

“The Sentinels”

by James J. Kimble

We dug our foxhole at dusk.
The soil was sand-filled and soft,
our labor rhythmic and rapid.
Only the cicadas saw us settle in.

Drill Sergeant Smith was out there.
We could feel him lurking in the darkness,
plotting his tactical approach.
He was waiting for us to let our guard down.

But the starry night invited reflection,
a rare respite from the turmoil of training.
Leather, cadence, reveille, and smoke—
all were dismissed in our tranquil cocoon.

At dawn, we were still deep into sleep.
The night attack had unfolded elsewhere.
We'd been left to dream of loved ones far away
from our shallow refuge in the dirt.

Before pursuing a career in higher education, **James J. Kimble** held jobs ranging from frozen vegetable packing to assembling bicycles to teaching debate skills in Kansas. As Professor of Communication & the Arts at Seton Hall University, he is now a propaganda historian, documentarian, journal editor, exhibition curator, and Fulbright scholar (personal website: jamesjkimble.com). This poem draws on his 1987 basic training as a National Guardsman at Fort Dix, New Jersey.