

## RICE WILL GROW AGAIN

Frank A. Cross, Jr.

We were walking  
On the dikes  
Like damn fools--  
Steppin over dud rounds.

\* \* \*

Mitch was steppin light  
When he saw the farmer.  
The farmer:  
With black shirt  
And shorts.  
Up to his knees  
In the muck  
Rice shoots in one hand,  
The other darting  
Under the water  
And into the muck  
To plant new life.

Mitch saw the farmer's hand  
Going down again  
With another  
Shoot  
But the hand  
Never came up  
Again--

After Mitch  
Ripped the farmer up the middle  
With a burst of sixteen.  
We passed the farmer,  
As we walked  
Along the dike, and  
I saw rice shoots  
Still clutched in one hand.  
He bubbled strange words  
Through the blood  
In his mouth.  
Bong, the scout,  
Told us the farmer  
Said:  
"Damn you  
The rice will  
Grow again!"

\* \* \*

Sometimes,  
On dark nights  
In Kansas,  
The farmer comes to  
Mitch's bed:  
And plants rice shoots  
all around.