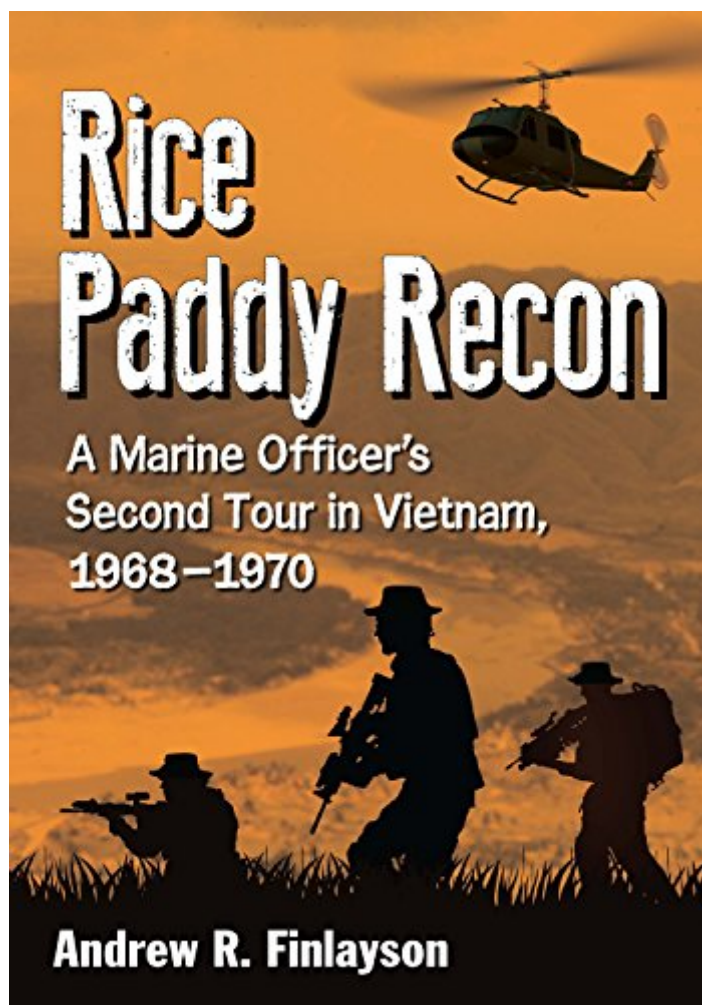


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Rice Paddy Recon: A Marine Officer's Second Tour In Vietnam, 1968-1970



Synopsis

A young U.S. Marine officer recounts his experiences of the Vietnam War over a nineteen month period. He graphically describes what it was like to perform three distinct combat missions: long-range ground reconnaissance in the Annamite Mountains of I Corps, infantry operations in the rice paddies and mountains of Quang Nam Province and special police operations for the CIA in Tay Ninh Province. Using Marine Corps official unit histories, CIA documents, and his weekly letters home, the author relies almost exclusively on primary sources in providing an accurate and honest account of combat at the small unit level. Of particular interest is his description of his assignment to the CIA as a Provincial Reconnaissance Unit (PRU) advisor in Tay Ninh Province, where he participated in several secret missions as part of the controversial Phoenix Program. The name and contribution of the CIA's most valuable spy during the war, the famous "Tay Ninh Source," is revealed.

Book Information

File Size: 8883 KB

Print Length: 320 pages

Publisher: McFarland (October 28, 2014)

Publication Date: October 28, 2014

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00PHS2DQO

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #21,218 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #4 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Military & Wars > Branches > Marines #5 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Military & Wars > Vietnam War #5 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Military > Vietnam War

Customer Reviews

This is another great read authored by Colonel Finlayson. As a Marine officer who served in

Vietnam 67-68 I especially enjoy reading his books covering his service and experience during his two tours in Vietnam, which covered the period 67-70. The first tour was in Force Recon (Killer Kane) covered in another book he wrote, which I read and thoroughly enjoyed. This book covers his 19 month extended second tour that took place in late 68 through early 70, which were troubled times for much of our forces in Vietnam. Caused by the political constraints placed on our ability to fight and the announced drawdown of our war effort, the social upheaval throughout the USA which spawned racial tension, hate, disobedience by a minority, and sometimes violent acts against authority (which the book describes a couple incidence of). By late 68 our government had given in to biased defeatism reporting which portrayed a negative picture by media people who reported from desks and bars in Saigon while manufacturing their negative view of events over reports provided by foreign journalist who had the courage to cover the war outside the relative safety of Saigon. Colonel Finlayson's tour in Vietnam as told in this book provides an outstanding view of what it is like to be a junior officer serving 19 months in harm's way while serving 6 months as an operations officer of a recon unit (an assignment given him based on his previous 13 month experience leading such units on long range recon patrols), next six months as a company commander with the 5th Marines, and finally 7 months as an officer working with the CIA as a PRU (Provincial Recon Unit) advisor to conduct special police operations against the enemy's political infrastructure in hamlets and villages between Saigon and Cambodia.

This book is a must read for anyone who is truly interested in understanding what the Vietnam War was to a dedicated junior officer. Just as the first book Killer Kane, Rice Paddy Recon should be required reading at the Marine Corps Basic School for all Lieutenants at Quantico and every other junior officer school. Andy does an outstanding follow up to his first book Killer Kane. Again it is a very personal, honest, frank, and detailed account of 1stLt/Captain Finlayson's second tour (1968-1970) in Vietnam as an Operations Officer for 1st Force Recon, then as a Company Commander of Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines in I Corps; and finally as the PRU Advisor in Tay Ninh Province. For those with a fascination with the "Phoenix Program", Andy provides a narrative that gives a firsthand account of how the program was carried out in one of the most contested provinces in Vietnam - Tay Ninh. The photos and maps are timely and informative. It is a very personal story to include his deep commitment to duty, his intellect to become the best Marine Officer he could be, his fascination with and love for South Vietnam, and his personal relationship with his Vietnamese friends, and gives vivid detail descriptions of his experiences. Few authors are so open to admit to their foibles as Andy has done in these two books. Reading Rice Paddy Recon

one can easily see how his PRU comrades came up with the very appropriate nickname "The Superior Monk." With his personal morals, honor, Naval Academy background, and as a devoted Catholic, it is easy to understand his actions and commitment to doing the right thing. The above does not take away from the outstanding tours of duty described within the book.

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