

**Dianna Marie Cannizzo**

**Stellazine Statues**

The men who line these battleship grey hallways sitting on outdated steel chairs without armrests are said to have the stellazine shuffle. This is the term the underpaid and jaded social workers affectionately apply to these broken men. They must do something to erase the vacant stares that greet them each day. They know it is not the calming drug that took the spring from their step or the light from their eyes. It is this thing called war that changed these boys on the brink of manhood into stellazine statues. They are no longer promising youth with uncharted territories to explore. They are living in the land of the dead with modern medicine serving her elixir to quiet the memories and block the nightmares. Oh they engage in activities that appear lifelike and connected to reality. But make no mistake not one of these men had childhood dreams of spending a lifetime making leather crafts in a room thick with the smell of Camel cigarettes. Not one of them agreed to exchange their sanity for the confines of the day activity center.

One of these fragile statues is my father. Although I hardly know him he has lived on an island in my soul for many years now – a piece of land that separated from the continent when I was four years old. I think that he would have been a great father. I can imagine his strong form moving through the house making it safe for bedtime. I am certain he would have carried in the Christmas tree. I think he would have said I was pretty as I paraded before him on the eve of my first date. I think he would have praised me for graduating cum laude from the university he would never attend. I think that he would have proudly marched me down the same aisle that joined he and my mother. But none of those things happened. The 'dogs of war' were let loose and they claimed my father... they mangled his mind.

Did you know that the Korean War was not officially dubbed a war? Did they think that by some governmental sleight of hand they could shift the words and thereby drain the truth from the horrors of war? Who are the nameless "they" who robbed me of my father?

**Dianna Marie Cannizzo** was born in Berkeley California, the granddaughter of Italian immigrants. Graduated cum laude in 1978 from UC Berkeley in Comparative Literature and in 1992 from JFK University, Ca. in Clinical Psychology. Worked for fifteen years as a Rehabilitation Consultant. Currently resides in Udine and teaches English.

At the moment she is working on a memoir about her reconnection with her father, a severely psychologically traumatized Korean War veteran, who spent fifty years of his life in Veteran's Administration facilities. The memoir is an attempt to piece together what happened to him and it is a story of healing, understanding and of coming to terms with the difficult truth about his life, giving voice to a forgotten soldier from a forgotten war.

[dicannizzo@yahoo.it](mailto:dicannizzo@yahoo.it)