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***Looking Down the Barrel
or All's Quiet on the Temp LZ***

08/14/09 & 11/10/10

Something foolish,
More often when young,
And still survive,
With luck
And a grandmother's prayers,
To wonder
In your graying years
At the chutzpah
Of it all.

Wanted to see
What it was like
Out there at night
In the waiting time
In a foxhole alone
With nothing more
Than a field of fire
Between your breath
And whatever might come
Over the barely seen lip
Of the Highlands' edge.

An ARVN hammer
Drove Charles west
From the paddied plain
After noon, but tortuous
Slashed overgrown ridges
And thousand foot slopes
Kept our American anvil
Out of play by day.
C-ration supper then
Into the foxhole;
Rifleman left,
Grenadier right.

If you didn't know
What night is,
You know it now.
The battalion, then the rest
Of the listening post
Lost in the dark,
Just you and the barrel
Of your rifle pointing
Out ahead with the thought
Will you have to pull

That trigger?

Rustle, rustle from down
The slope below.
Sarge calls for flares
The grenadier pops two
Over the side, and
Scurry, rustle, scurry
Back down the hill.
And nothing and no one
Shows up in your sights.

The tropic sun comes up
Just like in Mandalay
C-rat breakfast, goodbyes
And chopper back to base
For a major chew out
By the major...
"Don't do THAT again!
Don't need my aerial
Photo guy getting shot! "
Curiosity could have killed
This cat, but didn't,
With luck,
And a grandmother's prayers.

~Gerald A. Ney~