

# Witt

by Rebecca Faber

*for Brian*

i.

In a small country cemetery  
the breeze makes quiet waves through the line of flags  
and I find it comforting,  
something I can focus on during the graveside service.

The eulogy begins.  
I learn about a man who survived  
more than three years as a Japanese POW,  
remarks given by his son who served in Vietnam.  
The intricately folded flag will be given to his grandson  
who served in Iraq.

Without warning, my tears start  
(and I am a woman who no longer cries)  
so I focus on the POW/MIA flag,  
its black and white a stark contrast to the sun,  
the green grass,  
and the other flags.

ii.

*If only we could have a Lazarus miracle,  
I would bring father, son, and grandson to my home  
to feed them roast beef, mashed potatoes,  
and a good brown gravy—  
because that's how we feed heroes here—  
and I would sit in the corner  
and listen to the three of them talk—  
even let them curse at my table—  
to learn from them what I can never know.*

iii.

The eulogy ends.  
The silhouette on the POW/MIA flag

continues to wave at me.

Across the road three horses graze.  
A pickup drives down the gravel road,  
a cloud of dust following it,  
a reminder that eventually dust will cover  
even the bravest of us.

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**Becky Faber** is the daughter of an Army veteran (World War II) and the sister of an Army veteran (Vietnam era). She is the author of *One Small Photo*, a collection of 17 poems and one short story with military themes. Published in 2017, the book was developed to help raise awareness of the veteran suicide rate. Becky is retired from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She remains active in writing activities, including occasional presentations for the local Warrior Writers group. Becky holds a PhD in English. She has received the Mari Sandoz Award and the Mildred Bennett Award for her contributions to literature in Nebraska.