

ALEX VARTAN GUBBINS

**A Rainy Veteran's Day**

**Harlow Park Memorial, Marquette, Michigan**

I thank soldiers I've never met  
for days spent with trench rats, jungle snakes, sand fleas.  
I see a mother push a baby stroller then turn away,  
run my fingertips over engraved letters: Charles Hilanen.

Perhaps, Hilanen ate a hot meal before the mission, slept  
on a comfortable cot, read a note from his sister.  
After the bomb hit, perhaps he saw fall leaves:  
mauve, rust, and dun. Felt cold bite  
his lips, tasted oncoming snow.

**Alex Vartan Gubbins** served in Iraq, 2004-2005, as a Mental Health Specialist. He now writes and translates poetry, as well as teaches.