

# New Poetry from Frank Blake



Poet Frank Blake during his Army service.

## **We came home**

And had nothing to do and nowhere to go and too much freedom  
and money and space and women and cars and booze.

No more mission

Like a marathon runner collapsed at the end of a race and  
across the finish line and not really sure how to stop running  
or what to do next.



We missed each other

These other humans didn't get it and had never been in that  
place where it was not fun but we had fun anyway because we  
had the love of combat brothers

We were bored

Because no matter what, nothing we would do in a week back  
home was even close to being the team with unlimited  
government funding using state of the art weapon technology

And none of us yearn for combat

But we do wish we could go back to a time where our actions  
mattered and our friends were nearby and we all had a great  
goddamn adventure ahead of us.

And now we know

That "in our youth our hearts were touched with fire" and that  
everything that comes next will probably suck in comparison

because life needs us to be paying cable bills and walking dogs

And it's hard

To find meaning in things of little consequence when we learned so early on that the world is big and scary and violent and can be filled with acts of valor and sacrifice and hate and love.

So our only option

Is to live such a great and full life of found meaning in meaningless tasks as to make the sacrifices of those who didn't come home and don't get to walk the dog all worth it.

So we try

To draw as much life out of life and to execute a new mission of a great and purposeful existence

Because not all of us can

Because some didn't make it back.

## **Tracer**

There is one round among many  
Painted with that iridescent color of night time illumination  
Designed to mark the path  
Of bullets flight in jet black fear fueled midnight battles

Zips towards the enemy  
A laser of lead and anger

Ricochet path betrayed by a bright glow

The rule is

That for every one you see

There are many more you don't

Just like the veterans suffering back home years later  
We can see one every so often  
Glowing in pain

Tracing the path of alcohol fueled rage and family splits and  
no jobs and hard times fitting in

But we all know  
For the one we see  
There are lots more



## **Descent**

On the escalator at the airport

I saw a young man headed down as I was moving up

He wore that same familiar ripstop nylon rucksack that I knew  
all too well

It had patches from his units and friends and adventures

It had the same contents as mine

He carried in it lots of sadness for the friends he had lost

And guilt that he had made it back

And fear for what to do next

And memories of things he should not have done

And dreams of little girls dying

And lessons about leadership

And instincts to make his bed

And tears from current day family strife

And resumes to find new jobs

And drinks for when times get hard

And pills from the doctors

But it wasn't his rucksack that made me know he was a combat  
veteran

It was the knowing dead look in his eyes that gazed right past  
me and through me at the same time in that one brief moment  
where our missions intersected.