

# New Poetry by Ben White: “Cleaning the M60 – 39 Years and January 26, 1984”



TO FLESH BONE / *image by Amalie  
Flynn*

## 39 Years

The death  
Of a soldier  
Was an accident,  
A waste –

A shame,  
So the anniversary  
Is nothing to celebrate –  
Or forget

**January 26, 1984**

Back on the continent  
At the 1st and 51st Infantry –  
A battalion that doesn't exist anymore –  
The Cold War was fighting a strange peace  
With weapons and tension  
Wanting to release a dimension  
    Of battle prepared,  
    Trained for,  
    And ultimately expected  
While volunteers selected  
Stood ready in the West  
And along the borders  
    Awaiting orders to mobilize  
When one cold January,  
Thursday morning  
Soldiers had to realize  
The power of 7.62 mm ammo  
Tumbling into the chest  
    Of a brother in the band  
With manslaughter unplanned  
And wounds giving the medics  
An ambulance to ride in  
    Until the doctors  
    At the Krankenhaus  
Opened up the chest  
And showed them what  
One M60 round  
    Can do  
To flesh,  
Bone, and what

A few minutes ago  
Had been functioning,  
Distinguishable organs.