

Jim Simmerman

At the Peace March

It wasn't a march but, rather, a walk;
and the cynic part of me had become
bemoaned the word. But the part of me

that got me there, that once wore its hair
long and flashed the peace sign at authorities,
was glad to be among the bodies marching,

walking, moving like a storm-swollen river
or, in fact, Time itself, and holding hands
with other hands that still had bodies,

through the downtown streets. Police
would estimate the crowd at 200, later.
But I was there to count and be counted

among the thousand-plus of us: the gray
or bald, bespectacled retirees; the pierced,
tattooed, and Mohawked high-school teens;

the college kids cracking, for the first time
maybe, the great, sad book of America;
the janitors, clerics, nurses, cooks; some

whose bodies were red or brown or black;
some whose tongues had not been sliced,
yet, by the knife of the English-language-

only state; and dogs; and children too
young to walk, who rode the shoulders
and backs of their parents like a small, sweet

cavalry; and some who had lived through
other wars and, so, were not marching, but
galumphing on crutches or rolling among us

leglessly, backing up traffic, speaking our
peace, before the other bodies, which would
also need counting, later, returned to speak theirs.

February 15, 2003; Flagstaff, AZ

Jim Simmerman is the author of four full-length collections of poetry, most recently *Moon Go Away*, *I Don't Love You No More* and *Kingdom Come* (both from Miami University Press); and co-editor of *Dog Music: Poetry About Dogs* (St. Martin's). A new collection, *American Children*, is forthcoming from BOA Editions, Ltd., in 2005. He is Regents' Professor of English at Northern Arizona Univ. And lives in Flagstaff, Arizona.

"This book is a poignant search for a world beyond violence, a quest for tenderness and compassion in one's own life. If it is widely read, it could have a profound effect on how people behave in the new millennium."

—Howard Zinn, author of *A People's History of the United States*

BEYOND THE WEAPONS OF OUR FATHERS

Edward W. Wood Jr.

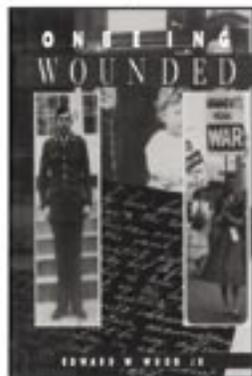
From our nation's birth in the crucible of revolution, to the bloody Civil War that pitted brother against brother and defined our national destiny, to recent aggressions from those within and without in opposition to our nation's values, American history has been shaped by violence. What is it that has led to such a prevalence of violence in America? What can we learn from our history in order to break this violent cycle?

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Ed Wood: Wounds, War, and Friendship

I met Ed Wood last fall, when Sam Halpert, a B-17 navigator during World War II, spoke at the United States Air Force Academy. Ed and Sam hit it off that evening, trading what war stories they had, bonding in a way the rest of us could not. As the evening wore down, Ed and I were introduced; my wife and I sat next to Ed while Sam Halpert read from *A Real Good War*, his novel about the air war over Europe. I watched Ed nod in agreement as Sam read. Afterward they gravitated back toward each other, but not before Ed and I had struck up a friendship of our own.

That friendship has continued, and we e-mail each other, always signing off with “Best,” or “Take Care.” Ed always includes greetings to my wife, and when we meet next for lunch, he’s asked that she come along. I appreciate that. I appreciate Ed, and I am grateful for his story. He’s the sort of anonymous guy you pass by on the street every day, but I know the stories you don’t. It’s only right that you meet Ed Wood, as well. You’ll be better for having done so.

Since I met him I’ve read two of Ed’s books: *On Being Wounded* (1991), and *Beyond the Weapons of our Fathers* (2002). Both, he tells me, have the support of Paul Fussell and Howard Zinn. So I’m supposed to automatically like them, right? Well, they are good books, but sometimes tough to read—mainly because I don’t agree with some of what he writes. Our biggest area of disagreement is over guns. Ed hates them. I, on the other hand, have two semi-automatic pistols at home. Both are loaded with 5 hollow-point bullets each. When I lived in Montgomery, Alabama, a police officer with whom I spoke said, “hollow points have better stopping power.” *What he means*, I thought to myself, *is killing power*. I wasn’t fooled by euphemism, but his sugar-coating didn’t stop me from buying hollow points later that week.

Ed wouldn’t approve of my weapons. He wouldn’t approve of my lifetime

