

Vietnam Haiku

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VIETNAM HAIKU

*Louis J. Sirico, Jr.**

A haiku is a short poem that records the essence of a keenly perceived moment. It uses spare, concrete words to create an image that evokes the moment. The traditional haiku links human nature to all nature and to existence. It seeks to transcend the intellect.

Haiku's roots lie in a five-hundred-year-old Japanese tradition. English-speaking haiku permits diversity in form and imagery.

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*IN RE "AGENT ORANGE" PRODUCT LIABILITY
LITIGATION*

689 F. Supp. 1250 (E.D.N.Y. 1988)

a black bird
roosting on the bare branch.
Northern autumn

The United States Air Force sprayed the herbicide Agent Orange to defoliate forests and deny coverage to opposing forces. Agent Orange contained a substance that many veterans claimed impaired their health. An action against the manufacturers resulted in a settlement of over \$240 million to benefit veterans and their families.

*STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT ON THE TET
OFFENSIVE*

The President's News Conference of Feb. 2, 1968, 1
Pub. Papers: Lyndon B. Johnson: 1968-69 155
(1970)

Bombs
echoing
the holiday firecrackers

The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong launched a surprise attack on cities, towns, and military bases on January 31, 1968, the beginning of Tet, the Vietnamese new year celebration. United States forces retaliated massively and successfully. President Lyndon Johnson asserted: "The biggest fact is that the stated purposes of the general uprising have failed." The Tet offensive, however, contributed to the American public's growing disillusionment with the war.

UNITED STATES v. O'BRIEN

391 U.S. 367 (1968)

sparks
from the flames—
fireflies

David Paul O'Brien and his companions burned their draft cards in violation of the Universal Military Training and Service Act. The Court rejected O'Brien's contention that the Act violated his constitutional right to free expression, but acknowledged that his conduct had a communicative element sufficient to bring the first amendment into play.

WESTMORELAND v. CBS, INC.
596 F. Supp. 1170 (S.D.N.Y. 1984)

settlement papers
again

In a 1982 CBS documentary, reporter Mike Wallace claimed General William Westmoreland had underestimated enemy strength in order to increase optimism among Washington decisionmakers about the possibility of victory. Westmoreland sued CBS for defamation. After eighteen weeks of trial, the litigants settled. CBS stated that it stood by its broadcast, but did not intend to assert that Westmoreland was unpatriotic or disloyal. Westmoreland received no financial settlement.

VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

Pub. L. No. 96-297, S.J. Res. 119, 94 Stat. 827 (1980)

Across the street
a bird lights
on Lincoln's hand

In 1980, Congress authorized establishment of a memorial on the Washington Mall. The memorial was dedicated in 1982. It is a below-ground granite wall bearing the names of service men and women killed or missing in Vietnam. Some veterans protested that this "hole in the ground" was an inappropriate commemoration. In 1984, a statue of three fighting men was erected near the wall.

