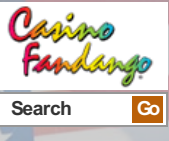


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Commentary by Eugene Paslov: Always Lost: A Meditation On War

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Saturday, August 6, 2011

Dr. Eugene T. Paslov
For the editor@nevadaappeal.com">Nevada Appeal

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The "Always Lost" exhibit is the brainchild of Western Nevada College educators Marilee Swirczek, Don Carlson and Kevin Burns, plus class members from Swirczek's creative writing class. Other Northern Nevada poets and writers also contributed.

The Carson Nugget recently awarded \$100,000 to the WNC Foundation for "Always Lost: A Meditation on War" to help with veterans' scholarships and with exhibit expenses. Kudos to the Nugget for a significant gift.

Sens. Harry Reid and Dean Heller of Nevada recently agreed to get the exhibit to Washington, D.C. The WNC Foundation and President Carol Lucey have committed time, resources and energy to put "Always Lost" into the national consciousness. These dead warriors deserve our nation's honor.

Dorothy Ramsdell is a member of the WNC Foundation board of trustees. She and her husband, Rob, have strongly supported the "Always Lost" exhibit, driven by patriotism and the power of Swirczek's vision and the compelling imagery of poetry, prose and stunning photographs.

The Ramsdells recently invited a group of friends and neighbors to their Glendale home to hear about the "Always Lost" exhibit. To about 40 people, Swirczek and Burns, a retired major in the Marine Corps, explained the purpose of the project, why it was conceived and who was involved. However, it was the next speaker who brought the audience to their emotional knees.

Amy Roby was in Swirczek's original class. She was a reluctant student writer about war. She was not a soldier and thought she didn't know much about it. But she is a mother and a wife, and her heart ached for those dead warriors.

This statuesque woman stood up in the full glory of her vital youth, looked directly at the audience and, in a voice that echoed the soul of all mothers – loving, soothing, firm, a mother's voice that touched deeply the feelings of all who have lost children – she read another mother's poem:

Listen

(by Teresa Breeden, exhibit poet, Carson City mother and teacher)

These soldiers were all children once:

smooth faces, fat thighs, sleep

so complete, anxious mothers listened crib-side

to ensure they still breathed.

First smiles -- intentional, accurate --

bled spring into winter's grasp. Eyes and fists,

they wrestled tomorrow from now, rolling crawling

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knowing, like light precedes sound,

the nature of things, the decency.

They stood in that first pair of shoes, released

supports, leaned into the wind of unknowing,

wobbled that first step toward war --

toward sleep so complete, mothers

still learning,

listening.

The audience gasped. The sound of silence, deafening. Heart's tears, flooding emotions. Thoughts of children grown. War. Its meaning.

Amy sat down. The audience sat in reverent thoughtfulness.

Please contribute to the WNC Foundation by calling 775-445-3240. We must remember our heroes.

- Eugene T. Paslov is a board member of the Davidson Academy at the University of Nevada, Reno, and the former Nevada state superintendent of schools.