**Floyd**

Alan Swope

Fifty-two at my birth, hollowed out

by the butchery of a world war,

he retreated behind the daily newspaper

while I dug tunnels in the yard,

clothespins for soldiers.

*Advice My Father Gave Me*,

a book with blank pages.

His stories were rare, a smidgen

about a Kentucky farm boyhood;

nothing of the young man,

a marksman in the Marines.

We hiked on trails around our city.

I wrung closeness from our silence.

Over the years, he dwindled, aged rapidly.

I pulled away.

After his death,

haunted by the void

where his spirit should live,

I tried to find him.

To learn how he kept his footing

on the swaying tightrope of life,

to learn what joys fed his hopes.

I searched old school

records, newspaper stories,

official war records—

then—

a yellowed letter to my father,

buried in an old trunk,

from his roommate as a bachelor,

teasing him about folding

his socks in pairs, then lining

them up in a neat row

in his drawer.

Something I do to this day.