

For Lewis B. Puller, Jr.

Our stumps are all tangled up

Chesty pulled more than his weight.
The Marine Corps had to love him,
couldn't pin enough medals
on his chest for fighting 5
wars & for having a son.
*Dad taught me to stand for ladies
& to shake a man's hand firmly.*

But life rushes right by a man.
In a *flash*—Virginia childhood, to San Diego,
to the triple-canopied jungle—steps on a
booby-trapped howitzer round,
vaporized legs, pink mist surround him.
Pray, Lieutenant, for God's sake, pray.
Screams come from another country.
Years later, Pain still walks point for him.

Back in the World
a wife & kids, booze & pain-killers.
Demands clemency for vets who deserted,
then loses a bid for Congress.

A '91 photo shows clenched-jawed
Puller in front of the Wall:
his wheelchair mirrored
in the smooth granite surface.

May 11, 1994: Lewis B. Puller, Jr.
died of a *self-inflicted wound*

19 years after the war's end,
the average age of a grunt in Vietnam.

Maggie Jaffe's publications include *Continuous Performance* and *1492: What Is It Like To Be Discovered?*, a collaboration with artist Deborah Small. *How The West Was One* is forthcoming from Burning Cities Press.