

First Place – Lindsey McKaig

Let's Not Talk About That

My *dzia dzia*, the Polish word for “grandpa,” loves to gossip. He loves to talk about God. He loves to talk about how to make the best mac and cheese. He loves to talk about how the police cars always come to that house across the street. Without fail, however, there is one topic that always makes him silent: the Korean War. I have trouble finding a way to ask him questions about his service without seeing a break in his eye contact, a desolate look in the opposite direction, and then that soft look being replaced by stern eyes and the words, “let’s not talk about that.” My *dzia dzia* talks about the Korean War so infrequently that I did not even know he was involved until I was fifteen years old.

He joined to make his family proud. He was scarred. He does not like to talk about it. During this particular interview, my *dzia dzia* did not want to talk about the war any longer than only a few minutes of discussion. I recall him looking into the kitchen while confessing, “I try not to remember anything from that time. Nothing good ever comes of it.”

What my *dzia dzia*’s real experience in the war was like, I may never know. But the brief, almost invisible sadness that glazes over his eyes when I try to bring it up is more than I need, or want, to know.