

Sgt. Julian Rincon
Team Leader of Wildcat 7
F Co. 52nd Inf. LRRPS / I Co. 75th Inf. Rangers

By Danny Wiggins



There was something different about Team Wildcat 7 of F Co. 52nd Inf. LRRPs / I Co. 75 Inf.Rangers. I was assistant team leader on this team for approximately eight months of my tour in Vietnam and this is my story about the exceptional Mexican / American soldier from Pico Reveria, California, who was its Team Leader. He was the primary factor in the success of this special team and for bringing the team members back safely after each mission.

I don't know what prepared Sgt. Rincon to be such a special team leader. Was it his ancestry, his environment as a young boy, the hardships he encountered, or the special training in the military, including NCOIC (Non Commissioned Officer Infantry Course) School at Ft. Benning, Georgia and Special Forces Recondo School? Whatever the single or combination of events, he must have been destined to lead one of the best LRRP / Ranger teams ever assembled in Vietnam. Not only was he respected and admired by the fortunate soldiers who had the honor of performing missions with him; but, also by Team Leaders, several whom he helped train upon their arrival and others who trusted and leaned on his experience and his knowledge of jungle warfare.

Shortly after I met this young soldier, we became team members and this turned into a great friendship only after several missions. I remember Rincon being a mild mannered individual who was easy to talk to and was proud of his humble upbringing as a Hispanic in the Los Angeles area. I found out that he had attended NCO school but I wasn't too impressed. I had known a few instant NCOs in AIT (Advanced Infantry Training) and my experience with them was far from being enjoyable. Being a country boy from North Carolina, I had been raised fishing and hunting game in the woods and swamps all of my young life. I owned my own gun at age twelve and could sneak up on animals without them knowing I was even in the woods. I was bigger, stronger, and I thought, a better soldier than Sgt. Rincon. How could a city boy from California show this country boy anything, for I was at home in the woods and after all that's all the jungle is? Right? It was scary enough being a LRRP (Lurp) and going out in the jungle with five other men; it sure would be great to have someone lead the team that had at least been in the woods before. He would probably keep the team lost and most likely get all of us killed.

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No one could have been farther off base with a first impression that I was about Sgt. Julian Rincon. From the start, he never exhibited any weakness. He was smaller, in stature than many but he never showed fear and this guy knew how to rumble. I once saw him hit a guy and kick him before he could complete the fall. This had to be a result of street experience back in the streets of LA. The LRRPs were the “badest of the bad” in Vietnam and Rincon definitely fit this mold. He knew how to be bad when he needed to; but, he always appeared low key and very humble. He didn’t have to prove anything to anyone. Rincon really gained my respect during our first field missions and especially our first firefight with the enemy. He could read his map, always knew our position, walked though the jungle like he had been there for years, made good instinctive decisions, and through his calmness kept everyone calm and in complete control during any situation. During my time serving with him, I can honestly say that I have never seen him do anything that would degrade the unit or the army. He exemplified the meaning of LRRPs, Rangers, and Air bourn

I know I was a good soldier and I owe much of it to my brother, Rincon. My experience with him is what prepared me to be a team leader and an instructor. I hear many of our guys tell stories of their missions and vivid details of their encounters and combat. I listen in amazement to their stories and their bravery; but, sometimes I feel that Team 7 was in a league of its own. Through the leadership of Sgt. Rincon we always focused on our mission and altered our assignment only when it was necessary or conditions warranted otherwise. I remember many of the guidelines our team operated by and these guidelines are still an influence in my life today. Our team had two objectives, perform our mission well and stay alive. I often refer to Rincon’s Team 7 as the Elvis Presley team” / “Taking Care of Business”. Sgt. Rincon was very professional and easy to get along with but he had a couple of requirements of his team members that were non-negotiable. If a member of the team ever went to sleep during his time on guard duty, he never went back to the field with Team 7. Also, if a person showed fear during a firefight, he was not the type of individual that needed to be a LRRP/Ranger. He recommended that soldier be transferred to a line unit (regular infantry unit) immediately.

As a result of Sgt. Rincon’s leadership and the professional team he assembled, Team 7 was given many special assignments, including attachment to outpost units to perform missions from that location, training companies in the tactics of ambush and training incoming replacement personnel. Team 7 gave training to a couple of companies who had casualties but had not had any confirmed enemy body count prior to working with our team. During our time with their unit, they had confirmed enemy body count and continued to do so after our departure. It is very ironic that Captain Reese M. Patrick, who later became our LRRP unit’s Company Commander, was a platoon leader in Delta Company at an outpost named Fort Apache and was one of those trainees. I remember how he admired our unit and when the opportunity came, transferred to the LRRPs. On another special assignment the team worked with a captain of a Special Forces unit. The

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Captain, later retired Lieutenant Colonel Robert K. Brown founder of in 1975 of "Soldier Of Fortune" magazine, after going out on a mission with our team liked the team so much that he tried to recruit several of its members.

The soldiers who see the most combat are normally the ones who also receive the most metals. I believe the best LRRP/Ranger teams are those who perform their mission well and avoid contact, unless the mission or situation warrants otherwise. I say this with no disrespect to any soldier who ever received a metal or were aggressive in their missions; but only to make a point. Rincon was deserving of quite a few metals but the LRRPs/Rangers were not about getting metals, they felt what they did was their duty in service to their country. He got his purple heart only after returning home and after leaving the army. Looking back, numerous metals of valor could and should have been awarded to all the individuals who served with these units. I'm not sure of the requirements; but, if those in authority could have only followed in his footsteps during that tour in Vietnam, Sgt. Julian Rincon would definitely have his deserving place in the Ranger Hall of Fame.