

The Last Post

by Robert Grandstaff

In the darkest night, in the pouring rain, a lost Doughboy, drenched and weary, will not complain.

Wearing mud covers boots, not fit for war, plodding along one miserable step at a time. He searches for his last post.

Bombs and thunder roll together, matching fury one for one. Through mustard, gas hues and pouring rain, fires in the distance forever remain.

Amidst churned-up mud, and twisted wire, illuminated by lightning. He searches for the last post.

He's always hungry, always fatigued, meals and sleep promised but seldom guaranteed. Walking alone he struggles through the night. A final journey, a final fight.

An ambulance approaches from far behind, the driver seeks to help, he doesn't mind.

Around craters, looking for the dead, he combs the battlefield for miles ahead.

An ancient volunteer, weathering the storm, jostled by rutted roads always the norm.

Gray hair, gray skin, gray eyes, searching in the night he sees a soldier all alone

Drawing near, he calls, "Headed to the post? Climb in the back. I've been there before."

Head down, body swaying side to side, the Doughboy closes his eyes to dream fitful dreams.

The last post is in sight, the journey near done. A shack, small and twisted on all sides. This is the one.

The roof without a chimney, the windows without glass, the door offset by several blasts.

"You're here now." The driver shouts. Slow and weary the passenger climbed out.

The Doughboy walks through the rain and opens the door. Looking around at the empty floor.

Ducking low, he steps inside, no light, no heat, but he's found his last post.

Leaning against the wall, he sits on the ground, rifle beside him as he closes his eyes.

He dreams of the soldiers who've been here before; he sees visions of the soldiers forever more.

He isn't the first here; this place has a past. He fought a war that left him behind at a post called the last.

The rain falls heavy on the roof above, he's never dry, he's under fed, he's never rested, he's almost dead.

Alone with his memories, alone with his nightmares, often alone saying his prayers.

He'll sit there through the night until his watch is over, and when he's relieved, they'll ship him home.

When the rain stops, when the clouds blow by, when fires die down and all is tranquility. Men will wrap his body in an honorable shroud. His ultimate resting place is God's half-mile.

The last post is never empty. There will always be another, family, friend, father, brother.

Searching for the last post.

Robert Grandstaff was born in Ohio and joined the USAF at twenty-three, then served fifteen years between Active Duty and Air National Guard. Served two deployments to Iraq 2003-2005 and Kuwait 2007. Medically retired after fifteen years and started working on a lifelong dream of writing. Currently works in management at Ohio State University and lives with his wife. The father of four, now adult, children and two dogs. "The Last Post" is the only poem written so far, while attention is focused on writing short stories and books. Check out the author's website at robertgrandstaffhomepage.com