

# Worn

*by* Paul de Denus

I am deeply rooted to this farm. The soil beneath my boots has churned up a hard living but we've kept at it, held on approaching eighty years now. Life's been decent enough but I'm damn near worn out. I wish my boys' been here to help. The war took them both, Taylor back in '68 and Tripp Jr. in '70. It's ironic that their lives ended on farm fields in jungle country half a world away.

The shirts hanging by the back veranda serve as our memorial to them. To see them there is a comfort, like they never left. The two in the middle belonged to the boys, book ended by Syl's favorite and mine. Taylor liked the red one, wore it in the fall on those cold mornings before the sun got up, shrugged it on as he quietly slipped out the door to jump the day. Tripp Jr. preferred the blue. When he wore it, I knew he'd be asking for the keys to the pickup, mumble something muddled about the McPherson girl two farms over.

Syl thinks we should take the shirts down now, as we ready for the move. We will, when the time gets closer. We'll bring them out to the western corner and bury them proper where the sun goes down easy over the tall oaks. To leave them there will be a comfort.

