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## My Father's Wars

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### Abstract

Longer now than sixty years ago, dying in a veterans' hospital, committed by my mother

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# My Father's Wars

*In memory of Thomas James Gallagher,  
1<sup>st</sup> Lt. U. S. Army Air Service Aeronautics (1885-1954)*

by Sheila A. Murphy

Longer now than sixty years ago,  
dying in a veterans' hospital,  
committed by my mother, unable  
to be her husband or a lawyer or  
my father, you are forever committed to  
my memory: walking stiff-legged down  
Main Street, and once, mirrored in my eyes,  
turning as you tried, too late, to hide  
an amber bottle under cellar stairs.

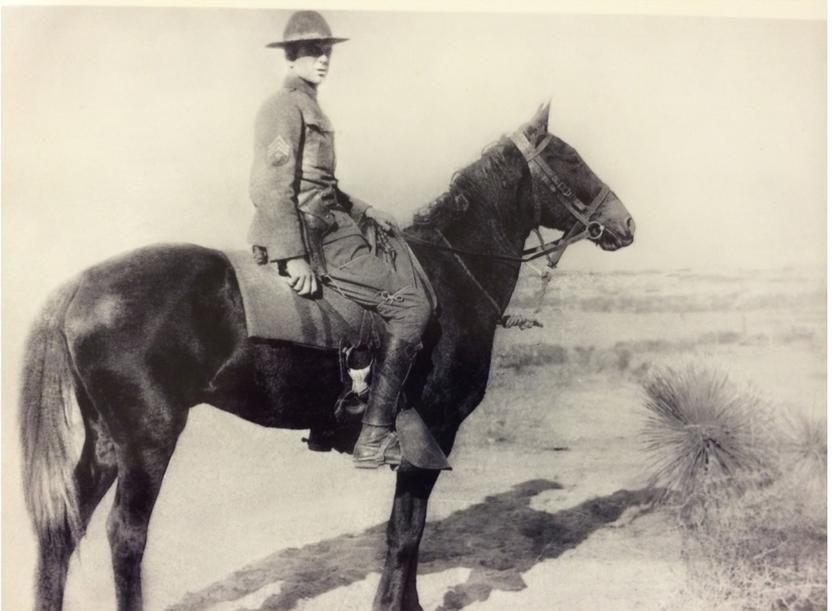
Born when you were fifty-one and deaf,  
I find your face in fading photos,  
smiling, proud, a man I never knew:

Perched atop your horse, in broad-brimmed hat,  
on border duty in New Mexico—  
the year is 1916. You look so young.

Standing near the cockpit of a bi-plane,  
goggles perched jauntily above your brow,  
you're poised to fly at Kelly Field in Texas,  
before the 1917 crash that closed  
your ears and introduced your pain.

In 1942, after leading the Memorial Day parade  
to Victory Field, flanked by flags and cannon  
and four wizened Civil War veterans, you call to  
*render our tribute to the sacrifices of armed forces  
scattered on far flung fronts....*

fading words on yellowed paper, brittle in my hand.  
Oh Pop, you're marching, marching, still.



*Thomas J. Gallagher, Sgt. Amb. Corps, 2nd  
Mass. Regiment Volunteer Infantry, 1916,  
Mexican Border Campaign*