

At the Soldier's Grave

By Sam Calhoun

I press my feet in the fescue,
green with every hope,
clover like small vigils,
the sun warm on my hand,

I hear the clang of flag against pole,
two hundred and fifty times now,
like Morse code threading time,
through the fabric it spanned.

I wipe soil from the headstone,
red as poppies in the field,
red as cardinals in their nest,
red as the sky to the east.

As the day slips into evening,
No words exist to convey,
my thanks to those laid
to rest beneath my feet.

Now the night's striped
with meteors, red like taillights,
and every star is a star still,
no matter how dim.

And in the dark a song
slips free from the trees,
a game played as kids
only in hymn:

red clover, white clover,
send the soldier on over,
blue sky, night sky,
bless you all, and goodnight.

Sam Calhoun is a Pushcart Prize-nominated poet, geoscientist, and nature photographer who lives in Elkmont. "At the Soldier's Grave" won the poetry prize at the Expressions of Freedom state art contest, organized by the Alabama USA Semiquincentennial Commission.

Image: "Liberty Uniting the Colonies," at the National Veterans Shrine in Montevallo, includes soil in its base from battlefields worldwide where American soldiers have died. Photo: Phillip Jordan

