

JIMMY PAPPAS

A Picture

We talk about life in Saigon while
eating lunch in the mess hall
when he asks me if I want
to see a picture of his girlfriend.

He hands me a photograph of
a naked woman sprawled across
the bed with her legs spread
and her face smiling at the camera.

Taken completely by surprise
and unsure how to react,
I can think of nothing better
to say than, *She seems nice.*

Saigon Crabs

The prostitute who lives
alone in a nearby apartment

invites us over for dinner.
Crabs, she says with a smile.

We all go over to her place.
She tosses the live crabs

into a pot of water, turns
on the heat, and sits down

with us at her kitchen table.
I resist the urge to ask her

to boil the water first. We sit
and talk, pausing only

when the crabs bang
against the metal pot.

JIMMY PAPPAS served for the Air Force in Saigon from 1969 to 1970 as a “Palace Dog,” the code name for Vietnam Teacher. As an English language instructor, he prepared South Vietnamese soldiers to fly with American helicopter pilots. After his service, Jimmy received an M.A. in English literature from Rivier University. He is a retired teacher whose poems have been published in several journals and a recent winner of the Poetry Society of New Hampshire’s national contest. He is completing his first book of poetry based on his wartime experiences and those of fellow veterans who have shared their stories with him.