

Tribute to the Infantryman

The average age of the infantryman is 19 years, a short-haired, tightly muscled kid who, under normal circumstances, is considered by society as half man, half kid, not yet dry behind the ears, but old enough to die for his country.

He never really cared much for work and would rather wax his own car than wash his father's, but he's never collected unemployment either.

He's a recent high school graduate and was probably an "average" student, pursued some form of sports activities, drives a ten year old jalopy, and has a "steady" girlfriend that either broke up with him when he left or swears to be waiting for him when he returns from half a world away.

He listens to rock and roll music, or jazz, or swing -- and 155mm howitzers.

He is 10 or 15 pounds lighter now than he was at home because he is working or fighting from before dawn to well after dusk. He has trouble spelling, thus letter writing is a pain for him, but he can field strip a rifle in 30 seconds and reassemble it in less. He can recite to you the nomenclature of a machine gun or grenade launcher and use either one effectively if he must.

He digs foxholes -- and latrines -- and can apply first aid like a professional. He can march until told to stop, or stop until he is told to march. He obeys orders instantly and without hesitation, but is not without spirit or individual dignity.

He is self-sufficient. He has two sets of fatigues, he washes one, wears the other. He keeps his canteens full and his feet dry. He sometimes forgets to brush his teeth, but never to clean his rifle. He can cook his own meals, mend his own clothing, and fix his own hurts.

If you're thirsty, he'll share his water with you, if you're hungry, his food. He'll even split his ammunition with you in the midst of battle when you run low.

He has learned to use his hands as weapons and his weapons like they were his hands. He can save your life -- or take it -- because that is his job. He will often do twice the work of a civilian, draw half the pay, and still find ironic humor in it all.

He has seen more suffering and death than he should have in his short lifetime. He has stood atop mountains of dead bodies ...and helped to create them. He has wept in private and public for his friends who have fallen in combat and is unashamed. Just as did his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, he is paying the price for our freedom.

Beardless or not, he is no boy, He is the American Fighting Man that has kept this country free for over 200 years. He asks for nothing in return except our friendship ...and understanding.

Remember him ...always ...for he has earned our respect and admiration with his blood.

He is an Infantryman.