

The Push

(Captain Pratt's Story from Korea)

Ruth Salter

That whole war we were never told what was happening, never given a plan. We thought there were only a few, but one day they covered the hilltops around us. One shot would mean a massacre; we stood still as trees. Then some of my men waved. The Chinese waved back. Slowly we turned and walked back the way we came.

A later patrol pushed farther than we had. The Chinese opened fire and some of our wounded were left behind. We found them later wrapped tightly in blankets. Their wounds were bandaged and they lay quietly on litters by the side of the road.

We gathered them and tried to figure it out, but it made as much sense as our fingers did lacing our stiff boots, freezing to our triggers.

RUTH SALTER lives with her husband, baby daughter, and more than twice the legal limit of pets in Boise where she teaches writing part-time at Boise State University. Her past adventures include rehabilitating injured wildlife, flying airplanes upside down, and receiving nominations for two Pushcart prizes.