

# “CH-47 OEF”

by Earl Weigelt

Should something called “aircraft” resemble a hippo?  
Or maybe a buffalo, perhaps a rhino?  
Great bulbous goggle-eyed flying machine  
that snarls and whumps and clatters and claps  
tilling the sky to the tucked-away places?

Death-dealers poking out proudly through hatches,  
swiveled and belt-fed and eager to chatter  
a hot stream of .30-cal Doom and Destruction  
on menace-bent Taliban lurking below.  
Inscrutable, shade-helmeted, silent hard men  
solidly planted and straddling door-guns  
tethered and head-setted, all primed for action,  
half hoping (half not) to lock on a target  
below or “Right there!” or even above  
up in those crags, proned-out on the rocks.

Of course there’s that high-pitched, incessant whine  
and that churning vibration and rattle and hum  
that unnerves the newcomer but rocks old salt to sleep  
wedged-in with cargo, IBA’d, ACH’d;  
with headphones and chew bottle and Scooby Snack bag,  
rucksack and Camelback, Gerber and IFAK.

And that smell—no, *aroma*—  
of fuel and exhaust, of hot metal and gunsmoke!  
It fills up the bay, made stronger by heat,  
rides desert dust and clings to your face.  
It stays with you later—it visits that dream  
where in a Chinook those mountains loom large,  
the ground slipping below  
and she banks, then she levels and plops on the deck  
at Mizan or Baylough, Dey Chopan or at Lane.

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**Earl Weigelt** grew up in Jackman, Maine and came to love the woods and waters of the North Country early. With family ties to service running deep, he answered a call to ministry right out of high school. Over the years he served as a youth pastor, summer camp director, educator and administrator at a small Christian school, served as a reserve police officer, and entered the US Army as a Chaplain in 2004. Having majored in religion and literature in college and holding a Doctor of Ministry in homiletics from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, he has always had an affinity for poetry, but really turned to it as a means of expression during and since a deployment to Kandahar, AFG for OEF 09-10. While much of his poetry comes out of his experiences in the outdoors, a good deal of his work has been inspired by his time in the military. Some of his poems have been featured in *The Smoking Poet*, *The Aputamkan Review*, and *Goose River Anthology*. He lives in Winslow, Maine with his wife Carol and serves as State Chaplain for the Maine National Guard. His son's family resides in Harmony, Maine and his parents still live in Jackman.