When my father came down with polio
he blamed it on the dirty barn he had helped
tear down hours before fever sent him tumbling
into fiery dreams where like a bewildered soldier
he joined frontlines filled with children
who only days before had played at dusk
in summertime yards, hopping like insects through
tall grass, never knowing their games would soon
be over, never guessing they would wake without wings,
their legs strangely withered.

His fever gone, my father woke under cover not far
from where the old barn had been. Luckier than most,
he climbed up out of the wreckage, his only scars
a weakness in one leg and a bothersome limp,
which he would forever try to conquer, bringing me as a
child up hundreds of mountain paths that meandered
through dreamy forests, wound slowly up onto
bald-faced summits where the wind whipped at our faces,
and the word “polio” was not once spoken.