Poem #1

**MY SON**

They stole him from me to send him off to war,  
and there he stayed to fight and die till it was done.  
It’s bad when governments steal sons from you,   
and he was by son.  
They said this war had to be fought  
And that it was for a just and noble cause.  
So, since I was patriotic and voted for them,   
I stood by their laws.  
But it always seems to be the young who go  
And against whom the scales of death are swung.  
It's bad when governments send young men off to die,  
And my son was young.

For what matters to them of a million deaths  
When war is the tender of life they promote?  
You can be sure when their reelection comes up,  
They won’t get by vote!  
For the enemy is now my chosen leader,  
The enemy called peace that all governments abhor!  
And you can be sure they won’t get any more of my sons,  
Till they end all war.  
Oh they may think they can get away with murder  
and do any damn thing they feel must be done,  
but they won’t take what I love away from me again,  
And I loved by son.

By: Patrick P. Stafford

Poem #2

# THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

What do you do when the hands of justice are unjust,   
  if not for your country,then who can you trust?   
  An innocent young man answered the call to war,   
  and the course of his life was changed from before.   
  the soldier was grateful that he was alive,   
  unlike those poor boys that didn't survive.   
 But the agony of war soon turned to disgrace,   
  as he came home to protesters that spit in his face.   
 His patriotism dashed,his new hope would fall,   
  as "baby killer" he heard his country men call.   
  He grew his hair long, wanting to blend in and hide,   
  and spoke not a word as he kept the torment inside.   
  searching for anything to help ease his pain,   
  but found all his attempts wound up in vein.   
 Then the injustice grew, that wasn't it,   
  he was imprisoned for a crime that he didn't commit.   
 His weakened state weakened as he was given the blame,   
  tired from fighting and forced to surrender his name.   
 They all knew he was innocent but someone must pay,   
  it didn't matter the wrong person would be locked away.   
  but he was not even freed upon his release,   
  the war was not over, he had not found peace.   
 Trying his hardest to forget what he can,   
  a prisoner of war, of conscience, of man,   
  unable to turn back the hands of injustice or time,   
  as the country he loved had committed the crime.   
 They'll never repay, the price freedom cost,   
 or give this man back, the life that he lost.

By:   C.W.

Poem #3

**A Piece of Sky Without Bombs**

Your friends said that you, a roadbuilder,  
had such love for our country, you rushed  
down the trail that night, waving your torch  
to save the convoy, calling the bombs down on yourself.

We passed by the spot where you died,  
tried to picture the young girl you once had been.  
We pitched stones up on the barren grave,  
adding our love to a rising pile of stone.

I gaze into the center of the crater  
where you died and saw the sky in the pool  
of rain water. Our country is so kind:  
water from the sky washes the pain away.

Now you rest deep in the ground,  
quiet as the sky that rests in the crater.  
At night your soul pours down,  
bright as the stars.

I wonder, could it be your soft skin  
changed into columns of white clouds?  
Could it be that when we passed that day,  
it was not the sun but your heart breaking through?

This jungle trail now bears your name;  
the skies reach down to your death and touch it;  
and we, who never saw your face,  
each wear a trace of you, bright on our cheek.

By: Lam Thi My Da

(Translated by Ngo Vinh Hai and Kevin Bowen)

Poem #4

# Tran Thi My Nhung

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **A Vietnamese Bidding Farewell to the Remains of an American**  Was your plane on fire, or did you die of bullet wounds, or fall down exhausted?  Just so you died in the forest, alone.  Only the two of us, a woodcutter and his wife,  dug this grave for you, burned joss sticks, prayed for you to rest in peace.  How could we know there’d be such a meeting, you and I, once separated by an ocean, by the color of our skin, by language? But destiny bound our lives together.  And today, by destiny’s grace, you are finally going home.  I believe your American sky is as blue as the sky above this country  where you’ve rested twenty years.  Is it too late to love each other? Between us now, the ocean seems so small.  How close are our two continents.  I wish a tranquil heaven for your soul, gemmed with twinkling stars and shining moon. May you rest forever in the soil of your home.  [From the original Vietnamese poem by Tran Thi My Nhung, translated by Phan Thao Chi and adapted by W. D. Ehrhart.] |