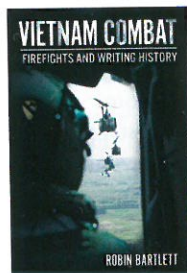


tactical information could change hour to hour, most of the [interrogation] teams were placed at the front” (p. 74).

Although Beverly Eddy’s timely book adds considerably to the Ritchie Boys’ hero-worthy story, she seems at times to intermix Richie graduates with those just passing through the camp, which might leave the reader to periodically wonder exactly who qualified as a Ritchie Boy. Nevertheless, she has provided a worthy book on an often-overlooked group of U.S. soldiers.

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VIETNAM WAR



Vietnam Combat: Firefights and Writing History

By Robin Bartlett.
Philadelphia: Casemate
Publishers, 2023. ISBN
978-1-63624-242-2.
Illustrations. Maps.
Bibliography. Index.
Pp. xxii, 288. \$37.95.

There have been many fine Vietnam Warmemoirs written since the conclusion of the conflict in 1975 (and U.S. involvement in 1973). As the Vietnam generation ages and the conflict recedes into the distant past, Robin Bartlett’s *Vietnam Combat: Firefights and Writing History*, suggests some of the best may be yet to come.

Bartlett wrote his memoir to help him deal with PTSD demons that were still creeping into his consciousness a half-century after his service, and to share some experiences that were not common even among other combat veterans (including face-to-face confrontations with enemy soldiers and hand-to-hand killing). Although he does not list it as an objective, he might have added providing leadership tips for young Army officers. Utilizing communication skills honed by a degree in comparative literature and a career in book publishing, Bartlett shows us what it takes to be a leader in

Rather than a day-to-day diary, each chapter focuses on one event that Bartlett turns into a deep dive into various aspects of his seven months as an infantry platoon leader.

an unforgiving environment, in a war for which Americans were losing heart.

Rather than a day-to-day diary, each chapter focuses on one event that Bartlett turns into a deep dive into various aspects of his seven months as an infantry platoon leader. For example, how do you balance your mission of searching for the enemy and preserving your soldiers’ lives? How does it feel to walk point while cutting a trail through triple-canopy jungle in 100-plus-degree heat? To lie along a trail through a long, dark, rainy night waiting for enemy soldiers to appear? To be ambushed yourself? What is it like to have your soldiers killed? To be wounded? How does it feel to kill, up close and personal?

To answer those questions, Bartlett drew upon a manuscript begun “many years ago” (p. 234) and memories that are “as fresh and real as in my mind today as the day they occurred” (p. xiv), although he probably wishes they were not. Gripping prose makes the reader re-live those experiences right along with him. Here is just one example (p. 66-67), taking you inside the mind of a young platoon leader reacting to an ambush: “My mind spun. I tried to think of all I needed to do to keep control of the situation and ensure my men’s safety while attempting to get Thomas medevaced. Everything and everyone seemed to be moving in slow motion. I realized that I was experiencing tunnel vision, so I stopped, took some deep breaths, and gulped water from my canteen.”

There is more in this book than combat. Bartlett describes his preparation for leadership: Airborne and Ranger schools and the Army’s basic

officer course. In a lesser work, this kind of material can feel like padding, but Bartlett’s entertaining anecdotes and breezy style make it almost as fascinating as the combat sections, especially for veterans who might like to compare his training to their own. There are a few lighter moments, too, including one that may make readers chuckle out loud (involving a new guy, a latrine, and combustibles).

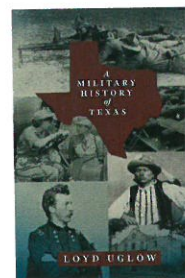
The last five months of Bartlett’s 1968-69 tour was spent in a military history detachment, with additional duty as assistant defense counsel in two marijuana trials. It is an enlightening glimpse into an aspect of Vietnam service readers seldom hear about.

Bartlett wraps up by analyzing the meaning he drew from Vietnam and its lasting impact on his life. Candid and bitter, his conclusions should be pondered by every politician who has a hand in sending young Americans off to war—and by the citizens who elect them.

Readers who want to learn what it was like for a twenty-two-year-old lieutenant to lead even younger Americans in combat, in miserable conditions, in a war no one understood, and where no one wanted to be the last man to die, there is no better place to begin than *Vietnam Combat*.

**Darrell Smith
Champaign, Illinois**

TEXAS MILITARY HISTORY



A Military History of Texas

By Loyd Uglow.
Denton: University
of North Texas Press,
2022. ISBN 978-1-
57441-865-1. Illustra-
tions. Notes. Bibliogra-
phy. Index. Pp. vii, 433.
\$34.95.

Loyd Uglow, author of *A Military History of Texas*, chairs the History Department at the Southwestern Assemblies of God University in Waxahachie, Texas. This book is Uglow’s second treatment of the military history of the Lone Star State. His first, *Standing in the Gap*, focused on U.S. Army outposts in