"He brought his box." Max plucked the box off the grass opened it and poured its contents onto the grass - a jumble of tie tacks, cufflinks and old coins. He lifted a star-shaped medal free.

Betty leaned forward. "What's that?"

"A silver star, I think. It's old-fashioned."

"What's that mean?"

Max looked back at Kelly. "I was in Viet Nam - Quartermaster Corps, Da Nang. Saw a dead Kong once and heard a rocket or two."

"So?"

"I never killed anyone, never had to fire a weapon. I knew guys who did, though. It changed them. If this is a silver star, it means old Kelly was in a very bad place. And he killed."

Betty snorted, "He probably found it."

Max looked at the scar above Kelly's ear and shook his head. "Kelly reminded me of those guys I knew."

"How so?"

"Unfinished business."

Betty frowned. "What are you talking about?"

Max shrugged. "War's just brute stupid, but it keeps moving. It leaves these guys with things they couldn't do, things they should've done, things they want to do and can't: unfinished business. It eats at them. Forever."

Betty was silent for a moment. "There's something in his hand."

A paper fluttered in the morning air like a white butterfly. Max pulled it from between the old man's fingers.

"He wrote a note before he died? What does it say?"

Max unfolded the paper and read aloud, "Dear Stella . . ." He looked up. "That's all."

"Dear Stella?"

~ ~ ~

Robert Walton *of King City, California, says, "I happen to think that a vast number of the world's present woes spring from WWI and I would like to do my utmost to raise interest in and knowledge of that awful conflict." He is an award-winning novelist (see page 2).*

3rd PLACE
FICTION
SUITABLE MEMORIALS
By Anne Fox

When you get to be my age, when you've seen war and peace circle like a snake with its tail in its mouth, you wonder, what really changes?

Look at this town, this park—in so many places you see statuary of marble or bronze dedicated to our war dead. Like that black marble obelisk over there. It's from the first World War, the "Great" one H.G. Wells wrote of to end all war. It seems that no sooner does one memorial go up than it's time for another to be commissioned.

And who objects? Never mind that our young will be fighting again somewhere, and some of us haunt these park benches like ghosts of what has passed.

But see little Mrs. Chamberlain scurrying off there with her two loaded grocery sacks? A few minutes ago she called to me, excited, from across the playground. "Miss Benson, did you hear the marvelous news?"

She came rushing over to my bench, where I like to sit a bit in the twilight nowadays after I close the library.

"Oh, but of course, how could you know, here in the middle of the park without a phone?" Mrs. Chamberlain was out of breath. For the first time I noticed streaks of gray curling through her short hair. She sat down sideways on the bench and told me the war was over. She'd just seen breaking news on the grocery store TV. Peace had been declared. Her son Marlon would be on his way home soon.

I felt a sigh in my body for her, but I just nodded or shook my head as necessary, while she chattered on. How many years ago had she come to the library with her mother's weekly note asking for books? And Marlon, the same? Mrs. Chamberlain interrupted herself to gaze around the park. "Oh, how beautiful," she said.

The rays of the setting sun plated the edges of the dark memorial pillar, outlining it in gold. Mauve light veiled the park, an occurrence at this time of year when mist blows in off the lake.

"Well, I better hurry home to make dinner," she said. "Are you going to be here for the celebration?"

She bustled off. From a distance came the tooting of horns, the popping of firecrackers. Workmen entered the park, carrying wooden planks and toolboxes to be ready for tomorrow. Wars are quick to celebrate beginnings and endings.

I watched the silhouette of the obelisk darken further against the paling sky. The edge of false gold had disappeared. For me, the black marble shaft rose from the shadowed earth like the finger of judgment. Not for others, who would now feel relieved, maybe lighthearted. After all, except for a brief holding of breath, just time enough for committees around the world to vote for suitable memorials, everything would return to normal.

~ ~ ~

Anne Fox *of Oakland, California states: "I've always despaired about our celebration of war after the fact."*

1st PLACE
NON-FICTION
AN UNDECLARED WAR
By Faye Adams

The time was June, 1954. The temperature soared daily to three digits. Air conditioning was still an unrealized dream for most. The Korean Armistice had been in effect less than a year. Skirmishes along the 38th parallel were frequent. The uneasy truce between North and South Korea kept the border patrols on constant alert.

The U. S. Air Force wanted to be ready for any eventuality. My husband-to-be was stationed in Great Falls, Montana as part of a fast deployment wing, designed to be able to set up operations anywhere in the world in three weeks time. He had been in Montana for two years, with only a couple of furloughs under his belt.

We had been engaged for 18 months, with a tentative wedding date of September 3rd. He called near the end of June to say he would be in Japan during September and that the only airmen being granted leaves before the training mission to Japan were the ones with a death in their family or those who wanted to get married.

"Could we get married now?" he asked.

It had been 10 long months since his last leave and I didn't have the heart to say no.

~ ~ ~

Bill arrived in St. Louis on Sunday, July 4th. Monday being the official holiday, every public office was closed. Tuesday morning, we applied for the marriage license and obtained the required blood test. We had barely three days to purchase his suit, shirt, shoes and tie, plus my dress, shoes, hat, purse and gloves. We also had to shop for flowers and wedding rings, arrange for wedding attendants, and secure a preacher to perform the ceremony.

On Friday morning, we picked up the license, and were married Friday evening, July 9th. The flowers weren't delivered on time. We waited as long as possible. We left for the wedding without them. With family members in tow, we drove to Morse Mill to be married by Bill's uncle, Vernon Dodson, who served as Pastor of the Morse Mill Baptist church.

"With this "hurry-up" wedding, people will think you're pregnant," Mother said.

"Fat chance of that," I said. "We haven't clapped lips together in ten months!"

"Well, you know how people talk," she said.

"Let them talk. They'll soon find they're wrong, with no bun rising in the oven."

~ ~ ~

We had driven out of the city, and were traveling south on old Highway 21. Suddenly, a loud pop rent the air, and the car swerved.

"Rats!" my brother said. "All we need now is a flat, in this heat."

The temperature was l04. None of the cars had air conditioning. We were leading the caravan, because Bill was the only one who knew the way to Morse Mill. Those driving behind us could see what was happening, with one of our wheels thumping like a drum. We slowly pulled off the road, with the others pulling in behind us.

In the intense heat, it was impossible to stay in the car. We women stood on the shoulder of the two-lane highway, our backs toward the traffic. We were being peppered with debris flung from the wheels of cars whizzing past. The men removed their jackets, rolled up the sleeves of their white shirts, and changed the tire.

~ ~ ~

We arrived at the church an hour later than the time we had set for the wedding to begin. "This is awful, being an hour late for my own wedding," I said. "I hope this doesn't mean years of bad luck," I said.

We almost missed him. "I was getting ready to close the church, and go home," Uncle Vernon said. "I thought you two kids had changed your minds."

The ceremony took less than five minutes. *Is this legal? Surely, there's more to it than this!* I certainly didn't *feel* married.

After the long trip back to my parent's house in St. Louis, we had a quick reception of wedding cake and punch, then on to Arkansas in my brother's borrowed '53 Chevy to visit Bill's family. His parents and six siblings hadn't seen him in almost a year, and who knew what might happen to him on the other side of the world.

Ten days later, he was on his way to Japan, and I was back at my job as a clerk-typist in the stock transfer division of the trust department at Boatmen's Bank, downtown St. Louis. Four lonely months passed before I boarded a train in St. Louis for a 48-hour ride across our land to join my husband in Montana and begin our life together.

During our engagement, I had purchased cookware, dishes, etc. for my coming marriage, and the girls at work had given me a bridal shower a few days before the trip west. Mother packed a shoebox of food for me to carry on the train. I shipped only the bare essentials for cooking and housekeeping, leaving the rest of the gifts in boxes at Mom and Dad's.

~ ~ ~

Bill was waiting at the station in Great Falls. He had warned me about the wind, but it shocked me to find it so strong. If you didn't lean forward, you were blown backward, step by step. Both Bill and I had grown up in Arkansas, and Montana was about as far away from our home state as you could get, in weather, scenery, living conditions, and customs.

We lived off-base in a furnished apartment. Our first landlady pointed out to us that she'd had nurses renting the apartment who didn't bathe every day. She was distressed at the amount of hot water we were using. We moved to a new apartment at the end of the first month.

The Missouri river runs through Great Falls, in the opposite direction of its path in Missouri, is spring fed, and populated with Rainbow trout. Fishing was legal until sundown, and the sun hung in the sky until 9:00-9:30 PM. Some days, we fished for hours after work. Bill had one more year to serve, after which he didn't re-enlist, but that year in Montana proved to be an exciting year of visiting national treasures like Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks, and a summer camping vacation in Canada. We had a year-long, half-frozen, half-fabulous, un-planned honeymoon.

North by Northwest

We traded fields of cotton bolls for snows
so deep they swallowed house and car alike,
so cold a breath transformed to crystal ice,
so strong the air became as still as death.
A fur-lined boot or glove spared flimsy guard
as fingers, toes and nose began to pulse
in pain and foster hope to somehow dodge
or ease the winter's all-consuming freeze.

Yet skin and pores recalled a choking sun
and days of sweat beneath its cutthroat burn
through cotton rows, its never-ending bite
of white-hot scorch and physical malaise.

Northern peaks and speckled river trout
defeated weather's aim to drive us south.

In November of ’55, we loaded all our possessions in our ‘49 Chevy, including a bird cage with two parakeets, Jerry and Lady, and headed home. In Roundup, Montana, the Chevy died. We were stranded for three days, waiting for a part the local mechanic didn’t have in stock.

In St. Louis, we found work, rented furnished apartments until we could afford to buy three rooms of furniture. Then, an unfurnished apartment until we purchased our first two-bedroom house in St. Ann in 1960. But the memories of that first year in the Northwest stayed with us through the years of raising four children when we couldn’t afford to take expensive vacations.

~ ~ ~

We celebrated our 60th anniversary this year. In 2006, I won $100 for a short version of our “Wartime Wedding” story, which was published in our local newspaper, *The Leader*. In 2010, I wrote it in verse.

Wartime Wedding

You would've labeled it a shotgun wedding,
if you'd seen how we rushed it,
snagging the license on Friday morning
and exchanging vows that same evening.

No white dress, no people-packed pews,
simply a long drive in my brother's Chevy,
from St. Louis to Morse Mill, Missouri;
that July day burned into our memories
at a hundred four degrees, no A/C,
and a flat tire on the road to the church.

Uncle Vernon officiated
in a less-than-five-minute ceremony.
You mean that's it? Is this legal?
I certainly didn't feel married!

"They'll think you're pregnant,"
my mother said. No chance of that,
with our entire courtship advanced
solely through airmail letters.

He was marked for Japan,
courtesy of the U. S. Air Force.
Only death or instant wedlock
were valid pleas for allowing leave.

We hadn't clapped lips together in 10 months.
When he called, I said yes,
and we had the shotgun wedding,
without the gun.

~ ~ ~

Faye Adams *and her husband Billy are widely published poets from DeSoto, Missouri. Billy, a retired Baptist minister, recently served as President of Missouri State Poetry Society. Faye was 2010 and 2012 Missouri Senior Poet Laureate.*

2nd PLACE
NON-FICTION
ROBERT FROST ON THE GREAT WAR TO END ALL WARS
By Lynn Veach Sadler

Publication withheld at author’s request.

Lynn Veach Sadler*, Ph.D, Pittsboro, No. Carolina, is a former college president whose prolific writings include many pieces about war. Her full-length collection,* ***Brother, Can You Spare a War****, won the New England Poetry Club 2013 Contest.*

3rd PLACE
NON-FICTION
FUN AND GAMES
By Anthony Michael Villanueva

We ran, dove for cover, crawled, shot and killed all morning. To our good fortune, our neighborhood provided the perfect battleground with vast plots of tall grass and mounds of soothing dirt for good cover. Kid-deep depressions in the earth made ideal foxholes for me and my brothers to hunker low and hear bullets whiz overhead. When we got hit, we gave our best performance of falling dead. If we didn't like the first drop, we got up, took another hit and fell again until we got it right. A buddy would rush to our aid and yell, "Mac, Mac, you okay?" The guy hit always had the name "Mac."

During a lull in the battle, we nestled in the trampled grass under a warm, comforting sun and debated seriously for minutes on end about which army we were going to fight when we grew up—the Germans or the Japanese. Without question, we would be fighting someone. The family's history provided ample proof: our dad had fought the Germans, two uncles had fought the Japanese, and another uncle fought the Koreans. There would always be someone.

Our day-long battles slipped languorously into distant memories as we grew too old for such fun and games. The innocence of those make-believe fire-fights evaporated with time as the years marched on, taking us with them. The incorruptibility that had once been part of our youth would be replaced by the truths of real war. Truths like our father surviving a cold, bloody morning on June 6, 1944 when water spray, wet sand, and body parts rained down on him while streaming bullets desperately searched for him.

Fifteen days into being 20 years old he clambered ashore a beach designated as Omaha; at 6:45 in the morning the odds of there being day 16 seemed all too impossible. As a member of the 116th infantry he wore the blue and gray patch of the29th Army. Less than half of his unit made it past the bluffs and on to the roads leading into France; luckily, he had evaded Death's clutches that morning, it already had its arms full of unlucky souls. The 116th would be less than half again by the time they reached Germany, and not all by enemy hands.

One of his brothers also deployed from a landing craft, but on the other side of the world, splashing into a different ocean—the Pacific. That brother would wear a mask of many a surgeon's best attempt to make a new face; a Japanese hand grenade wiped away his handsome, original face. We used to scatter from him, like insects from under an upturned rock; as kids we didn't know better. Nobody told us.

Nobody told us. . .

Another brother survived unscathed and came home intact from New Guinea. Years later yet another brother would go to war. He spent most of his war behind barbed wire as a POW, sometimes in a small box for stealing anything green to add to his rotten rice. Like my father and the other brothers, he didn't speak of his war experiences either, even though the Korean conflict wasn't officially a war but rather a "police action."

My brothers and I learned the ugly truths about war from our well-seasoned family experts by the time Viet Nam arrived on scene. As luck would have it, I got as far as Japan. The people I found there could not have been of the same people who had grotesquely disfigured my uncle. I prayed they wouldn't see me as one of the same foreigners who had disfigured their people of Hiroshima.

One brother served in the Tonkin Gulf in a gun turret aboard a Navy cruiser, firing on an unseen enemy inland. A harness tethered another brother to a doorway in a helicopter gunship, his horrible gun turning other humans into red mists and flying body parts. His stories and his alcohol made for stinking, ugly company when he came home.

The youngest brother served much later aboard ship in the Persian Gulf during the time of the USS Stark incident.

After my enlistment and some GI Bill education, I returned to active duty, but with bars and a bit more responsibility on my shoulders.

Those who send young men to war found other conflicts to be resolved. They gave them impressive names like *Operation Just Cause* and *Desert Storm*. They did it, I'm sure, just to give me the opportunity to hone my new acquired skills—combat casualty care, in the form of anesthesia. I assumed my new-found duties and rendered care to yet another generation of wounded warriors. The pride and excitement of it all waned as age tapped me on the shoulder to make me take a closer look—the wounded seemed all so young.

Those young kids made me think of my father-in-law who, as a medic, provided aid and care to wounded soldiers on that hellish nightmare of a beach, Omaha, that D-Day morning, 1944. He and my father didn't know each other then. They were just two of the many thousands making history that day, each doing the job they were trained to do: one to kill; one to save; both to survive. Abel didn't have to be there, he served a country that promised him citizenship if he would join battle for a cause. He could have gone to Mexico and sat it out; but he didn't. He survived the war, but not his cancer.

When my brothers and I fought our pitch neighborhood battles as kids, we didn't know that there had already been a great war to end all wars. Again, nobody told us. We were just carrying on the family tradition as we knew it.

Now, as veterans of childhood combat (and more), our aches and pains remind us we're way too old for war games. My ailments are time-related. One brother's maladies are Agent Orange related. The other brother . . . well, he no longer hurts; his alcohol did what a crashing helicopter couldn't do. The youngest brother sailed the world and came home with fun stories—and silly tattoos.

On a day like today, when the trees are decorated in crisp reds, oranges and flashing yellows, the remnants of those childhood battles are but a daydream and deep sigh away. It was all fun and games, until—

~ ~ ~

Anthony Michael Villanueva, Maj. USAF (Ret.,) *lives in Folsom, California. He is from a family of veterans. He gave twenty-two years, two months and nine days in service to this country. He is a graduate of George Washington University, Washington, D.C., with a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing Anesthesia. Now retired from both military and civilian practice, he spends his time "learning a new craft—writing."*

1st PLACE
RHYMED POEM
A BALLADE FOR THE MAGIC OF *WHOA!*
By Larry Hand

The Saigon soldier yelled the magic word,
Perhaps the only English word he knew.
His *Whoa!* was what we all distinctly heard,
And yet the truck rolled on across the dew.
Beyond the road it bounced along, down through
The shallow ditch awash in putrid muck
While we could only laugh and say, adieu,
Because it's hard to stop a wayward truck.

Our little group of passers-by concurred:
This driver did not know the thing to do –
Just use the brake! But, like a mocking bird,
He echoed what his ears believed was true:
He called out *Whoa!* repeatedly, in lieu
Of actions that could change his comic luck.
A screaming U.S. sergeant's face turned blue.
Not even he could stop that wayward truck.

But then an act of providence occurred;
The truck soon found a swamp that held like glue.
The runaway bogged down, its wheels interred,
While way back home, the magic word still grew:
Cry *Whoa!* they said, let's make all wars taboo.
But when the bells of war are raised and struck,
The word is faint within the loud ado.
No one back home could stop that wayward truck.

Sometimes, my friend, we fight but can't subdue;
We roll along until we just get stuck.
And then one day we're yelling *Whoa!* anew.
It seems we'll never stop a wayward truck.

~ ~ ~

LARRY HAND *of Woodstock, Georgia is a Vietnam War veteran who served as an information specialist in the U. S. Air Force .and was a S/Sgt at the end of his 4-year tour. Now retired as a corporate communications specialist in Atlanta, he is author of the 2001 novel WHISKERS ON PINE and, since 2004, has won more than 50 awards for his poetry.*

1st PLACE
UNRHYMED POEM

ANY WALL WILL DO

By Irvin D. Milowe

The U.S. Postal Service issued a wide variety of "Kilroy Was Here" stamps honoring the mystery man whose long-nosed logo spread around the world during World War Two to symbolize presence of the U.S. military. Some believe he was 21-year old Sgt. Francis Kilroy of Everett, Mass., who left his message on a hospital bulletin board early in the war.

"One, two, three, four, we won't fight your fuckin' war,"
the No-Nammers chanted down Constitution Avenue,
along the barricade of buses vectoring their march
up Pennsylvania Avenue,
away from the White House lawn and L.B.J.

But Kilroy never scrawled "Fuck" or Flee to "Sweden"
on any wall under his logo throughout World War II.
His graffiti wasn't a protest against that war,
but the signature of voluntary submerged selves,
under and reminding the chains of command,
"I'm still here; I see, Big Brass, how you too
booby-trap the underside of your cot with snot.
I'll take your orders just to win this war,
But then I'll phoenix back as you undress from first looey
to auto mechanic, and I'll stand in front of my wall
and give the final salute with my middle finger.

So tear out my logo, and my long-nose picture.
Fold it away, save it: the right war or president
will come along again someday.
You might use it then, even if you're not a poet.

~ ~ ~

***Irvin D. Milowe**, MD,DLFAPA, DIPA of Coconut Grove, Florida is a professor of psychiatry actively treating PTSD in "Wounded Warriors" back from Iraq and Afghanistan for free. He previously Chaired Departments of Psychiatry in the HEW Bldg. in Washington, D. C. and helped create a Peace Information Center for all uniformed services in Seattle, as the World's Fair wanted nothing about Atomic Bombs on the grounds.*

Kilroy: (provided by Irvin D. Milow)
"Poets should have no political causes." – Miloscz
"Kilroy went AWOL in Vietnam." – Eugene McCarthy
"Kilroy probably comes from Kill+Roi, kill the king, the Oedipal father." – some Freudian

2nd PLACE
UNRHYMED POEM

COMFORT WOMEN

By Maurine Killough

Comfort women (ianfu) were young women, even girls, often tricked or kidnapped by the Japanese military during WWII. They were brought to what were called "comfort stations" and forced into prostitution to serve the soldiers. Most of these women came from Korea, China, Burma and other Japanese-occupied countries.

i am comfort to them
mad, frenzied soldiers
uniforms lined up out the door
and i will know them one by one
day and night
i break apart in myself until i cannot feel
the tortured hyena mouths tear at my chest
i cut myself into bits to blind myself from the horror
the shame
that this is a comfort to them
tricked away from my village
my stick legs squatting in the dirt
playing pebble games with my brother
dirty knees and toothy grin so shy when they ask my name
so nice, they were so nice that day
until they brought me here
and ripped away the right to my own body
my fate
my sin for being a girl, a comfort to them

I shut my eye to the brutes, the hits and filthy hands
syringe of medicine for oozing infections
from the dirty doctor who i am forced to comfort too
there is no comfort to offer dead hearts enlisted in misery
and there is no tenderness for my own heart
long ago flattened and left for dead
hibiscus flower cut
set on the hot sidewalk to shrivel in the scorching sun
burning, like my insides
so i will recess far inward to keep the truth from rising
endure this comfort station as a palace of hell
i shrivel like a pink blossom plucked from its vine
shrink to know that these blisters will brand my life forever
delicate petals, scarred and left to wither on the hot road
under a mean sun
that will never, ever set

~ ~ ~

***Maurine Killough** of San Mateo, California is inspired by life stories of frailty and the existential experience of being alive. Visit her blog: iwritemyself.wordpress.com.*

2nd PLACE
RHYMED POEM
I DIDN'T WANT TO DIE THIS WAY
By Norma J. Pyle

The guns are shelling all around,
Starved bodies lying on the ground.
The smell of fear hangs in the sky.
Too many now have had to die.

My friend's blood seeps into the dirt.
I knew not how a heart could hurt.
Beside me stands a man half dead,
a bullet blast into his head.

What kept him going and moving still
could only be determined will.
The cries of pain now fill the air;
the wake of death is everywhere.

I think of God and Christ a lot;
Out here they're often all you've got.
We all have tried to seek their aid.
So many times we all have prayed.

I know my life will soon be through.
My mother dear, I think of you.
I see your face as clear as day.
I wish that I could always stay.
My fourteen years ebb fast away.
I didn't want to die this way.

~~~~~

Norma J. Pyle, *award-winning poet from Springfield, Missouri, has written many Civil War and Holocaust poems.*

3rd PLACE
UNRHYMED POEM
GRATITUDE FROM FOREIGN SOIL
By Zee Mink-Fuller

A box arrived from home today.
The cookies were in pieces, but I don't mind.
I shared the chocolate chip shards with
my bunk mates. We laughed, the
chocolate covered our fingers.
We'll save some for later.
I am grateful for anything from home.
Cookies, magazines, books, candy
and especially letters with photos.
These make life a bit more bearable.
Knowing someone who cares, packed these
treasures with love and hope.
Every day the sun's daily blast of heat
covers me in sweat.
My dried rationed breakfast
knots in my stomach.
Unfamiliar dirt clings to my boots.
I march on, dedicated to duty.
Heavy gear, an armor of sorts,
rests on my twenty something
shoulders and back;
making my walk
a difficult constant chore.
Hard to keep eyes
aware of the enemy when
a metal cage sits square
on the head of a dreamer.
I shouldn't complain.
These necessary tools
Of supposed safety
shield me from another's aim.
I am a weary soldier at the end of the day.
Thankful for the box from home
which awaits.
Sharing, once again
with my buddies.
The photo of my best gal,
smiling just for me, with eyes
of loneliness, I will
keep for myself.

~ ~ ~

Zee Mink-Fuller*, Burleson, Texas, lives on a few rural acres. She had personal painful experiences with the Vietnam War which remain in her heart. She says, "I am always looking for the cast-off I can make into a funky piece of art. Always thinking, always writing, I am a Junk Gypsy by trade."*
~~~~~

3rd PLACE
RHYMED POEM

HOME OF THE BRAVE

By Raymond Reininger

INTRODUCTION: **THE WOUNDS OF WAR ARE NOT ALWAYS EASY TO SEE**

You are a different me, not the one that is hurting. At times, you don't understand me, but that's all right. That is my doing. I choose not to share all my feelings, feelings I don't fully understand. I constantly fight a war and pain deep inside me. There is guilt for coming home almost whole, there is guilt for those who never came home, and for hiding all I saw. Please don't judge me harshly. I'm doing the best I can at the speed I feel safe at. There is a price to be paid for growing up too quickly. I have no regrets; I love my country as much now as I did back then. Now I have to learn to love myself again. No one is in any danger in my presence. Actually we, the walking wounded, are more likely to defend you even at the risk to our own lives. **Raymond Reininger**

~ ~ ~

Raymond Reininger, *disabled Vietnam veteran, suffers from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and memory loss from a head wound. He began writing poetry as therapy. He says: "I am still a work in progress. I have defeated the individual who caused me the most pain—the man who kicked and spit on me when I returned home in uniform. . ." He lives in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, near his two daughters.*

A lonely soldier fought back his fear.
He knew around the next building death would be near.
He called on his training to keep him alive.
With his buddies beside him, he may just survive.

He reached for his cross that hung on his neck,
All the time knowing it wasn't military spec.
He needed his God more than ever before;
Up ahead were buried the deadly Claymore.

He scanned all the buildings for a sniper that hid;.
It was now his job to scout and to rid.
A foot soldier was he, with a pack on his back.
What was feared most was enemy's bushwhack.

The sniper was spotted and soon was destroyed.
An Iraqi with an infant seemed to be annoyed.
Having Christian upbringing, he rushed to keep her calm.
Suddenly these fine soldiers realized the baby was a bomb.

For helping a country that is so full of strife,
These five caring soldiers just gave their life.
Five mothers will cry when they get the news,
And another five soldiers will soon fill their shoes.

The cross was found and the dog tags intact.
They were put in a package; that's what was sent back.
Has life no meaning to these people at all?
And for fighting and caring, how many more soldiers will fall?

Send our soldiers home and let the Iraqis rule.
Their lives are marked with death, and we're not their tool.