

An Evacuation Poem

i don't remember being evacuated
but my dad had to shoot all the pets
even ours, so they wouldn't be dinner
for people we didn't know.
it was humane in an inhumane war
but it didn't seem so nice
to the kids, like my brother
who lost a friend to my dad's shotgun.

my mom had to grab as many
sentimental things as she could
the shortest time she's ever had to pack.
a lot of things were left behind
wedding presents, china-ware
all treasures to her heart.
and maybe now someone else
is eating off those plates and wondering
how their family ever got such dishes,
you don't shotgun china-ware and wedding gifts.

John must have been sad too
he'd lived there all his eight years
seven as my brother.
he would miss his friends, the people
the yard he played in
the sidewalk where he built erector-sets.
all lost to a war
which he hadn't agreed to
but was uprooting his life despite.

i look at the pictures and wonder
how my life would have been
if we had not been kicked out so
if i had grown up to play
on the pool-table which i crawled on once
or had become accustomed to the sight
of Flame trees and the Lao...
i'll never know them thanks to the war
the war that deserves no thanks
but for the lessons of pain and mistakes
it digs up for us to bear.

jmb:2/7/94