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Poetry from the Mine Field

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notes FROM the FIELD

poetry from the mine field

by Chris North

"What We Do"

With protection on and helmet tight,
Equipment tested and ready,
We cross the line to start the search.
Our movements slow and safe and steady.

Through waist high brush and piles of
rubbish
And house after house in a line,
We clear the ground and mark our route
To hunt the hidden mine.

Each day we walk the ground we've cleared
To prove the job's done right.
We check each morning to ensure
No mines were laid last night.

With weather so cold
The prodder burns the fingers of your hand.

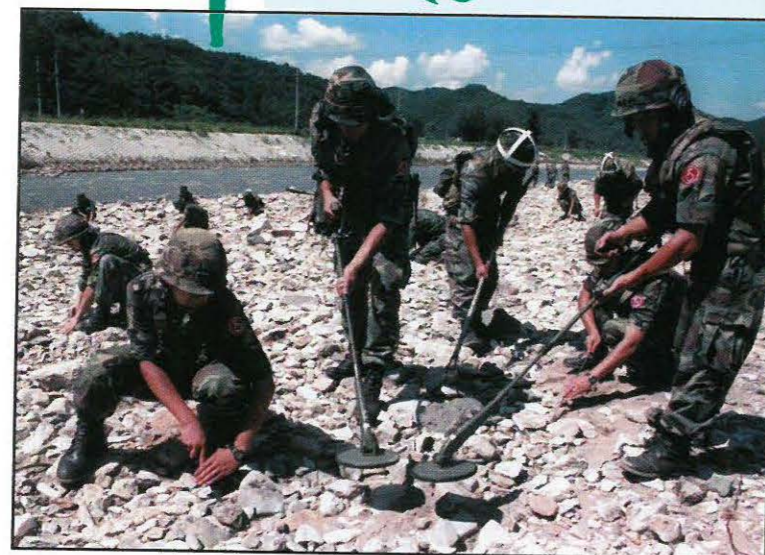


Photo c/o AP/World Wide Photos

Other times so hot sweat stings your eyes;
It takes so much effort to stand

Whatever the weather, be it hot or cold,
No matter what comfort we need to endure,
We search the ground with prodder in hand.
We must be safe, we must be sure.



Photo c/o Oren Schlein/
Adopt-A-Mine Field
Program

"The Silent Assassin"

This quiet sentry waits, he doesn't care how long.
He waits alone or in groups for you to come along.

The assassin is ready, he remains ever alert.
He can wait for years to do his job, he cares not who's
killed or hurt.

So far so good, no booby traps so there is one less
worry.
Slowly now with steady hand uncover the mine, don't
hurry.

There he is, still waiting, even after years in the
ground.
His body of plastic, as good as new, still working, still
sound.

Carefully, with steady hand, now comes the vital part:
Gently lift, reach underneath and unscrew this
demon's heart.
It's over now, this battle won, another victory filed;
One less assassin in the ground.
One less to hurt a child.

This is one battle won, but the war still goes on.



Photo c/o ATC

The very old or the innocent young, he sees them all
the same.
He lies in wait to trap them all, he must achieve his
deadly aim.

We look for him, we hunt him down wherever he may
lie.
We play with him his deadly game, one of us must
surely die.

Like night of old with armor for battle we prepare.
Slowly moving forward, hunting, we probe the
ground with care.

Then something hard is felt beneath; if it is a stone,
then all is fine;
But if not, we now prepare for mortal combat with
the mine.

With visor down and armor on and with prodder at
the ready,
We gently probe beneath the mine, stay cool, stay
calm, keep steady.



Photo c/o ICRC/Lan. Woodmansey

"What Is He Thinking?"

When a deminer steps forward to do his work,
Who knows what's inside his head.
Who knows what he thinks whilst doing this job,
Where just one mistake could leave him for dead.

Does he think of his wife and his children,
Does he think of their future?
If he makes a mistake and sets off a mine,
Who will take care of them after he's dead?

Demining he doesn't think of such things,
Focus on the job instead,
Mind just concerned with finding the mine.
If his thoughts wander, he could end up
Dead.

notes
FROM
the
FIELD

poetry

"Risky Business"

*No matter how much we follow the rules,
No matter how hard we try,
Each time the prodder goes in the ground
We know we could die.*

*Each time we search the ground ahead
Using tripwire feelers with care,
A blinding flash could be the first we know
That a tripwire mine was there.*

*That even when we checked the ground
ahead
With detectors tuned so fine,
We know when we move forward that
Our feet could find the mine.*

*We put all these drills together,
Confirm and check and test,
Working hard, constantly improving
To make our drills the best.*

*So we trust in all the drills we use.
To improve, we continually try.
But demining is a risky business,
And deminers often die.*

"Who Knows"

It's when I'm alone that it starts to
bite,
When I've nothing to do and it's late
at night,
These thoughts creep in,
Evoking worry like sorrow,
Will I survive the day or be killed
tomorrow?

Will the next landmine I touch
Be the last thing I see?
Will I be killed or maimed,
What will happen to me?

I'm sure it won't happen, but
I know that it might.
These thoughts come to haunt me
Sometimes in the night.

When night drifts away and
Morning seeps through,
My confidence returns in the things
that I do.
Worries recede as the morning turns
bright,
I am eager again to get on with the
fight.

Those haunting memories
Seem like decades away,
But they return at the end of each day.
Confidence deserts me,
The day draws to a close.
Will I survive or die tomorrow?
Who knows?

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