



VCU

Virginia Commonwealth University
VCU Scholars Compass

Mighty Pen Project Anthology & Archive

Mighty Pen Project

2018

Carry On Luggage

Jack Frazer
jack.frazer@comcast.net

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/mighty_pen_archive

 Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#), [History Commons](#), [Leadership Studies Commons](#), [Military, War, and Peace Commons](#), [Other Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#), [Peace and Conflict Studies Commons](#), and the [Terrorism Studies Commons](#)

© The Author(s)

Downloaded from

https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/mighty_pen_archive/59

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Mighty Pen Project at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mighty Pen Project Anthology & Archive by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.

Carry On Luggage

By Jack Frazer

What have you to declare? / asked the man at the window

Orders / next assignment / Ft. Wolters, Texas
Lieutenant's bars / aviator wings / medals
A duffle bag / dirty uniforms / old boots
Ninety dollars / fifty piasters / twelve dông
A Zippo lighter / engraved / *Skill not Luck*
A Seiko watch / from my R&R / in Hong Kong
A Montagnard sash / a Núng pipe / souvenirs
A P-38 / in case I / get hungry
Dog tags / in case I forget / who I am
A buck knife / to cut belts and straps / if I crash
Scars / from friendly fire / on my right hand
Joe's last letter / from Gail / before he was killed
My Dear John letter / from Suzanne / now married
A song / *We Gotta Get Out Of This Place* / by the Animals
A book / *Street without Joy* / by Bernard Fall
Twelve months / or five days / or five years
An older face / at your window / going home

What's in your bag? / asked the woman at the VA

The fear of sudden movement / loud noises / and crowds
The smell of nuoc mam / human waste / and rice paddies
The feel of a cyclic handle / monsoon rain / and a poncho liner
The taste of canned bread / spiced beef / and apricots
The rhythm / of Huey blades / beating in my ears
The discovery / of a classmate's / prosthetic leg
The presence / of dead and wounded / in my dreams
The sight / of eight names / on a black wall
The prospect / of a visit / from Agent Orange
The support / of family, friends / and strangers
The rejection / of those calling veterans / losers
The camaraderie / of shared experience / and service
The knowledge / I was more lucky / than skillful
The memories / of things best / forgotten
The belief / that things change / for the better
The question / what do I do / now?