

This is a collage of photographs of my grandfather, Allan Williams. This poem is about how dementia robbed us of him and him of us.

Softly.
(like the finest sand through our fingers),
I witnessed my father's father slip away.
Grain by grain, memory by memory,
a recognition at a time.
The old man, the strong man,
the kind and gentle man,
the farmer, the father, the friend.

With the patience of the inevitable -
he faded.
Silently and viciously, childhood returned;
confused, scared. Alone.
His wife, his farm, his family -
a mirage of memories conflicted and torn.

In his eyes was wonder.
His recognition in shadow -
like a degrading film reel projected
through smoke onto diaphanous silk.
He smiles when I enter.
He stands to shake my hand.
He says it's nice to meet me.
He does not know me.

When we buried him,
having lost him for the second time
- the final time,
the buzzard called and lambs cried on the wind
and through the blue sky and soft spring sun
snowflakes fell.

