

Never Forgotten
By Darlene Machtan

My father's favorite Washington war memorial:
Cherry blossoms.
Not granite or bronze renderings,
marble obelisks.
larger than life presidents
or reflecting pools.
Not a wall of 50,000 names that scars the earth
or the platoon of nineteen still on Korean patrol.
Not the valiant six at Iwo Jima,
not even the orderly
endless white tombstone soldiers
row on row
marching for eternity.

My father's flag is woven
from cherry blossoms,
the last ones,
the ones that linger,
late blooming,
fragile sentinels of spring,
foreign pink gnarled fists that
sadly
will too soon disappear.

The ground is littered
with their remnants,
but he looks up.
Cherry blossoms.
He breathes.
Take a picture of this.
This is what I came to see.
They were supposed
to be gone by now, he says,
but some things last.
He grins into the camera,
shoulders hunched against the wind,
wheel chair proud—
a silent one man salute
to cherry blossoms.

