**The Pink Blanket**

Bruce E. Whitacre

The young vets and houseproud brides poured

their teacher salaries into tract homes and Fords:

Fairlanes, Galaxies and Country Squires, leaving

budgets only for picnics, or, winter nights, bridge.

They cramped the living room with folding tables.

Annette brought a cake; Elaine pretzels and chips.

Jim brought the pop, and for later, the Pabst and the Schlitz.

In the basement, we kids staged our ghost stories

and gunfights; grossed out girls, outwitted boys.

Then came witching hour. “To bed” they boomed.

Host kids were wrestled into their rooms.

The parents’ big bed was the guest kids’ camp,

atop the chenille all lit by a lacy lamp.

Jolted awake under a pink blanket I rode

atop my father’s broad shoulder float-

ing down the icy steps to the frigid Ford.

Drowsy, confused, I felt the cold air creep,

its terror of inky night, the old, gray snow.

I gripped that blanket as streetlights and snowy rooves

lullabied across the frosty windows.

I was deep asleep as our car pulled in to home;

I slipped without waking into a bed all my own.

Only with age and awareness would these times

 the whole swaddling of my little years

crystalize and contrast

the terror of inky nights the old gray snow

with those children left to brave it out alone

in camps, in shelters, in someone else’s home

without a pink blanket and all that it means

a shield, a furnace, a weapon, and sometimes, wings.