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By Peter Braestrup

The Vietnam War and its "lessons," real or imagined, still preoccupy U.S. policymakers, politicians, journalists, and, every so often, TV producers. Old cliches and myths persist. To take a New Look at what we now know (and still do not know) about the 'higher conduct of the war' by Hanoi, Washington, and Saigon, some fifty of the best Vietnam historians and analysts gathered for a two-day exchange of views at The Wilson Center in the Smithsonian last January. There was plenty of debate. Some of their findings made headlines. VIETNAM AS HISTORY incorporates the major papers given at The Wilson Center.

Contributors to the volume include Richard Betts, Larry Berman, Douglas Blaufard, Herbert Y. Schandler, Paul Miles, Edwin Simmons, Richard Hunt, George C. Herring, Peter Rodman, Stanley Falk, Bui Diem, Douglas Pike, Stanley Karnow, Alan Gropman, Allan E. Goodman, Vincent Demma, Samuel Popkin, Harry G. Summers, Jr., Russell F. Weigley, Robert E. Osgood, John Mueller, Lawrence W. Lichy and others.

Peter Braestrup is editor of The Wilson Quarterly, former Washington Post and New York Times correspondent in Vietnam, and a past Wilson Center Fellow.

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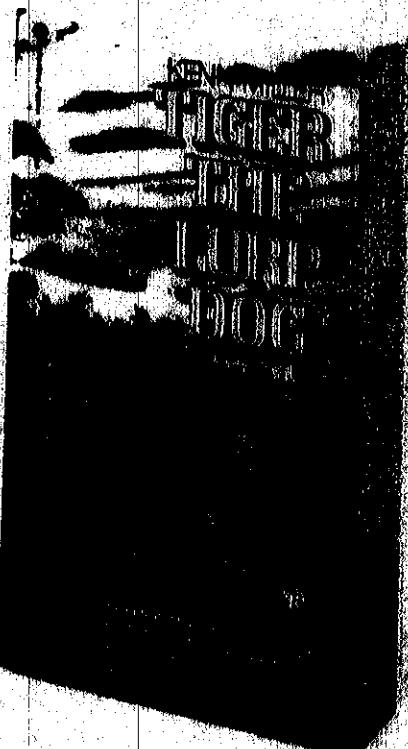
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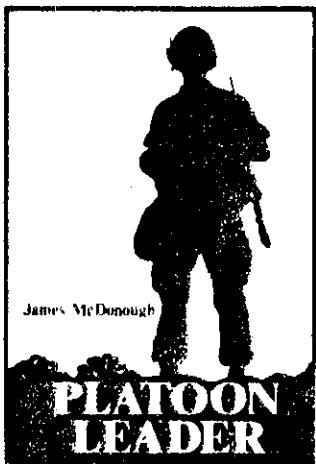
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\$15.95, ISBN: 0-89141-235-2, cloth, 6x9, 1 map, 212 pages
June 1985

PLATOON LEADER

James R. McDonough

The young lieutenant, Jim McDonough, arrived in Vietnam in August of 1970 and was assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade as an infantry platoon leader. For five years he had been preparing for this moment — four years at West Point, followed by Airborne School, Ranger School, and Jungle Warfare School. Now he would face the reality of war.

McDonough writes honestly and vividly of his transition from a green, wide-eyed newcomer, in awe of the fate awaiting him, to a seasoned combat veteran. Becoming a good leader meant confronting his personal fears of death and disfigurement. It meant establishing authority over the men of his platoon and gaining their trust. It meant coming to grips with the morality of a leader's position, as he made decisions that determined life or death. And, it meant accepting the loneliness of command.

The new lieutenant strengthens his platoon position and initiates aggressive patrolling, day and night, to protect the village and stop enemy movement. But "Charlie" is a clever and devious enemy. The rice paddies and thick underbrush hide ambushes, booby traps and snipers. The gruesome toll of the booby traps wears on the nerves of his soldiers who know that one misstep can send hot metal tearing through their flesh. The pressures of leadership weigh heavily on Lieutenant McDonough as he struggles to meet his responsibilities to his men and their mission. Caught

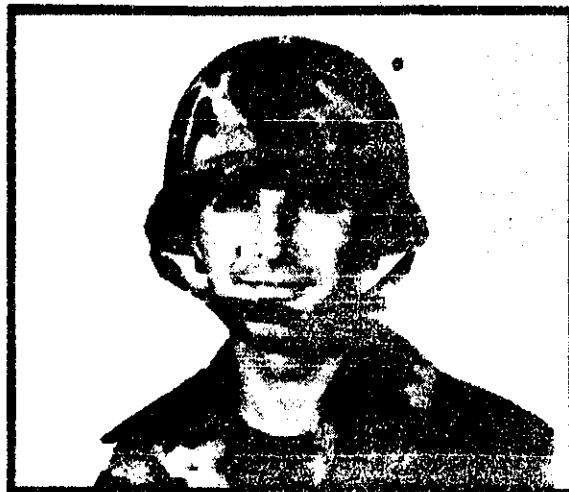
up in the savagery of war, he is not willing to abandon a sense of humanity. Yet in combat comes the chilling realization that there is a fine line between rational man and kill-crazed animal.

PLATOON LEADER is a gripping and action-filled story of combat, an account of a young man's struggle with the conflicts of allegiance to his mission and his soldiers, and a psychological thriller that introspectively examines the effects of shouldering the responsibilities of life and death amidst the brutality of war.



About the Author

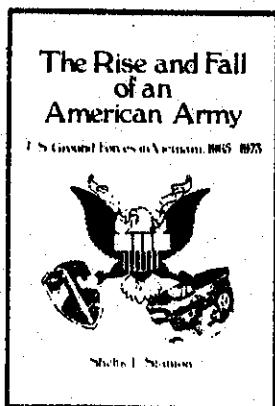
James McDonough, the son of a career Army sergeant, graduated as a lieutenant from West Point in 1969. At the top of his class, he had full option as to branch of service and first duty assignment. Choosing the Infantry, he volunteered for service in Vietnam. McDonough, now a lieutenant colonel, continues to serve with the U.S. Army as Commanding Officer 2d Battalion, 41st Infantry at Fort Hood, Texas. Other assignments with troops were as platoon and company commander, battalion operations officer, and brigade and battalion executive officer. He served also as professor of political science at West Point, intelligence officer with the U.S. Army Headquarters in Europe, special project officer at the Defense Nuclear Agency, and liaison officer in the U.S. State Department. He holds a Master of Science degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



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July 1985

THE RISE AND FALL OF AN AMERICAN ARMY U.S. Ground Forces, Vietnam: 1965-1973

Shelby L. Stanton

Introduction by Col. Harry Summers

A lucid, comprehensive and gripping overview of United States military participation in the Vietnam War. It focuses on the combat units that shaped the battlefield itself; details how the U.S. Forces were raised, where they were sent and how they got there. The account of the American buildup is followed by a thorough battlefield history — the first complete account of the U.S. military ground operations in the Vietnam War. All major operations and significant battles are described vividly, and the impact of each victory or defeat assessed. War strategies, campaign plans, battlefield tactics and combat performance of Army and Marine Corps units are all covered in depth.

As the war dragged on, the initial strength and enthusiasm of the men on the line, as well as of the top level planners, began to wane for reasons clearly explained and thoroughly documented. The story of how the U.S. fielded a massive, modern fighting machine into this small country in Southeast Asia to

wage a war which consumed so much and ended in defeat, is a dramatic one.

Based on information derived entirely from primary sources and recently declassified files, Shelby Stanton presents the facts in a lively writing style. Beginning with the early years of the advisors and Special Forces, then showing how the Army and Marines entered the picture, and proceeding through the war chronologically, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army* is an action-packed, definitive reference that will come to be considered a military classic.



About the Author

Shelby Stanton has proven himself a masterful researcher and historian with his *Vietnam Order of Battle* and *Order of Battle: U.S. Army World War II*. To those talents he now adds those of an engrossing writer. He is currently working on a definitive history of Special Forces Operations in Southeast Asia as well as other orders of battle. Stanton and his family make their home in Bethesda, Maryland.



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\$17.95, ISBN: 0-89141-236-0, cloth, 6x9, 5 maps, 30 photos, 272 pages
September 1983

BRENNAN'S WAR Vietnam 1965-69

Matthew Brennan

This author's account of his thirty-nine months in combat — he made over 400 helicopter assaults with "The Headhunters" (1st Air Cavalry Division reconnaissance squadron) — is exciting, moving and extraordinarily perceptive. If you only read one Vietnam War memoir, this should be the one.

Through Brennan's eyes we see what the war did to the land, to the people, to the men who fought. He points up the contrasts between beauty and devastation, brutality and love: the delicate porcelain cup lying in the mud of a wrecked jungle bunker; the "Vietnamese Madonna" nursing her baby while the Viet Cong husband hides in ambush . . .

Brennan went to Vietnam as a young private eager for action. He found his way to the Flashing Saber Blues of the 9th Cavalry, and before he was through was given a direct commission to lieutenant.

He wore the combat infantry badge with pride; was awarded the Silver Star, the Bronze Star, three Army Commendation Medals and three Purple Hearts. He served all over Vietnam from the DMZ in the North to War Zone D near Saigon. He could trace the pattern of the war, and watched a highly trained army disintegrate into demoralized draftee formations. His leaves home were distressing, since he had lived so long on the edge of danger and death.

On his last return to the Blues, he found the changes there almost unbearable. He had done his share and had had enough.

What he saw, what he did and what he learned make up the canvas of this remarkable book. It is the Vietnam War, and it is all wars.



Matthew Brennan

AP/World Wide

The brutality of Vietnam was commonplace and endless. Once we found a seventy-year-old woman who had been shot through the head by a Viet Cong political officer. She had refused to share one half of her meager rice hoard with the local guerrilla squad. There was a teenage girl from the same area who was killed by us as she defended a large rice storehouse in the hills. She had been firing a captured American rifle. I remember her well—a soldier dragged her body into the burning hooch to serve as a warning to others. Today the Vietnamese Communists will probably tell you that the old woman was useful as a lesson for the other villagers and that the young girl was a heroine. I don't know.

I never understood why America was in Vietnam or what motivated the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese soldiers to fight so bitterly. My understanding was only that I was among the small fraction of Americans in Vietnam who were actually involved in the fighting. I had wanted to be a "combat" soldier, and I wore the blue Combat Infantry Badge with pride. After all, the badge always got such respectful stares from rear echelon supply clerks and truck drivers. Our collective future, the time of being a Vietnam veteran and of being afraid or ashamed to mention it, was still light-years in the future.

Brennan's War



About the Author

As a civilian, Brennan earned a PhD in Anthropology from Harvard, but left the academic world. He lives in a log cabin in Kansas.

