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POETRY | FALL 2016

## Assisted Living Lullaby

By Ellen Sazzman

### *Rosemont Senior Village*

Partnered with walkers, my audience  
shuffles into the assembly room  
to listen to me fence

with the piano this afternoon.  
I pick out the melodies by ear,  
a diminished gift, notes

dropping like flies, but my fans don't hear.  
Wandering third story passages, my wife  
Irene babbles lyrics

of the good old summertime, wartime  
when the beauty queen meets a sailor  
shipped to the Philippines.

After my discharge, three strong sons spawned  
in the heat of peace. Undershorts, sheets  
crowd the line at moon muted dawn.

Bees croon, broil in the cedar eaves.  
Boys wrestle, bruise, then – presto – goodbye.  
All that buzzing, bleeding,

laundry, leaving, must have broken her mind.  
My hands stumble through a serenade –  
clap, clapping – coda signs

that lead her down the stairs to my side.  
Hips flush, we sway, tune up our pieces.  
Goodnight Irene goodnight.

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**Ellen Sazzman has been published in *Moment*, *Comstock Review*, *Beltway Quarterly*, *Common Ground*, *CALYX*, and *Poetica*, among others. She was a winner of the 2016 Moving Words Poetry Competition and a finalist in the 2010 Split This Rock poetry contest. Sazzman, who is a mother, grandmother, and retired lawyer living in Maryland, received Northern Virginia Review's 2012 outstanding poetry award, a Pushcart nomination from Bloodroot Literary Magazine, and honorable mentions in the Anna Rosenberg poetry contest.**

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