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The bells pealed that Sabbath morning in our town—
our church bell one of them—
to celebrate the centennial of Armistice Day.
I stepped outside into the brisk air to listen
while my fellow congregants stayed inside,
our Eucharist suspended for the moment.
I sent a silent prayer
for those who had fought, suffered, and died.
It was a time of reflection and joy
as it must have been then
when the Great War ended.

Collar Disks

When I was a child,
my grandmother gave two metal disks to me
along with other mementos:
a wedding ring, two thimbles, a pair of spectacles,
and a skeleton key—
items that had belonged to her mother.
For years I kept the disks stored away
until one day I took them out
and looked at them.
One was embellished with a *US*
and the other with crossed cannons
atop the number *89*—
symbols that simply suggested the military.
But then when I came across a portrait
of my great-uncle Charlie,
my grandmother's brother,
I noticed identical insignia—
a *US* and crossed cannons over an *89*—
pinned to the collar of his doughboy tunic.
Suddenly I realized that the metal disks
I'd kept hidden away
were souvenirs of the Great War,
part of a uniform Charlie had worn in France.
That day of my discovery
the disks gained deeper value,
and I was grateful for the gift
that my grandmother had so long ago
bestowed on me.

Jentry's Bullet Pouch

The bullet pouch belonged to a man
I never really knew.
As I child,
I saw Jentry walking up our street,
heading to his house at the top of the hill.
He lived there until he went to Broughton—
a mental hospital—
where he would stay for the rest of his life.
When my cousin's wife settled her parents' estate,
she gave away many of their things—
including the leather pouch—
some to my mother,
who passed them along to me.

Inside the pouch is a single long bullet—
a 30-06, my husband explains,
ammunition that Jentry would have used in World War I,
his gun a Springfield rifle.
I wonder now if the missing bullets were spent in battle
and if what he went through in France
had something to do with his mind being lost
in his later years.

It's sobering to think that I,
a stranger to Jentry,
have ended up with his bullet pouch—
something he desperately depended on
when he faced unspeakable danger
a century ago.