



The Luckiest Guy in Vietnam

James A. Lockhart

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Vietnam 1968: See what's inside the mind of a new lieutenant as he leads two diverse infantry platoons and then commands a rifle company in the field. Walk in the rice paddies and jungles, outsmart the bad guys and, above all, keep the troops alive. Move past the mistakes and twists of fate in the company of everyday Americans who became exemplary infantrymen in the best traditions of their country.

Here we find that most popular assumptions about the war do not apply to these men as they fought in Vietnam, even during this deadliest year. Their ability to perform at a higher level than their enemy belies granting any advantage to indigenous foes. These American infantrymen quickly adapted to the harshness of a hostile tropical environment and neutralized it as a factor favoring the enemy.

This account of determined men overcoming the ever-changing challenges of war captures the essence of the American fighting man's resourcefulness. From the day-to-day grind to the flashes of gunfire, they operate with careful success, accomplishing their mission while protecting their own.

Fast forward 18 months and the same lieutenant returns to Vietnam but now as a combat-tested, Special Forces-trained captain assigned to a secret mission. As a key staff officer in the new training program for the Cambodian Army, he recognizes fundamental problems and crafts lasting solutions. The quirks and flukes of training third-country nationals in Vietnam are no less challenging than those in his first tour of duty.

Language and cultural differences compound the difficulty of conducting training in a combat zone but no slack or extra points are given. The enemy, while less active in this new area, is still an imminent danger to both trainer and trainee.

Unusual, even bizarre, problems arise and must be dealt with despite the lack of relevant standard operating procedures, applicable training, related examples or meaningful experience. These situations, some previously unpublished, require creativity, soul searching and sometimes panache to be successfully resolved.

This book relates events in Vietnam as experienced by the author. They are described as he witnessed and remembers them. After presenting the details of each tour of duty, he offers comments and analyses separately from the narrative so as not to slow its pace or interrupt its flow.

The Luckiest Guy in Vietnam Details

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Rob Ballister says

Read and reviewed as part of the MWSA 2018 awards program.
