

“504th Parachute Infantry 82nd Airborne 3rd Platoon Hill 1205”

by Juleigh Howard-Hobson

-For the Master Termite: John J. Parsons, my great uncle, KIA Christmas Day 1943

And they throw around numbers like they are
What matters. How many men deployed. What
Divisions. Which Squads. When. Coordinates where
The battles took place. Numbering each spot.
But enumerations articulate
Nothing of the war that you knew. Nothing
Of the freezing cold, the hunger, the state
Of numbing destiny you fought knowing
Most of you would die, if not in battle
Then—*oh Jesus*—in agony after it
When men would crumple up like metal
Buckled in on itself: insects who stir
Bloody dust and die small deaths in shattered
Places. *Merry Christmas*. Numbers mattered.

Juleigh Howard-Hobson’s work has appeared in many places, including *Think Journal*, *Able Muse*, *Third Wednesday*, *War, Literature, & The Arts*, *Consequence*, *The Lyric*, and *So It Goes: The Literary Journal of the Kurt Vonnegut Museum & Library*. She is a Million Writers “Notable Writer” and has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize, the Best of the Net, the Rhysling and an Elgin; her most recent book is the Elgin nominated *Our Otherworld* (Red Salon Press). Her great uncle, John Parsons, was The Master Termite – immortalized in the World War II classic *Those Devils in Baggy Pants* by Ross Carter.