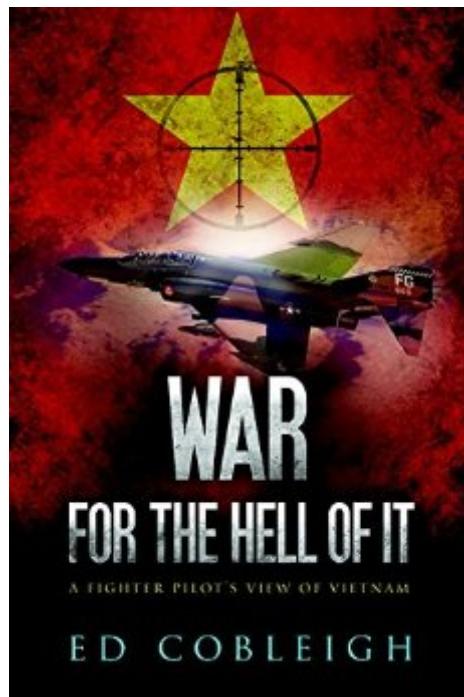


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War For The Hell Of It: A Fighter Pilot's View Of Vietnam



Synopsis

Ed, "Fast Eddie," Cobleigh served two tours of duty during the Vietnam air war, logging 375 combat sorties in the F-4 Phantom fighter/bomber. In *War for the Hell of It*, Cobleigh shares his perspectives in a deeply personal account of a fighter pilot's life, one filled with moral ambiguity and military absurdities offset by the undeniable thrill of flying a fighter aircraft. With well-crafted prose that puts you into the Phantom's cockpit, Cobleigh vividly recounts the unexplainable loss of his wingman, the useless missions he flew, the need to trust his reflexes, eyesight, and aggressiveness, and his survival instincts in the heat of combat. He discusses the deaths of his squadron mates and the contradictions of a dirty, semi-secret war fought from beautiful, exotic Thailand. This is an unprecedented look into the state of mind of a pilot as he experiences everything from the carnage of a crash to the joy of flying through a star-studded night sky, from the illogical political agendas of Washington to his own dangerous addiction to risk. Cobleigh gives a stirring and emotional description of one man's journey into airborne hell and back, recounting the pleasures and the pain, the wins and the losses, and ultimately, the return.

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Customer Reviews

Vietnam-era combat pilots are too often overlooked. Their bombing campaign was one of our

nation's costliest air offensives. Yet, for most Americans, it's the "grunts" on the ground who remain the face of U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia. Perhaps that's because so many Vietnam aviation narratives concentrate on technical details at the expense of human experience. In "War for the Hell of It," Ed Cobleigh has given us an arresting emotional account of one pilot's personal war. Forget "The Right Stuff." Cobleigh pierces that popular image and takes us inside the helmet of a USAF fighter pilot, circa 1969. His memoir is much more than airspeed and avionics, operations and ordnance. This is a book about warriors; the author just happens to fight his war from the cockpit of an F-4 Phantom II fighter-bomber. Cobleigh's account is unsentimental and unsparing. He's a relentless veteran, cold and competent. Over two tours and 375 combat missions he makes mistakes, he hates the enemy, he loses friends, and he copes by resorting to denial and detachment. Yet, for all his hard-won cynicism, Cobleigh refuses to surrender his humanity. This is a book about duty. Winners get out alive, and survivors are obligated to tell the truth. One reason why Cobleigh's memoir is so compelling is because it's not a straight chronology. Readers who expect dates and specifications will be disappointed. Instead, Cobleigh wisely chooses to tell his story as a series of vignettes that capture vivid on-the-spot impressions. It so happens that the father of one of my high-school classmates served with the USAF in Vietnam. Weapons officer in a Phantom, he won the Distinguished Flying Cross. When he told us war stories, this is what they sounded like.

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