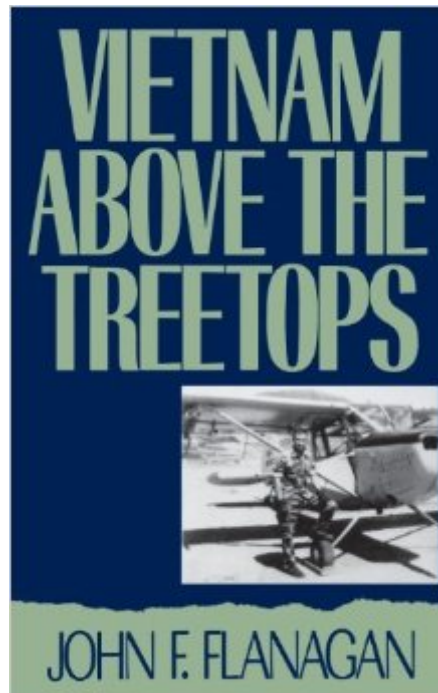


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Vietnam Above The Treetops: A Forward Air Controller Reports



Synopsis

It is 1966, the war is escalating, and a young Air Force Academy graduate's assignment is to patrol unfriendly territory with six-man hunter-killer teams. As a Forward Air Controller, flying single engine spotter planes, Flanagan is the link between fighter-bomber pilots and ground forces. This autobiographical account recreates the period when Flanagan, assigned to Project Delta, was plunged into major operations in key combat areas. Spectacular airstrikes, team rescues, lost men, thwarted attempts to save comrades--all are recounted here with raw honesty. A factual combat history from one man's perspective, this is also a thoughtful look at the warrior values of bravery, honesty, and integrity. Flanagan examines the influences that help build these values--educational institutions, the military training system (including the service academies), and religion--and reflects on the high cost of abandoning them. In *Vietnam Above the Treetops*, Flanagan traces his life from adolescence through the training period, combat missions of all kinds, and re-entry into the everyday world. His war tales take us to key regions: from the Demilitarized Zone, south through the Central highlands, and into War Zone C near Cambodia. Flanagan tells the absolute truth of his experience in Vietnam-- call signs, bomb loads, and target coordinates are all historically accurate. He offers observations on the Vietnamese and Korean forces he worked with, comparing Eastern and Western cultures, and he vents his frustrations with the U.S. command structure. Determined to reconstruct the past, Flanagan re-read old letters from Vietnam, examined maps, deciphered pocket diaries, interviewed former comrades, and let his own long-buried memories surface. Flanagan did not find this book easy to write, but he wanted to pay tribute to his fellow warriors, especially those still missing in action; he wanted to exorcise his war nightmares and further understand his experience. Even more important, he needed to communicate the values he and his comrades lived by, in distant jungles where they faced some of the toughest circumstances known to human beings.

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Customer Reviews

It brought back all the fear, sadness and frustration of that december day in 1966. I was a 19 year old doorgunner on one of those gunships that day with the 281st ahc in Khe Sanh. I am 51 now and to this day it still haunts me. I was fortunate to be on several mission with Flanagan and the guy always came through.

This book brought back many long forgotten memories of what we experienced as FAC's in Viet Nam. We flew just above the jungle and treetops at about the speed of smell with no armament except a flack vest to sit on and threw hand grenades out the windows at the bad guys in a desperate attempt to help the men on the ground who were in contact with the enemy. A good book - recommended reading. Robin O'Brien

A great book, and tells it like it was, could not put it down till I had finished it. Would recommend it to anyone who enjoys flying and understands the risks of our courages pilots in the Viet Nam War.

Having been there and done that I can vouch for the authenticity of the writing. Even if you're a civilian you should be able to develop an appreciation for what another little known group of pilots did for their country.

I was not a FAC, but appreciate their efforts to support us. He addressed some problems confronting the military in Vietnam in a thoughtful and I believe accurate way. Inter-service squabbles particularly.

General Flanagan's memoir of his time in Vietnam is one of the most personal and sorrowful

accounts of that American tragedy yet. The Kirkus review tells us, "you will not find the meaning" of the Vietnam War in this book. And that's true. John F. Flanagan didn't go to Vietnam to do that. He went as a Warrior and the nature of that war weighed heavily upon him. It does to this day. In a way I would classify this personal history with E.B. Sledge's masterpiece *WITH THE OLD BREED*. The times and perspective are different, but seeing the elephant remains the same. When all the grandstanding and speeches are over, all the flag waving and parades, ultimately men risk their lives for their friends. These men are usually too preoccupied with the task at hand to "figure it all out". Sledge saw war and was horrified by its specter, its indifferent carnage and filth. He had the rectitude though of having returned a 'winner'. All those boys were killed, but their death had some purpose. John Flanagan couldn't feel that. He just knew that the friends he lost and saw die, died vainly. No matter how good these men were, how much moral certitude they had, their deaths were without purpose. John Flanagan is a man of purpose. General Flanagan reflects great dignity upon those men and to their families. He's a man of quiet dignity himself and can take pride in knowing that he did all he could when he could. As a Soldier that's what's known as trust. My best wishes go out to General Flanagan, his family and friends.

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