

Bill Fritz

Seminar

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Raymond Bates

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Visual Stimulus - Boots

These “boots” are made for walking, or so said the song popularized by singer Nancy Sinatra during the Viet Nam War. They were made for walking alright, but only had a life expectancy of five months, if you were lucky. Then they began to rot and tear and seep in jungle crap and water like a weakened dam just before it gives way. So was the reality of a ground pounder Marine grunt or Doc in the northern jungles of I Corp. During the monsoon rains you were always chilled to the bone. Hardly ever stayed dry or warm. No wonder trench foot was such a dreaded fate of so many in past wars. Keeping an adequate supply of foot powder for the troops during the monsoon was never-ending. Then you throw in the water leaches, another of a grunt's “hitchhiker” pals, one picked up on patrols. Hope you are well supplied with insect repellent, it works great to get them to pull their heads out of you. The alternative is to burn them off with a lit cigarette. (Which is Hell if you happen to be a non-smoker!) Life in the bush has its humorous moments. As a “Doc” I’ve seen some cigarette burns in some unlikely and unexpected places. One day on patrol, we stopped to take a de-leaching break. The patrol leader asked one of the newly PVT’s, who happened to be near a down log, covered with ants, “Say, PVT, what color are them red ants?” The PVT pondered for a moment and then answered, “Oh I guess they’re kinda orange.” (True anecdote)

Everyone smiled and looked at each other, finished de-licing, and we continued our patrol.