



Fine lines

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EDITED BY

David Martin

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~ Autumn 2019 ~

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Knowing Thy Fathers

DESHAE E. LOTT

I.

John Fitzgerald

May 29, 1917–November 23, 1963

November 25, 1963

The masses march in their white shirts and dark ties
numbed by the drum thrum thrum.

The mother motions,
and the toddler salutes
with the men around him.

And he doesn't understand —
as the horses plod in step
and the wagon rolls on
and the flag rolls on
and the coffin rolls on —
that he'll never know
his father.

II.

George William

May 27, 1927–August 31, 1951

Between the white wooden pier and beam house
and the alley before the levy,
Alton tended his Louisiana
garden, grape vines, and bee hives
as he learned to do as an Alabama farm boy.

Indoors he listened to the radio's
South Korean war news
for hints on the status of a younger brother,

a First Lieutenant in the 15th Artillery Battalion, 2nd Infantry
Division.

The telegram came years before the remains:
Willie's daughter
would never know
her father,
prisoner of war.

III.

Alton Richard
June 4, 1918–September 16, 1973
Nearly seven decades later
hands muddied
by turnips newly unearthed,
Alton's son recalls his six-year-old days
when the radio broadcasts and
the telegram and the funeral were among
what mattered to his dad.

The echo of the losses resounded:

Father...

Brother... Uncle...

Father....

all too swift to the grave.

Alton Sr.'s transplanted roots
held fast and yielded fresh harvests
tended by his son, my father.

Year after year,
Alton Jr. erected memorials

Father...

Brother... Uncle...

Father....

bequeathing the paternal line's
love of the land and
passions for hunting and fishing.

New Red River property
reverberates
the Alabama farm names:
duck blinds known as
Trade, Craven Hole, Middle Hole, and Bluff Hole.
And the names of deer stands there
announce the legacy:
Josie and Si.



*“I love the freedom of my wings.
I love the empty space above the ground.
I rejoice in my freedom.
Freedom is my religion.
Peace is my God.
Love is my worship.”*

BANANI RAY

WORLD PEACE: THE VOICE OF A MOUNTAIN BIRD



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