

“After the War”

by Phil Carson

He doesn't come home at night
To return, or to stay and weep,
He doesn't talk about the war.

Tributes to forgotten friends,
Remembered as they stood.
He doesn't come home at night.

Old No. 7 to quiet the tongue.
Names spoken and lost spirits found,
He won't talk about the war.

Cheers to all and cheers to none.
To remember is to forget every single one,
He salutes those who never came back.

Fruit of the summer on the ground—splayed ...
Betrayed again and again by the season's end,
He doesn't come home at night.

A dime or quarter and no one to talk to.
Silence—pay phones are a thing of the past.
He keeps secrets about the war.

Formalities on a frigid December mourn,
Twenty-one guns and a flag to keep,
Tonight Daddy won't come home.
Daddy kept a secret about his war.

Phil Carson lives in Eugene Oregon with his wife, two German Shepherd Dogs, and a Siamese. Phil enlisted in the Navy in 1974, and after his active duty he served in the US Navy Reserves until 2008. This poem was written during his attendance at Eastern Oregon University Department of Creative Writing.