

G R E T C H E N K O E N I G

Deep Seas

Perhaps you were born in the wrong generation.
Food on the table, roof overhead,
stern words of direction absent
of heart were supposed to mean
I love you.

As a child, looking for Grandpa's knee
I didn't understand why you hid
under blankets, tucked away
in your corner room. Barricaded
behind the glare of mindless
radio

Shuffling into the kitchen behind
You as a teen
enveloped by your VO5 hair gel
and Maxwell house—second run
I watched you cook morning grease,
offer it as breakfast I sensed vulnerability
“we brewed like this on the sub.”

Stubbornly outlasting your belief
That service equals silence
I find you
buried in a green-bound book
six inches thick filled
with dates and details

stamped "Approved:
Department of the Navy."

1941-1945 became the key
as I lugged the book off the shelf
looking for clues to a man.
And so I sit by your bed
where no radio
interrupts

I wade through entries
looking for a dark haired,
short, wiry, Polack,
Master Chief Petty Officer
running a sub he
never really left.

GRETCHEN KOENIG was for a number of years an Instructor of English at the United States Air Force Academy. Her grandfather served in the Navy during World War II.