

LONG RANGE PATROL

As posted on Facebook

Stars and Stripes

early 1968, author unknown

The men I am writing about could easily be the boy next door or the gentle bond-headed kid from the corner supermarket of not so long ago. The “boys” are bound together by their trade. They are all volunteers. They are in the spine-tingling, brain twisting, nerve wracking business of Long Range Patrolling. They vary in age from 18 to 30.

These men operate in precision movements – like walking through a jungle quietly and being able to tell whether a man or an animal is moving through the brush without seeing the cause of the movement.

They can sit in ambush for hours without moving a muscle except to ease the safety off the automatic weapon in their hand at the first sign of trouble. These men are good because they have to be to survive. Called LRP’s for short, they are despised, respected, admired – and sometimes thought to be a little short on brains by those who watch from the side lines as a team starts out on another mission to seek out the enemy.

These are men who can take a baby or a small child in their arms and stop his crying. They share their last smoke, last ration of food, last canteen of water – kind in some ways, deadly in others. These are men who believe in their country, freedom, and fellow-man.

They are a new kind of soldier in a new type of warfare. They may look the same as any one you may have seen in a peace march, draft card burning or any other demonstration – but they are different. Just look in their eyes. Better yet, just ask them, for they are men.

These men stand out in a crowd of soldiers, it is not just their tiger fatigues but the way they walk, talk or stand. You know they are proud because they are members of Long Range Patrol.