Of Mary Ann

I met a girl named Mary Ann,
So sweet and very shy.
I fell in love and promised her
I'll love you till I die.

I wondered how it came to me,
An ordinary guy,
Her words so sweet, when spoken low,
I'll love you till I die.

I'll not forget the way she looked;
I heard her softly sigh,
As she stood by my side and said
I'll love you till I die.

But skies grew dark with clouds of war,
I heard the battle cry.
We said goodbye and whispered low,
I'll love you till I die.

The days stretched into endless nights
Beneath a shell-lit sky,
Whose only comfort was her words,
I'll love you till I die.

Her letters did not fill the void;
They did not satisfy
The longing in my heart to hear
I'll love you till I die.

Then slowly came the sick'ning shock,
From her came no reply,
And I was here and could not say,
I'll love you till I die.

Sweet Mary Ann, my heart cried out,
O do not say good-bye.
I'm here—so far—O hear me say,
I'll love you till I die.

One black and bitter day it came
I felt my blood run dry,
For you will never say again,
I'll love you till I die.
O god damn him who whispered low
Those words upon the sly,
To my own wife, my Mary Ann,
I'll love you till I die.

The push is on and time runs short,
A man can only try;
But blood runs fast upon the ground.
I'll love you till I die.

—Evelyn Wagner.

† † † † †

Aftermath

John Roth

He hardly limped at all any more, but he still could not push from his mind the fact that a part of his body was—well, no longer a part. He had been lucky. The concussion from the shell had mercifully blacked him out and he had no memories of the interval between the explosion and his waking in the blessed quiet of the evacuation hospital with its still more blessed morphine. Luckier still he was, in the fact that Uncle Sam's payroll included the best surgeons in the business: surgeons who knew exactly where to cut the bone and tissue in his shattered leg so as to insure that the artificial limb he now wore would perform just as it was performing—nearly as well as the lost one. Odd, though, how he could seemingly still wiggle the toes of the missing foot, flex and bend it just as he used to do. The doctors had explained it, of course. The nerves controlling such things had not been damaged and, consequently, when his brain commanded, they still performed such duties, even though the plastic foot he now wore had little need of the services.

He pushed open the polished chrome door of the little short-order shop and once again he was conscious of a sense of gratefulness for the little things of life to which he should have now become accustomed after nearly a year of discharge from army life. Things like clean socks, real coffee, a bed at night, Coca Cola, the feel of a steering wheel in his hands, white shirts, a daily shave, the smell of the city, this blast of warm air he felt now as he entered the cafe. The crunching cold of Korean winter was in his mind now as the heat from the room engulfed him and suddenly he was drowned again in relief for being out of the war alive, being home, being safe!