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*If Veterans don't help Veterans, who will?*

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# ***The Original Cherry Lieutenant***

{non apologia pro vita sua}  
12/26 & 12/29/04

Attention to orders:

To the Nam he was sent;  
Fresh fledged boy-man greener  
Than an Irish Meadow\*  
After the rains of Spring.

With his head stuffed full  
Of lectures and books,  
Army training and  
The best intentions.

A term appointment  
With daily duties for  
A sometime student  
In Southeast Asia

School of Guerilla  
Warfare's sprawling South  
Vietnam campus,  
Binh Dinh Department.

To "beautiful,  
Bright" downtown An Khe,  
Showing the newbie  
The lay of the land.

A lesson: "You can't  
Go when you gotta;  
If the john's a wall  
Along an alley,

And you feel their eyes  
Watch the lieutenant  
Curious to see  
Just what he will do.

Another: 'Do nerds  
Have hormones?' 'Yes,  
but don't know how  
Or when to use them.'

And this one knew naught  
Or little of love,  
Of women or sex,

A clueless dunsoid.

So an old warrant's  
Solution was find  
A female to lift  
Him from Virginville.

That mission accomplished,  
But jury's still out  
On how much he learned  
Or still needs teaching;

About things that matter,  
And the forgotten  
Most relentless now  
Retought and retained?

Learned so very much  
Finding out he knew  
So little; wisdom  
And understanding,

Took a holiday,  
PX run to parts  
Unknown, so it seemed  
From watching the war.

Quaint rustic quarters;  
Either red clay dust  
Or mud, mold and slime  
Gets on all his gear.

Few amenities:  
Cold Australian  
Showers, three holers,  
Cheap soda and beer.

And when days' work done,  
Unit volleyball.  
"Jungle rules", the finger  
Still shows being jammed.

An unexpected role,  
Buffer between men  
and Dear John'ed sergeant,  
Then the major says,

"You're way too friendly  
With the enlisted."  
The fine line then walk,

Ever get it right?

Came replacement of tents  
By tin roofed hooches,  
"Please take a walk, Sir.  
And leave that hammer."

A fortunate son  
Though; spared the worst wrath,  
With a ringside seat  
To the surreal storm.

With head in the clouds,  
Both meanings apply,  
Somehow survived to  
Live and ponder why.

*~Gerald A. Ney~*