

Welcome Home?

David F. Freschi

“Freedom Bird” gleaming

Blurring in tropic sun and silver tarmac

Jungle stink and paddy must still

In our pores, in our sweat

Boarding- excited and subdued

First stop, Okinawa, confusion

Dump you gear, make it legal

Back on the bird

Into an endless sky

No horizon to see

Till San Diego, sunny, America

Nerves fill the plane, touchable, fragrant

28 hours from death

To milkshakes, burgers, and “round-eyes”

“Here’s your barrack assignments-

You’re confined to base- they

Don’t like you out there.” Huh?

3 weeks later, a flight

New York and then home

Plane is cold, still in summer khaki

Excitement building, can’t sit still, pacing

“Sir, you’ll have to sit- you’re making passengers nervous.”

Sorry, sorry, happy is scary?

JFK- Thrust into the crowd, hostile stares

Confusion, how to get home?

The tears push forward, paralysis hits

“Hey Doc, where ya need to go? We

Take care of our corpsmen. My limo, right outside

You're safe, You're safe. I've been there."

Finally, home, the excitement dulls

"Don't talk about it, you don't want to."

I don't?

Visit Mom and Dad the next day

"Put it behind you, you had to do awful things."

I did? Where do I put it?

And life, if that's what it is begins

Check in at the VA, feeling bad

"You weren't in a real war." Huh?

A life forms, a routine, darkness stalks always

Day upon day, month upon month, and on

Every Memorial Day a leech bite

Every Veteran's day a punji stake to the heart

Years go by and still

Road home is hard to find

"You were in Vietnam?" Yeah?

"How many babies did you kill?"

Shame to rage to coldness

No idea how close his death was as

He retreated to his smugness

Fuck it, don't mean nothin' Move on.

When do we get home?

