



A WAR WITHIN A WAR*

Janne Ketrow

Jim slept fitfully, intermittently calling out. He sifted through the diverse reality of his dreams, seeking one to key his return to awareness. A vision of a glowing candle recurred. Uncomfortable, he sensed in his periphery a jar descending to snuff the taper's life. Urgency engulfed him. Pain overwhelmed him.

"Get moving, maggot!" The D. I. never neglected an opportunity to generate enthusiasm for the trainees' duties. A well-placed kick often produced not only enthusiasm but also esteem for the sergeant and his practiced methods. The obstacle course would finish their usual twenty-hour day. The ten-mile run, including various traps, mines and obstacles made with full sixty-pound packs, would determine next week those qualified of the forty Ranger trainees.

Jim had completed basic training with several honors and the rank of Private First Class. Most of his buddies only attained the status of private. Advanced infantry training placed him second in his class with an offer to attend Officers Training School. Declining because of the extra time required, Jim elected to become a non-commissioned officer. He even became the champion boxer of his division, as though training to fight in a war was insufficient. It seemed an invisible force was pushing him to a peak of physical condition to meet an unknown enemy.

The United States army shipped their new sergeant to Viet Nam where he joined Ranger training. Jim's correspondence reflected his sense of accomplishment but also his loneliness. Frequent letters from his family mirrored their pride, love, and great concern. Mediocrity and mild delinquency in high school and his first year in college were replaced by the achievements in physical and military training.

The waves of pain receded, leaving throbbing aches. The jar withdrew, and the dark beyond the ring of light thrown by the candle brightened. Fuzzy shapes appeared and then came into focus. Females and males clad in antiseptic white retreated, carrying syringes and oxygen equipment. Burning pain raced through his body and localized

in the left side of his back, chest and arm. Another war had initiated its cycle. Pneumonia, shock, and infection, the recognized foes, advanced.

Six of forty completed the ten-mile run. Jim finished first in time comparison, and watched as his best buddy crawled the last half mile in an agonizing attempt to become a ranger. Of course, only those who finished upright and under the time limit would surpass the mundane life of the "grunt" (infantrymen of the lowest rank).

The first mission was completed without casualty. Five or six men formed a team. The team-leader co-ordinated their specialties and tested the team members explicitly. Their lives depended on a deep faith, ability and intent. Jim wrote several times of fear, close calls, and the satisfaction of performing adequately. He also wrote of death, homesickness, and the girl he left behind. To his older sister he wrote about minor wounds received in action and his inner beliefs of the immorality of this civil war (police action), trusting her not to worry the family with his insecurities. He needed someone to confide in and to reassure him in the choices he made. He wanted protection from the fears of mortality and humanity. Always he experienced fear. The few people he could trust with his life and emotions dwindled in direct proportion to augmented paranoia.

"Ketrow, wake up!" The nurse gently shook him awake to take his temperature. The therapy facilities at Valley Forge helped him regain 70 per cent usage of his left lung and nearly full mobility in his left arm and shoulder, but the scar tissue in his back and chest was deep, restricting his mobility and self-image. Pneumonia and a thrice-collapsed lung would never allow Jim to attain his former athletic proficiency.

This mission into Cambodia was exceedingly important to the success of the entire Cambodian campaign. The exhausted team rested in a tiny clearing in the ebony day of the canopy jungle, not even daring to heat their food. Sometimes the Viet Cong could track by virtue of smell alone, trailing by scent as a dog could. Jim sat with his back to a tree, eyes closed, knowing that respite from the now three-day-long search-and-kill will be brief. A safety cleared—SNICK. Frantically his body jumped and rolled, before his mind perceived the

sound of an AK-47 automatic following him. Pounded twice by shots through his back, coughing blood, he managed to fire in support of his team members. His buddies dragged him to the chopper they had finally raised by radio. As the medics strapped him down, consciousness retreated.

THE GAME IS OVER*

Craig A. Anderson

The little boy heard his father come in from work and hurried to finish the page of fractions. Homework can be a bore for an eleven-year-old boy, but he didn't really mind; it was part of the game. That task completed, he took off in search of his father. Cautiously creeping through the hallway, he became the hunter: his father was the hunted. "There he is!" With an exuberant cry the little boy attacked and landed amid a tangled mass of newspaper. Laughing, he looked up to his father and asked if he could go to a Halloween party the next day. Father started to grumble, which meant no to the little boy, but then he reversed his decision and nodded in assent.

"Make your own costume," he added, but the boy had already bounded away gathering crayons, scissors, and assorted papers and sacks. It soon became a father and son project, with Father grumbling