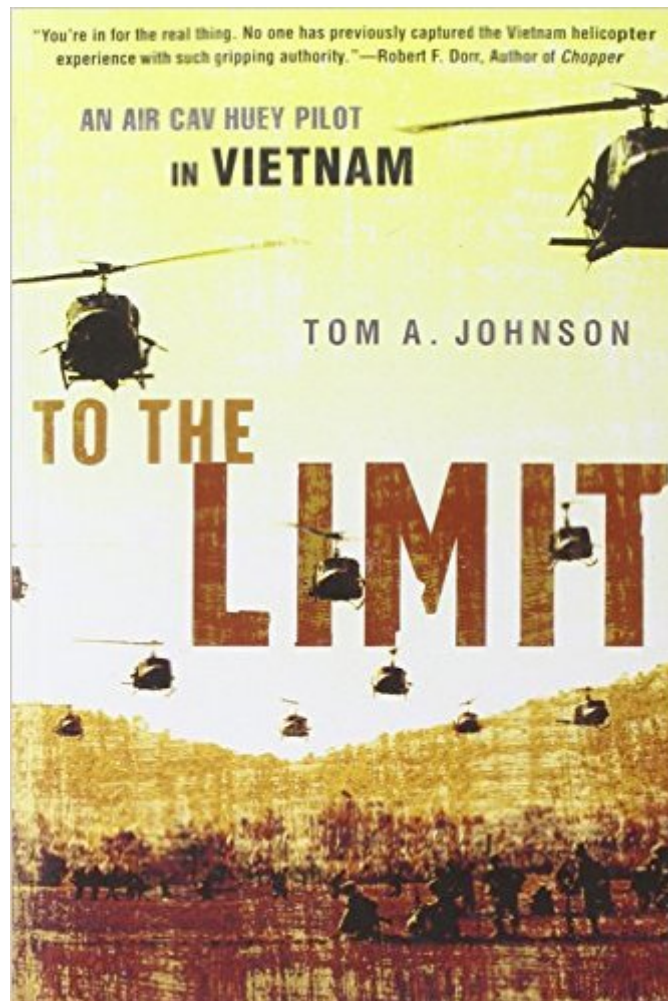


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# To The Limit: An Air Cav Huey Pilot In Vietnam



## Synopsis

During the Vietnam War, one out of every eighteen helicopter pilots never made it home alive. At age nineteen, Tom Johnson flew in the thick of it, and lived to tell his harrowing tale. Johnson piloted the UH-1 "Iroquois"-better known as the "Huey"-as part of the famous First Air Cavalry Division. His battalion was one of the most decorated units of the Vietnam War, and helped redefine modern warfare. This riveting memoir gives the pilot's perspective on key battles and rescue missions, including those for Hue and Khe Sanh. From dangerous missions to narrow escapes, Johnson's account vividly captures the adrenaline rush of flying and the horror of war, and takes readers on an unforgettable ride.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I finished your book about a two weeks ago. A totally engrossing read. If you had any question about your success in conveying what it must have been like, you nailed it 100%. I waited a couple of weeks to see let the story sink in before writing as I thought I'd be able to more adequately describe how much I enjoyed the book and to somehow explain just how much impact it had. I find I'm still short of words, so you'll have to accept that as the best compliment I can come up with. You and your fellow aviators have my absolute respect and admiration. I turned the TV on a few days ago to see "Tour of Duty" showing on the History channel. There was a Huey dropping off a bunch of guys! I have not watched that series before and having gained some insight from your book, it is something I can watch with considerably more knowledge, respect and interest. The technical description of how those whirlybirds work and behave is reminiscent of Tom Clancy's writing style in

his books that usually involve submarines. In this case, knowing the story is in fact non-fiction adds an entirely new perspective. I'm still struck with the vision of waking up in your tent - a damp, humid, mucky, muddy, steamy cauldron - I could "feel" what you described. I am left with very clear visions of: how you "sanitized" your machine by dipping it in the river; the lesson (and practice) of keeping the nose high during a crash into trees; the emotional toll being separated from a young wife; losing friends; crashes and combat; landing without power! WOW.....I'm still fascinated by the concept of landing a helicopter without power! I'd love to see a video of that. Those things really don't look like gliding is something they do particularly well... That whole auto-rotation thing is hard to accept without actually seeing it work.

To The Limit is a 1st rate, well written book that shows Helicopter flying at its best. One can learn great insight into the skills required to fly a helicopter, especially in combat. Due to combat situations and other extenuating circumstances, Tom Johnson, his air crews, and the helicopters themselves are pushed "beyond their limits". With great detail Tom Johnson vividly describes many instances from his flight school days through his tour of duty in Vietnam. Some stories are hysterical, including the time mortars are falling all around, while Tom Johnson and others are trying to run from the outhouse to seek cover. Tom's vivid description of combat, death of friends, and others he never knew, gives you a true feel of the intensity of combat. The vivid pictures he describes will cause your heart to race and your palms to sweat.

As the author put it, the Army gave him a choice, he could walk or he could fly around Vietnam. At nineteen he already had five years of flying experience. It isn't hard to guess which option he choose, especially since by now you've certainly read the title of the book. His tour of duty ran from June 1967 to June 1968. During that time he flew 1600 air hours. A normal work year in the US is 2000 hours. He was basically in the air for a year. And he was there during some of the worst possible times: Hue and Khe Sanh, operations in the A Shau and Song Re valleys. This was the most dangerous job that the Army had, one in eighteen didn't come home alive. The book is dedicated in memory of James Arthur Johansen. He is pictured on page 193 a few hours before he was killed. Mr. Johnson came home with a chest full of medals. He doesn't mention what kind of a reception he received when he came back, but 1968 was the time when the reception was not good. He deserved the medals, and I hope his reception was good. Thanks, Mr. Johnson, for writing this story.

so, i thought i'd give the point of view of a young person and my impressions of this book. recently i took an interest in the vietnam war and after seeing most of the vietnam movies out there, i moved onto books. i wasn't sure exactly which aspect of the war i wanted to read about, but from "we were soldiers" i became familiar with the air cavalry and so i picked this book. and i'm so glad i did. i loved it. this is the sort of stuff i wish they'd told me about in school. i think tom johnson did an awesome job of telling his story truthfully but modestly. the book is so real. it wasn't a bunch of watered down garbage (which i've read enough of in high school), it was his story as he remembered it. i saw the pride the air cavalry guys had for their division and how deeply affected they were by the losses of their friends. i saw how the guys emotionally dealt with dangerous missions and their possible deaths, and a lot of the "goings on" of the military. also, this book is crazy intense. especially the chapter about his experience in the a shau valley. my palms were sweaty and everything. if that's not a sign of a good book i don't know what is. overall, i recommend this book to my peers and my elders alike.

This is a well written book, well worth the money. While reading the book there were times my heart was racing, there were times I laughed out loud and there were times I had to put the book down for awhile because I couldn't see to read it through the tears. I didn't rate it 5 stars because there were so many errors about the flying and flight school. I started flight school 6 months before the author, learned to fly in the same type helicopter, arrived in Viet Nam 6 months earlier, and flew the same "D" model Hueys logging over 1,500 hours in less than a year. He flew as far north as possible as I was flying as far south as possible. He flew "Lightening Bug" missions while I did the same job in my unit except we called it "Firefly". Many times the author speaks of flying 120 mph while being escorted by Huey gunships. A loaded B model couldn't do much over 80 mph and a C model might do 10 more. The Cobra could go much faster. He speaks of stretching the glide after an engine failure by slowing to 60 knots when in reality you want to accelerate to 96 knots and pull the rotor to the bottom of the green arc to get the most distance for the altitude lost in a Huey. I could cite many more examples but you get the picture. Definitely buy the book but don't believe everything you read.

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