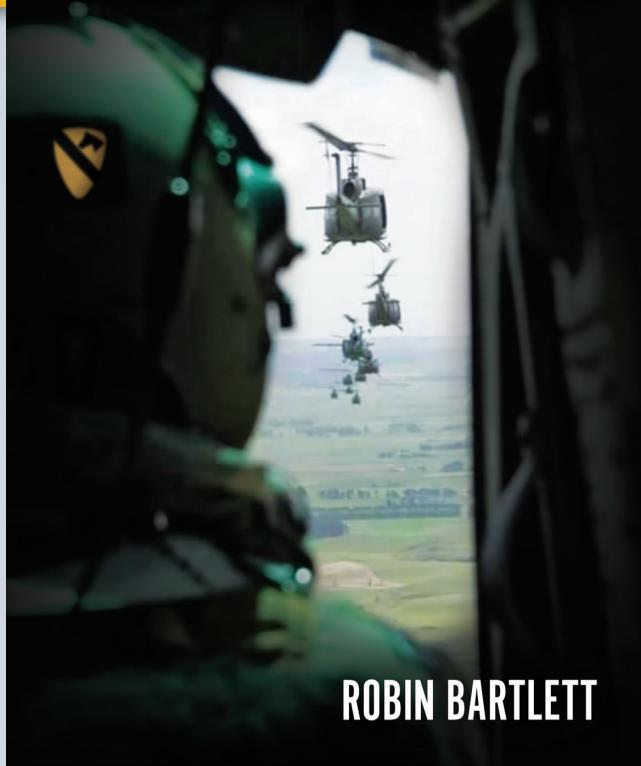


VIETNAM COMBAT

FIREFIGHTS AND WRITING HISTORY



ROBIN BARTLETT

Helicopter Combat Assaults (Charlie Alpha)

The year 1968 was arguably the most significant year of the war. It was the height of the American involvement, and because officer casualties had been so great after the Tet Offensive of January 1968, all prior officer assignments were canceled.

1st Lieutenant Robin Bartlett, originally on orders to the 101st Airborne Division, suddenly found himself at the “repo-depo” in Bien Hoa reassigned to the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). The unit had more helicopter support than any other unit in Vietnam. The soldiers carried lighter packs, more ammo and water because of the availability of rapid helicopter resupply. Immediate support from artillery, helicopter gunships and ARA (aerial rocket artillery) was only minutes away to support a firefight. Wounded troops could be medevaced even in dense jungle using “jungle penetrators.” It also meant that Bartlett’s platoon could deploy through helicopter combat assaults into hot LZs (landing zones) at a moment’s notice if an enemy force had been spotted. And they did.

It was with extreme anxiety that Bartlett made his way to join his battalion and company – it was the worst of times to be a platoon leader in Vietnam, let alone a grunt serving in a combat unit. Bartlett also had to cope with personal issues of commitment to a war that was rapidly losing support not only back home but among the soldiers he was leading through the jungles of I Corps on “search and destroy” missions. *Fifty years later, Bartlett’s vivid combat experiences are brought to light in a fast-moving, well-written, first-person narrative expressing the horror, fear, anguish, and sometimes illogical humor of that war.*



About the Author:

Promoted to 1st Lieutenant after only one year, Robin Bartlett at 22 assumed the leadership of the 1st Platoon, A Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). Over the next seven months, he led a platoon on more than sixty air combat assaults and search and destroy missions.

Robin Bartlett grew up in a military family. His grandfather, father and brother all attended West Point, however after thirteen elementary and middle schools and four high schools, he decided he’d had enough of the military. But in college, as the Vietnam War escalated and eighteen-year-olds were drafted daily, Bartlett joined his college’s ROTC program and fell back into a familiar routine. Upon graduation as a Distinguished Military Graduate he volunteered for Infantry, Airborne, and Ranger training, and assignment to the 82d Airborne Division. He got everything he asked for...and more.



"Robin Bartlett has written one of the most honest and searing personal memoirs of the Vietnam War yet published. He served with distinction as a 22-year-old infantry platoon leader during the brutal combat of 1968. Twice wounded and decorated for valor, he returned like many veterans feeling betrayed by US political and senior military leadership. Although dogged by PTSD, he created a successful life. 'Welcome Home' brave soldier."

— Barry McCaffrey, Gen USA Ret. (Four combat tours and three Purple Hearts)

"This is an incredible book. Objective and hard hitting. Robin was in the thick of it – fighting in Vietnam as an Infantry platoon leader. The author put young Americans in body bags and carried them through the jungle. We were soldiers once. What were we fighting for again? We need a book like this to help us make sense of a determined enemy in a surreal, mysterious place called Vietnam."

— Jan Craig Scruggs, Chair, National Selective Service Appeals Board and Founder, Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC

"Robin Bartlett's superb memoir gives readers an understanding of the human dimension of the Vietnam War and the profound and sometimes searing experiences of the American soldiers who fought it. Veterans, like Robin, who did their duty deserve our deepest respect and gratitude. Younger generations should read this book to gain an appreciation for the sacrifices they made and the service they rendered to our nation and one another."

— H.R. McMaster, General USA Ret., Former National Security Advisor of the United States, author of *Battlegrounds and Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies that Led to Vietnam*

"Many times, during my own Vietnam combat experiences I found myself looking up longingly at U.S. Army helicopters that blackened the sky. As a footsore Marine, I often wondered who those guys were and how they survived so many of the combat air assaults we heard about. The answers are all in Robin Bartlett's masterful recounting of his time as a platoon leader with the vaunted 1st Air Cav during the most rugged years of the war. In his factual recounting Bartlett tells it all as he saw it from a grunt leader's perspective. Strong stuff and full of detail and emotional insights."

— Capt. Dale A. Dye, USMC (Ret), Vietnam veteran, actor, filmmaker, and author of *Korean Odyssey, A Novel of a Marine Company in the Forgotten War*

"Robin Bartlett has a gift of writing. Not everyone has it. This book graphically describes his experience as an American soldier on the battlefields of Vietnam. We should all read his story. We should all heed his words and learn and share his lessons. We should never forget. We owe this to our Vietnam veterans. We should always tell them, "Welcome home, brother." We owe them that much and more."

— Skip Vaughn, author of *Vietnam Revisited*

"Vietnam veteran Bartlett debuts with a cathartic account of his 1968 tour of duty. Only 22 years old when he was promoted to platoon leader in the 1st Air Cavalry Division, Bartlett was careful not to get too close to his men, most of whom were younger: 'I always had to recognize that I might be giving an order to one of my men... that would end up getting the soldier wounded or killed...' In the narrative itself, Bartlett's prose is more vivid, especially when he describes using his combat knife to kill a teenage Vietnamese soldier during an ambush. When his seven months as an officer in the field were over, Bartlett was transferred to division headquarters and a job compiling after-action reports... Poignant and personal, this is an intimate account of one man's war."



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