

NORVIN DICKERSON

**At the VA (2007)**  
**Greg's Story**

Military intelligence met VC mortar,  
chopper tailed down in gyroscopic  
horror. Motion-sick I dumped  
my AK47 out the door into  
a rice paddy. Hit warm water, puked.  
Machine gun fire pinned us down.

Now it's gaskets, fuses and carburetors  
coming out of gun muzzles.  
I forgot where parts go  
in the Mercedes I repair.

*I need drugs.*

*I can't work on cars anymore.*

The corpsman in the waiting room shakes  
me. *I can't give you drugs until the doctor  
sees you.*

*I'm having flashbacks. It's been over  
thirty years.*

If you didn't know ages, you could tell  
the WWII vets by pins clustered  
on their caps. Two talk to me but don't listen,  
their ears jammed with hearing aids camouflaged  
by whiskery hairs.

A one-legged Vietnam vet leaves his arm  
braces behind and hops over to the clerk  
like a gymnast on a balance beam.

Sniper fire around our helicopter,  
I dove under my face bloated  
to hold in oxygen. I crawled back  
to camp, two days without standing.

I scream out,  
*They're coming!* loud enough  
for one of the WWII vets to ask  
*Who?*

*20,000 soldiers from Iraq without  
arms, legs, and chins. They're a secret  
Army, bona fide fucked up and depressed.  
But they won't live in the woods  
like I did.*

## Chopper

I was hovering inside Cambodia  
when Nixon denied on TV  
we had troops there. I supported  
Marines with my Huey, heavy  
as a flying boxcar. The Marines  
told us the Viet Cong had ammunition  
that could shoot up to 3000 feet  
so fly higher. I informed my  
commander about the intel.  
He flew at 3000 anyway.  
He's in front and VC know  
the second helicopter will defend him.  
No one had my back.  
Puff of smoke and flack.  
My chopper was hit, and  
we headed down.  
Hard to steer.  
Harder landing.  
I spent months in Nha Trang  
hospital with a shattered left leg.  
When discharged, I took my  
army pay and bought  
a yellow Porsche.  
Working on a vintage VW  
camper. It'll be worth a fortune  
when I'm done. I love  
everything mechanical—  
that doesn't fly.

**Norvin Dickerson** served in the Navy in the early 1970's as a Supply Officer in Iceland. In 1973 I volunteered to go to Vesmannaeyar, an island where a volcano was erupting, to shovel ash off roofs. Accumulating ash had established a new ground level above the first story.