



11-15-1999

For Friends Missing in Action

Walt McDonald

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Recommended Citation

McDonald, Walt (1999) "For Friends Missing in Action," *Westview*: Vol. 19 : Iss. 1 , Article 17.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol19/iss1/17>

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For Friends Missing in Action

by Walt McDonald

I want to turn them loose
in pastures without gunfire
or trucks running them down.
I think of friends from childhood
on icy streets at night,
the first car wreck in town

I ever heard, West Texas burning
and two good friends inside
and dying. Waking in dry July,
I watch the ceiling fan, whirring
the same old moan, my wife
asleep beside me. Friends died

in Vietnam and childhood,
others missing in action.
Our children sleep behind locked doors.
The hearth is stocked with wood,
though nothing I've done
could save them. Often, I swore

I'd never forget their names.
I watch the clock, counting red dots.
I finally sit up and rack my brain
and walk to the porch to bump
into ghosts, roll calls
of all who never know I'm up.

