

### The Old Warrior

The young woman asked gently,  
“Would you like to hold her now?”  
The old man looked at them intently,  
And saw that the baby ceased to cry.  
“I reckon I could, if you allow.”  
Was his whispered, creaky reply.

She explained, “She's sleeping,  
And should be fairly still.”  
Then noticed he started weeping.  
As she placed the babe upon his lap  
His wizened arms beheld a thrill,  
While the babe continued to nap.

The young mother sat beside  
The great-great-uncle's wheelchair  
And shared the joy he couldn't hide,  
Then wrapped an arm around his shoulder.  
Her own tears she could not forbear  
To see this sad man, this old soldier.

He lifted the baby up to his lips  
And pressed them softly on her head.  
All his pain this simple act eclipsed.  
As he drew in the new baby smell  
It pulled up a memory never dead  
So strong nothing would ever quell.

His mind saw his own baby brother  
Loved as certain as his own breath.  
Due to illness of the boys' mother  
He became George's surrogate parent.  
Diligent from infancy to death,  
His loving devotion was never errant.

From farm, to church, to school,  
He taught young George thoroughly  
To how to read or use a tool  
From how to mend a fence to tie a tie.  
He devoted his life fervently;  
George was the apple of his eye.

And when they both were old enough  
    Into the army they both enlisted.  
They fought and acted manly–tough–  
    In many a warring and distant land.  
    As soldiers, their life consisted  
    Of guns and fights hand-to-hand.

    Until one day in heat of battle  
    Some shrapnel hit George's chest.  
    As his brother heard death's rattle  
He pressed both hands to staunch bleeding  
    –Heaven knows he tried his best–  
And to his God sent prayers and pleading.

But he could not save his brother dear  
    And was forever broken-hearted.  
    He soldiered on year after year  
    Without regard for his own life  
    Mourning for his brother departed  
And never again loved or took a wife.

This lonesome man who once had lain  
In foxholes amid the despairing and dead  
Now held someone he could love again:

A little baby to warm his soul.

He kissed her again upon her head

And in his heart, she filled the hole.

He who had not only seen, but caused

Pain, blood, gore and slaughter

Who thought his love had forever paused

Now felt hope for humankind.

As he held his brother's great-granddaughter

He sensed a change of heart, of soul and mind.

The baby stirred and then awoke

She smiled at him and began to coo.

Gathering courage the old man spoke,

“She's beautiful! What's she named?”

“Why... I thought you knew.

It's Georgia.”the mother proclaimed.

The baby watched while the old man wept,  
And the mother felt truly sublime.  
After a while the baby again slept.  
Four generations span:  
Together, they sat until feeding time,  
A young mother, a baby and a happy old man.