



THE BAMBOO SHOOT
The Story of the 2nd
Airboat Platoon

By James Parker Wollner

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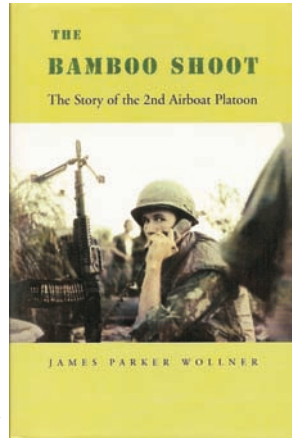
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The Bamboo Shoot is the memoir of James Parker Wollner detailing his experiences and those of his platoon members of day to day life during the Vietnam War. It is also a story of his surroundings as well as the various ethnic groups that the unique unit worked with, from the Nungs to the Thais. It is a story of emotions, the good and bad, days of monotony followed by days that seemed to fly by. It is the story of the feelings of terror and grief at the loss of friends, and the uplifting spirit of camaraderie between brothers, and of helping those who could not help themselves.

The story begins with the author, Jim Wollner 's arrival in Vietnam and subsequent posting to the 9th Infantry Division where a new airboat unit was being formed. Within two days of his arrival, he was off to the Special Forces for additional training. Their first combat mission was in the Plain of Reeds, near the Cambodian border. The unit would travel up the Mekong river, a 40 kilometer trek in five hours traveling at about 20 mph.

Jim was the first member of the unit to receive a Purple Heart. This time also cemented relationships between all, and molded them into a cohesive unit. Weeks later new airboats were received and the unit was reassigned to operate out of Camp Bearcat. Their first mission was to pull security for a gigantic machine called the tree crusher. This machine was used to clear areas of vegetation around a base camp that was being built. This swamp was tidal and these tides fluctuated 13 ft., perfect for the airboats. Tragedy and triumph would follow this unit for the next four to five months. In May of 1968 the unit was reassigned and operated their Boats on the Dong Nai River. where they were used in various capacities, i.e., security, inspection of river traffic, recon patrols, and a few night ambushes.

In June and July there were big changes in the offing. The 9th Division was moving their entire base of operations from Bearcat south, to a place called Dong Tam.

The story presents a facet of the war in Vietnam that few experienced and which cemented friendships among those who served in that unusual unit that will last a lifetime. The book goes on to detail some of the their individual as well as unit get togethers and details of their personal lives following their combat experiences. ★

THE FIRST MARINE
CAPTURED IN VIETNAM
A Biography of Donald G. Cook
By Donald L. Price

334 pages \$35 softcover

67 photographs, appendix, notes, bibliography, index

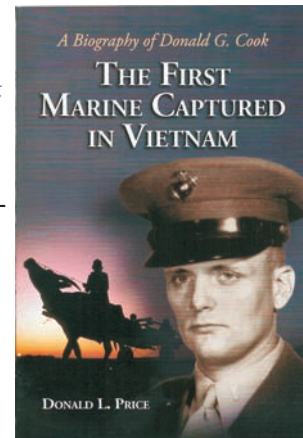
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Reviewed by Cy Kammeier



A very impressive work by retired Marine and former advisor to Vietnamese Marines, Colonel Don Price. The writing style and obvious depth of research paints a vivid word picture of VC prisoner of war Marine Donald G. Cook from the time of capture on December 31, 1964, until his death from malaria three years later. Cook's remains have never been recovered, however, the courageous leadership and actions that earned Cook the nation's highest award, the Medal of Honor, during his captivity have been well recovered by Price. Both the research and the writing are exceptional, obviously a work of admiration and respect for a fellow Marine by a Marine who trod in many of the same footsteps as Cook.

While everyone who has served in Vietnam, or any war for that matter, has a book within himself, the biographer in this case brings out much which most heroes would never bring out in an autobiography. The depth of his research based on interviews and first-hand knowledge of the debilitating diseases, harsh conditions, and life in the jungle makes this an exceptionally factual representation of what Cook endured in the period of his captivity. This biography which relates to a unique and unusual chapter in the Vietnam War rates a place in history among the best writings of that conflict.

As senior officer among several POWs, Cook displayed exceptional courage and devotion to the welfare of his fellow prisoners, refusing to submit to indoctrination efforts or physical abuse to coerce political statements, which led to the posthumous award of the Medal of Honor. In the history of the Marine Corps, Cook is the only Marine captive to ever earn the nation's highest award, or to have a U.S. Navy ship named after him. He earned it, not for a single deed, but for continuing acts of valor that were undertaken without regard to personal safety or comfort. He died while nursing and comforting comrades held by Communist guerrillas in the South. While many stories have been written about life among POWs held in the North, this is one of the rare insights of day to day survival in the tropical, dense, triple canopy jungles of South Vietnam.

"The First Marine Captured In Vietnam," should be required reading by every Soldier or Marine before going into combat as a source of great inspiration. It is not only a captivating read, but as a result of Cook's actions and Price's ability to translate them into words, the memory of Cook will be indelibly inscribed among the most heroic of all Marines in the long and illustrious history of the Corps. Semper Fidelis is a perfect descriptor of Cook's performance and Price's devotion to a fellow Marine.

Bravo Zulu! ★

