**Young Brave**

Tom Feulner

You told me your war stories,

how you’d throw candy over barbed wire

to the Iraqi children, and sometimes

tease them with your grenades.

I laughed and shook my head,

lit another cigarette and blamed

the Chief, but that blond wife of yours

wasn’t laughing, she was waiting

for you back in Spokane, Washington,

still in high school, church every week.

You can disappoint her if you like, but

don’t let me bury another friend

under an American flag.

The last thing I heard you say

to your mother was, you’ll wish

you let me drink that beer

when I die in Iraq. You never were

the sentimental type, and I understand

your dark humor, but I don’t understand

war. I understand death.

In March you were home, with all

the old tattoos, and a new one that reads

USMC: Death Dealers. Twenty-two

never seemed so permanent.

When we’d get stoned before

soccer practice, you’d make me laugh so hard,

forget my locker combination.

Sixteen never seemed so lost.

Came out of the movies today,

there was rain everywhere,

and church bells going off.