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2018

## Carry-On Luggage

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## Carry-On Luggage 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 đồng  
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?