



# Net-Centric Warfare Changes Poetry

A cruel English teacher once made me put together a poetry anthology, which is a collection of my favorite poems. Now, who would do that to a high school kid? Anyhow, after all these many years, I still have it, and came across it the other day. Many of our great songs and poems have military origins, or military subjects.

*The Charge of the Light Brigade* is in my anthology, so I can "Honor the charge they made."

That poem was based on a real battle that should never have happened. The order was sent for them to retreat, but, as the poem says, *Someone had blundered*. They received the word to charge, and they did. This wouldn't have happened in a net-centric world and we wouldn't have great misquotes like "Ours is not to reason why, ours is but to do and die." I heard that many times when I was in the military, and I hear it occasionally now. The poem actually reads *Their's not to reason why, Their's but to do and die*.

I think I remember reading that this verse is the most often misquoted one in

history, but I don't know how one would determine that.

My forced anthology has another, less well known, humorous poem, that deals with communication on the battlefield, and the human nature of warfare. It is called "Pershing at the Front," and was written by the humorous poet Arthur Guiterman. World War I was fought in *the murk and the powder stench, and the wet and the muck as well*. Will net-centric warfare do away with this colorful environment? Or will it bring a shared awareness between those with boots on the ground and those who are two or three thousand miles away remotely applying mass while sitting in an air conditioned environment? As well as being in my poetry anthology, this wonderful poem can be found at <<http://holyjoe.org/poetry/guiter8.htm>>. The ending highlights another aspect of war that just can't be replaced by modern technology.

Now, instead of all the world wondering about the wild charge, all the world is wondering about net-centric warfare, and what it will do to the nature of war. I'm

wondering about what it will do to the nature of song, poetry, and our society.

Now we are going to have to write poems about being self-synchronized and having shared awareness. And how about this *shared awareness* stuff? If we would have had shared awareness in the 1800s, literature might be lacking other famous prose.

What about let's *remember the Alamo*, and the great ballad that came from that battle? What would have some shared awareness done for that band of heroes? Did Bowie and Travis know that reinforcements were not going to come? Would it have mattered?

I fear that this change in warfare will have a negative impact of the world of poetry and song. We are going to have fewer poems and songs about love and brave deeds. Do we really want to pursue this technology?

— Dennis Ludwig  
[dennis.ludwig@wpafb.af.mil](mailto:dennis.ludwig@wpafb.af.mil)

## MONTHLY COLUMNS:

ISSUE	COLUMN TITLE	AUTHOR
Issue 1: January Communication	Sponsor: Are Your Communication Skills Advancing? Publisher: Communications: Continuous Improvement Required BackTalk: Who's on Project Management?	Bob Zwitch Tracy L. Stauder Gary A. Petersen
Issue 2: February A New Twist on Today's Technology	Sponsor: What Is Up and Coming Publisher: Improving a Little at a Time BackTalk: Tech-Neologism	Kevin Stamey Elizabeth Starrett Gary A. Petersen
Issue 3: March PSP/TSP	Sponsor: Software Product Development: Transforming Art to Science BackTalk: Why Isn't There an "I" in <i>Team</i> ?	Terrence Clark Dr. David A. Cook
Issue 4: April Alternate Mixes for CMMI	Sponsor: Transitioning to a New Model? First Consider Your Organizational Culture BackTalk: Win the Battle, Lose the War	Randy B. Hill Dr. David A. Cook
Issue 5: May Transforming: Business, Security, Warfighting	Sponsor: Transformation: A Continuous Process Publisher: Education Is Key for Successful Transformation BackTalk: Transform This	Bob Zwitch Elizabeth Starrett Gary A. Petersen
Issue 6: June Why Projects Fail	Sponsor: Why Do Projects Fail? BackTalk: When Failure IS an Option ...	Kevin Stamey Dr. David A. Cook
Issue 7: July Net-Centricity	Sponsor: The Future Battlespace and the Power of Immediate Decision Making BackTalk: e-Dorado: The Lost Centric City of Information	Terrence Clark Gary A. Petersen
Issue 8: August Ada 2005	Sponsor: CrossTalk Co-Sponsors Invite Additional Government Organizations on Board Publisher: Ada Continues to Evolve BackTalk: Ada: The Maginot Line of Languages	Randy B. Hill Elizabeth Starrett Dr. David A. Cook
Issue 9: September Software Assurance	Sponsor: Software Assurance: Highlighting Changes Within Our Software Community of Practice BackTalk: Ready, Fire, Aim!	Joe Jarzombek Gary A. Petersen
Issue 10: October Star Wars to Star Trek	Sponsor: The Vision of What Can Be Publisher: Star Wars, Star Trek, and CrossTalk BackTalk: Science Fiction, Science Fact	Diane E. Suchan Elizabeth Starrett Dr. David A. Cook
Issue 11: November Management Basics	Sponsor: A Willingness to Keep Learning Publisher: Basic Articles BackTalk: Deja Review	Kevin Stamey Elizabeth Starrett Gary A. Petersen
Issue 12: December Requirements Engineering	Sponsor: Requirements Management Is Required BackTalk: Net-Centric Warfare Changes Poetry	Randy B. Hill Dennis Ludwig