

Boys to War are Gone

At cenotaph I stood too long 'neath midday glare,
With the throng lingered long, listened in the saddened air.
Doughty widows there, in the crowd, standing strong, erect. They were proud.
Me, my head was bowed for my father's sake.

A wide-eyed boy played hide and seek with motley crew on city's street.
He and boyhood street friends went in tow, in step, off to war.
Such a lark. Stories we will tell when we come home.
Heroes bold weren't told of long, black nights, blooded sites.
No place for boys to hide, or remain, at Alamein's dread campaign,
or lay white-knuckled succour'd 'neath Casino's folly, its dying fields.
Now 'mongst the cold, forgotten dead, counted as mere cannon fodder,
they now asleep in unmarked bed.

The glorious dead, it is said, unhinged my father's head,
his work with the bombs a dead-end job.
Stripped his gears, came home alone, wasted, worn, flotsam of second war.
Searched in vain for boyhood friends, never found them or himself.
Deemed a dying breed with broken dreams in latter days,
hit the skids on mean city street.
Only yesterday, it seemed, had played there hide and seek.

Now black mood swings, seldom spoke 'cept in command,
punctuated with his hand. Lived hard raising Cain, medicated pain with drink.
Only at his early end, near the brink, found what he had lost.
Peace, a time and place to hide and speak.

When placed in ground, in surround, his legacy abounds.
Four medals and a picture of himself.
As a boy with boyhood friends off to war.

Gerald Morton