

*Across the hanging blanket in a corner of the hootch the light burns all night. Every night. His two young reconnaissance team members on the other side don't complain. Don't ask why. There's no mystery.*

*That's when the goblins come out.*

*More whiskey . . . another Louis L'Amour novel is the answer. Sure. Float. Mellow out. Yet the eyelids gotta close sometime . . .*

*"Pappy, help me! Pappy! Pappy!" shattered comrades more alive than when they were alive call out to him.*

*And Pappy's victims say with accusing eyes, "You could've been more merciful to us."*

*Sweat drenched, he jerks up in bed, wide-eyed.*

*"Thank God for the light," he mutters soundlessly.*

You could say he's the finished product of the warrior's art.

—a friend of Howard "Pappy" Upchurch