

# NAOKO FUJIMOTO

## SHIGERU

My grandfather received  
his name on February 9, 1919. When he died,  
he lost his name on the whitest  
sheets in a nook of the hospital

It was November 9, 2008. A monk  
gave him a posthumous Buddhist name.  
It was written in poor  
calligraphy on a memorial tablet. *Shigeru*,  
the old name, slowly

whittled away in incense. It smoldered.  
Chrysanthemums and orchids shrouded

the corpse. It was laid on an iron  
board at a crematorium. When the eighteenth  
oven was opened, I touched his limp  
cheeks one more time. My grandmother put  
two stones from a Japanese chessboard and his glasses.

At the seventeenth oven, a little boy called, "Papa."  
A woman held him from falling into it. The nineteenth  
oven rang as if an elevator  
reached the last floor of this life. Fifty-seven

minutes later, my grandfather was ash. His skull,  
cracked sternum, and a titanium  
joint between his femur and shin. His burnt  
bowels were green on the iron board. One  
stone rested next to his melted glasses. I wanted.

I picked up the remnant. My fingertips were scalded.  
The stone tumbled asunder by my feet.  
The pieces on the ground like debris  
after war. His friends were killed as war

criminals without trial after seven  
Japanese colonels were hanged in 1946 when he was on a ship.  
Two bags of saccharin and his torn permit to Japan;  
the atomic bombs. War  
orphans gazed at him by the shore in China. Toward the east,

his mother prayed for her son. Morning  
glories are always purple under rubble. I closed

the elevator at his apartment. I carried  
his ash. It was still warm. When the elevator arrived,  
it rang. I was home. He stood by the *sanzu*-river.

A lantern lit on the boat.

LESTER M. WOLFSON POETRY AWARD  
1st Place: Shigeru - by Naoko Fujimoto