

# Lost Photos

by Shay Wills

I found your Vietnam photos

    You said were lost.

        Sun-pale aerial shots

Of Vietnam with jungles

    Cancer gray,

        Muddy roads queasy purple,

And sky as white bone.

    No wonder we lost,

        The land we pictured

Was wrong.

    Our nation did not

        Understand color.

A half huddle of manly boys

    (boyish men?)

        Back from prepping LZs

With their faces and the air

    That haloed them

        Reddish brown

By muck

    Not of the country

        But of the mission

The call of duty

    Staining your young souls

        Too deep to ever unmark.

A blue hulled freighter in a bay

    Below hills lifting the sky

        Away, extending

Angels farther from your tents.

    Dear Johns

        Became invitations to immolations.

That time your crew

    Threw chickens

        From your Huey

To see if they flew,

Rotor-wash thwapped them earthward  
To a death you knew would be.

The flotilla of Hueys  
Like giant beetles  
Beat their way to their base of red clay

Riddled by invisible holes  
Maybe cameras  
Weren't good enough to spot,

Or maybe  
Cameras see only  
What viewers want to see.

I threw the photos  
All away  
For my memory to recollect.

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An army brat, **Shay Wills** graduated from the University of Arizona with a BA in English and Creative Writing. He, with his spouse and son, live in Tucson, Arizona, near his two older children. Recently, he followed a different passion, earned his MS, and works as a mental health counselor. He has poetry appearing in *The Abstract Elephant*, *Hive Journal*, *Wingless Dreamer*, and *The Closed Eye Open* among others.