

Foreword

All History is relevant to someone, and some history is of interest to everyone. This book, however, should be of interest to anyone who served in the Services at the time of the Vietnam War, and to everyone else, because it is a window to events not well-known nor remembered today.

Very diverse elements of all the United States Services made contributions to the effort, and so did other countries, particularly Australia; during which many men and women made incredible achievements, performed duties under the most adverse, dangerous environment of the time, and exhibited loyalty and a sense of duty regardless of personal opinion and a hostile attitude from the general population at home.

Reading this book brought back memories of my in-country tour 1966-1967 when assigned as a Vietnamese Navy advisor in the Market Time operations (the coastal Junk Force element, in my case), and subsequent deployments on the USS *Polk County* (LST-1084) in 1967 and 1968/69, and on the USS *Parsons* (DDG-33) in 1972 and 1973.

David Bruhn has compiled detailed information on the forces in the Vietnam theater, concentrating on the US amphibious Navy involved from the first assignments of US elements in the early 1960s through March 1973 (when all US forces were out of Vietnam), to the dramatic culminating events of the North Vietnamese takeover in 1975. He lists where Navy and Marine units were located, what they did, and why (the objectives and expectations—some of which were not always realized).

This book is an excellent resource to anyone researching involvement in the Vietnam conflict of Amphibious Forces, and those of the US Coast Guard. At that time, the US Navy had about 965 ships, of which over 15% were amphibious force-related; most of which were deployed to Vietnam at various times. Fifty-four of these ships were in Landing Ship Flotilla ONE, alone; 50 of which were LSTs. Today, the US Navy has fewer than 300 ships in commission; about 33 of them are amphibious warfare ships.

Along the way, David gives glimpses of truly remarkable individual heroism and initiative, and expands insight into the lives of the few who received this Nation's highest decoration, the Medal of Honor. Reading the account of Boatswain's Mate 1st Class James Williams, a MOH recipient, is an inspiration.

The Vietnam conflict is largely viewed as a solely US fight, but David makes it clear it was a United Nations effort, listing armed forces from other countries, principally Australia.

The Vietnam era is ancient history to most of our populations today. Barely mentioned in textbooks, it is most often recorded as a tragedy. David brings out the fallacy of this. On the deck level, individuals responded to events with purpose, determination, and heroism.

While reading these accounts, one should keep in mind that this book covers events that happened nearly 50 years ago. It was a time before cell phones, digital photographs, Skype, and GPS (or any reliable electronic navigation).

We take our instant communication for granted today, but at that time, in that place, even 2-way radios were mostly line-of-sight, and did not always work. In life-or-death situations—which were many—when radio communication failed, individual field commanders had to make operational and tactical decisions on-the-spot. With no opportunity to seek guidance from higher authority, and potential great costs associated with any delay in decisive action, relatively junior leaders had to act independently, and did so, again and again, to protect those under their charge. This book recounts many such actions.

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