

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

*Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair,
Maine Poet Laureate*

It is the time of year when we honor the men and women who have served our country during conflict. In this poem, Bruce Guernsey of Bethel relates the story of a haunted war veteran.

Night Patrol

by Bruce Guernsey

My father never slept real well after the war
and as my mother tells, he woke in fear
so deep, so far away, he seemed to stare
straight out at nothing she could see or hear.

Or worse – she wraps her robe around her, remembering-
he'd sit there grinning, bolt upright beside her,
this mad look on his face, the bed springs quivering
with some hilarity the night had whispered.

And once, “He did this, your father, I swear he did –
he must have been still dreaming, rest his soul –
he tried to close my frightened eyes, my lids,
to thumb them shut like he was on patrol

the way he'd learned so they would sleep, the dead.
And then he blessed himself and bowed his head.”

Take Heart: A Conversation in Poetry is produced in collaboration with the Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance. Poem copyright © 2004 by Water Press & Media. Reprinted from “The Lost Brigade,” Water Press & Media, 2004, by permission of Water Press & Media. Questions about submitting to Take Heart may be directed to David Turner, Special Assistant to the Maine Poet Laureate, at 207-228-8263 or poetlaureate@mainewriters.org.