

## POINT MAN by Ruth J. Decker, Mother of MWSA Member Paul Decker

Sharp-nailed thorns paw at my shoulder  
Scratch my face, drawing blood.  
Armed ebony shapes loom, menacing;  
Dark octopi displaced and erect.  
Night sky lighter still than they!  
Should I fear? Should I welcome  
The shelter afforded from smaller  
Armed shapes, skulking, eyes piercing?

I push through brush long entangled,  
Waiting, ears sharpened, alert to snap  
Of twig, unseen, broken by human foot?  
Or animal? Who goes there?  
Cold steel leveled at cold steel.  
Which shall discharge death?

Waiting, dry gulp of throat, heart hammering!  
Charge!--the foolish impulse--No! Wait!  
Though waiting be more torture than  
Reckless confrontation.

Ah! Hear you the sly footstep?  
Has he discounted human presence?  
Day! Where is your spotlight?  
Flares! Your probing glare?  
Breathing--close, unseen target!  
Now! Finger tense, benumbed,  
Involuntary pressure, resounding shot!  
Crackle and thud of body falling!

Should I move--or wait?  
Is he solitary hunter?  
Aching muscles clench,  
Holding me still,  
Crouched in granite.  
Listen. He moves not; no comrades  
Come to his aid. Endless time---  
Humming quiet unbroken.  
Cold now, accepting yonder peril,  
Knee after knee.  
Stop! Ears straining,  
No answering brush sound.  
(But where there is one may be many!)  
Careful! Do voices murmur forward?  
Turn! Retrace knee steps;  
Think not of fallen prey.  
Warning clamped behind bitten lips,  
I reach others like me  
And breathe at last!



**Ruth Decker, Poet**



**Paul Decker, Vietnam 1969**

On Veterans Day 2009 a book was published entitled "Heart of a Military Woman." see [www.sparklepresentations.com/store\\_books\\_heart\\_military.asp](http://www.sparklepresentations.com/store_books_heart_military.asp)

On page 68 is Bravo 2/7's contribution to the book, a poem entitled "Point Man" penned back in 1969 by Ruth J. Decker. Paul Decker's infantry unit in Vietnam. 1968 - 1969 Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Division.

The poem can be found on numerous internet web sites including Bravo Companies at [www.bravo2-7.org/av/](http://www.bravo2-7.org/av/) as well as [iwvpa.net/deckerrj/index.php](http://iwvpa.net/deckerrj/index.php)

B 2/7's web master describes the poem with the following text: Point Man is an excellent poem written in 1969 by Paul Decker's late mother, Ruth Decker. It is amazing how she was able to describe the fears and apprehensions all of us experienced in Vietnam. Perhaps it was related to her own anxious moments waiting for her son to return. This poem, as well as several others she wrote, was published in the early 1980's.