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Eleven Bravo (LRRP Rangers Vietnam Book 1)

RW Holmen

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This is a re-release. Much of the content was previously published under the same name, but is now offered as the first chapter of "Gonna Stick My Sword in the Golden Sand: a Vietnam Soldier's Story."

"Golden Sand is a bold, dark, and intense retelling of the Vietnam experience through the eyes of an army scout, the point man of Romeo-18, a camouflaged and face-painted four-man LRRP team inserted by helicopter into remote and unfriendly territory to search for "Charlie," the North Vietnamese soldiers who travelled the mountain gullies of the Ho Chi Minh trail.

"Golden Sand" is less about patriotism and heroism than about the gut-wrenching reality for the Vietnam combat soldiers who are celebrated for simply doing their best to get by, not as superheroes, but as young men who often acted heroically but sometimes foolishly in circumstances not of their own choosing. One reviewer commented, "the bond and the folly of immortal combat ring loud and clear from the page, and the story's told with all the realism, language and pathos of experience." The mood of "Golden Sand" is dark and somber rather than triumphalistic: a hauntingly honest and brutally true retelling rather than a glorification of the Vietnam experience.

The story opens as a young soldier receives combat infantry training at Fort Polk, Louisiana, and he soon lands in Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, as the rest of the world celebrates Neil Armstrong's walk on the moon. After a torturous twenty-three day hump through the jungle, the now seasoned-veteran volunteers for the LRRPs. The LRRPs of Vietnam (Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol) were the cavalry scouts of their war, traveling by helicopter rather than mustangs into remote and unfriendly territory. The mountainous jungles of the central highlands were especially inhospitable, filled with snakes and wild animals, and criss-crossed with the tributaries of the Ho Chi Minh trail that lay hidden beneath the thick, triple-canopy jungle foliage. It was the job of small teams of LRRPs to penetrate the ridges and valleys of the rainforest to track and identify enemy activity. The remaining chapters of "Golden Sand" chronicle hair-raising missions to the field as well as the stand down time in the rear base camps.

The author refers to "Golden Sand" as "autobiographical fiction." True incidents serve as inspiration for the book, but the stories are told with literary embellishment. The author served with K Company, 75th Infantry (Rangers) in the central highlands of Vietnam in 1969-70, and he was twice awarded a bronze star for valor in combat.

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