



## **A Lonely Kind of War: Forward Air Controller, Vietnam**

*Marshall Harrison*

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## **A Lonely Kind of War: Forward Air Controller, Vietnam** Marshall Harrison

Forward air controllers fought a tension-filled, three-dimensional war in Vietnam, quite literally running the air war on the battlefield where they coordinated all air strikes. It was a dangerous life as they flew low and slow, always a prime target for enemy small arms fire.

## **A Lonely Kind of War: Forward Air Controller, Vietnam Details**

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## **From Reader Review A Lonely Kind of War: Forward Air Controller, Vietnam for online ebook**

### **James Sausville says**

This is the definitive book on the battles fought by forward air controllers in the Vietnam War. The author weaves a compelling narrative about his first-person experiences as a forward air controller in combat. I have read more than a hundred books on the conflict in Vietnam and this book is my favorite by far.

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### **George says**

An earnest and engrossing account of Mr. Harrison's experience as a FAC pilot of the OV-10 Bronco in Vietnam and Cambodia. He directs fighters in the air and provides close air support to the soldiers on the ground, engaging in slower-speed turboprop flight and tight aerobatics that fill a critical operational niche between slow yet maneuverable helicopters and super-fast jets. This book does not get philosophical, so if you're looking for an investigation of the morality of combat, the Vietnam War, or secret special operations, this isn't it. But if you want to understand this little-noted portion of history, told well, and glossing over little either in heroism or fear, pride or regret, comradeship and sullenness, this is it. If you're familiar with the more common literature and film from infantry and helicopter operations, this will both enrich your understanding and take you someplace new. I won't leave spoilers for the events at the end of the book, but the fast-starting opening does not disappoint toward the finish. I see that Mr. Harrison has also written some fiction, so I'm going to check out "The Delta." It would be good to see his work make it into a feature film. And I'm going to keep an eye out for the OV-10 Bronco in museums. Maybe I'll even get to Europe to see the contemporary airshow-based OV-10 Bronco Demo Team in action.

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### **Jeff says**

#### **An engaging and entertaining read**

This is a remarkable book of service and self sacrifice. It is fast paced at times humorous and very well written.

A Forward Air Controller flying an OV-10 Bronco, Marshall Harrison tells the compelling story of his service in South Vietnam.

Flying from forward often unimproved air strips he helped protect troops in enemy contact and directed fighter aircraft dropping bombs.

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### **Michael Burnam-Fink says**

Forward Air Controllers had one of the most important jobs in Vietnam. They made sure that troops got airpower delivered exactly where they needed it, and not off in the jungle or on friendly positions. With a

load of smoke rockets and a great radio network, FACs coordinated the delicate dance of getting bombs on target.

Harrison has a clean style that captures the chaos and complexity of his job, while providing enough context to follow along. Flying low and slow in OV-10 Broncos, his pilots made sure the fast-movers knew where to put their bombs. He also has plenty of 'life in Vietnam' stories, including a madcap attempt to get a pair of cobras out of his hooch's bunker that involved calling in the Green Berets.

All of this makes for a far above average memoir, but where this book gets truly nuts is when Harrison is seconded to MACV-SOG towards the end of his tour. He was shot down supporting operations in Cambodia and hid overnight in a bamboo grove while NVA troops hunted him. Back in the cockpit, on another mission, Harrison landed his OV-10 on a jungle road to pull out a SOG team that had been blown and was out of helicopter range for extraction. This is the kind of thing that gets you the Medal of Honor (Bernard F. Fisher got one extracting a downed pilot with his Skyraider under similar circumstances), but because it was all classified at the time, Harrison got nothing at all.

There were a lot of courageous men in Vietnam. I feel confident in calling Harrison a Hero-with-a-capital-H.

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### **Jen says**

My dad loaned this book to Mark and I. We both enjoyed it, though I thought it was a bit technical for me at times (the book starts off with a 2 paged list of military acronyms and their meanings, and several times in reading I had to refer to the list and found that it wasn't comprehensive enough!) Though it did paint a vibrant picture of life as a FAC pilot in Vietnam. The risk, the dangers and the laughs--it gave a clear picture of the relatively sheltered USAF life in Vietnam, and was very interesting to contrast with the recent book I read, "Matterhorn," which paints an incredibly ugly, grimy and desperate picture of life as a soldier on the ground in the Vietnam war. I also enjoyed reading "A Lonely Kind of War" because it makes me think of my dad, who served in the Air Force during the war, and kind of explains a lot about his sense of humor and professional career.

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### **Caleb Lyons says**

Great read on the little known lives of Forward Air Controllers (FACs) during Vietnam. The Author's wit really lends itself to the art of military story telling, helping to capture the essence of the Aviator way of life

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### **R\_ says**

This is an impressive book & the author. It's an exiting story of a man who was in the thick of the fighting & was in a unique position to coordinate those same battles as a Forward Air Controller. It's too bad that there seems to be so much negativity surrounding anything having to do with the war in Vietnam. As in any war, I'm sure that terrible things happened. But it was gratifying to read a story about an extremely competent aviator/warrior who served with others in that war (whether Air Force or Army) who were NOT crazed killers, but rather brave men who were doing the best they could in a bad situation. My father (as an Army Officer) was called upon to do that very same thing.

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## **Vetri says**

whew

this book is truly a page turner  
filled with action and a few funny bits that would make anyone laugh out loud specially the bit when a aussie  
bronco pilot crash lands "well within vietnam" and that other time when they try to flush out the cobra truly  
made my bell hurt with laughter. this dude worked with SOG , so that proves he has brass balls .  
a definite and must read for anyone and everyone.

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## **Philip Hollenback says**

I enjoyed the narrative in this book, although I felt the ending was way too much of a hollywood action  
movie. I question whether the events he described all really happened. Still, it was enjoyable as heck.

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## **Mark Veira says**

Bloody fantastic read. Harrison has the ability to put you in the cockpit with him, skimming over treetops  
under fire, baked in sweat, adrenaline coursing through your veins.

The kind of action this man saw, and the vividness of his portrayal of it - is astounding, this kind of action  
and pace is usually the domain of the very best novel writers, yet this actually gives you all the excitement,  
without the fiction - instead you get a gritty look into true historical events - part of a very obscure and little  
covered slice of the air war over Vietnam, the life of a Forward Air Controller.

These guys flew day and night in lightly armed, slow-moving OV10 Broncos - and held complete authority  
over the hordes of bomb-slinging fast jets, telling them exactly how and where to drop their ordinance.

A riveting read throughout, couldn't recommend it more highly!

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## **Chris the Protagonist Antagonist says**

A must read for anyone serious about delving deeper into understanding the Vietnam War experience. Very  
highly recommended. I still give it five stars even though I wish there wasn't a portion of the book devoted to  
how the author learned how to become a FAC. The first chapter alone is worth buy this book. The last  
chapter is pretty incredible too.

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## **Armor says**

Excellent book. Guy has cojones, enjoyed the beginning and the shoot-down especially.

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## **Seth says**

Author Marshall Harrison served in the United States Air Force for three tours of duty during the Vietnam War from 1965 to 1970. His autobiographical book, *A Lonely Kind of War* depicts his unique job as Forward Air Controller in a Bronco OV-10 aircraft. Harrison and his few colleagues as FACs coordinated air strikes by fighter bombers in support of ground troops and bombing bunkers and other ground targets of opportunity. Often working with a wide myriad of officers, radio operators and pilots, this job required a range of skills including communications, navigation, piloting and attacking ground targets. As a result, the FAC duty was assigned to a select group of Air Force pilots who, as the title of this book suggests, were alone in their mission to support the armed forces in Vietnam.

Harrison made over five hundred sorties as Air Liaison Officer/Forward Air Controller 1st Infantry Division and 1st Cavalry Division in the Vietnam area. He became well-decorated with medals and awards for his service which include the Silver Star and Distinguished Flying Cross. Fortunately, many of the sorties he made to earn the medals are included in the book. Why is such a history more valuable than secondary sources or entertaining than a fiction action novel? Mostly because the fiction novels have the same action, but it is not real. Here, it is real, but no less exciting to read about. The book also informs and educates audiences.

*A Lonely Kind of War* throws the reader directly into the elements of a page-turning thriller novel- action with bombing and getting shot at by enemy antiaircraft guns. Harrison has many choices of missions to include in this title, and it is interesting to note that this book could have been well over a thousand pages if he included every exciting mission he experienced and the anecdotes from base and flying on the over five hundred sorties that he made while on active duty. However, he chooses the most exciting missions to include because they make for good story telling. But he also includes typical every-day experiences to inform the audience about what daily life was like in Vietnam for military personnel. Therefore, both the exciting and the mundane remembrances are worth including.

After the initial adventure in the skies over South Vietnam, the reader is taken back to the basics of becoming an FAC. The author's keen sense of storytelling is apparent here because if told in strict sequential order, the book would not be as attention-grabbing to the reader, who might become bored if started with training and not combat. The training is vital to the story because without it, the book would be nothing more than anecdotes typical of storytelling to curious children and grandchildren.

Marshall Harrison was shot down and spent a night in the jungle while being hunted by the enemy Viet Cong. At the end of his tour as FAC he reluctantly flew for the Special Forces who were operating in Cambodia. These make for a great crescendo to the story.

There are many memoirs written about the Vietnam War and authors usually need to decide what to include and what to omit when editing down to size. Given the daily non-stop requirement of American servicemen in Vietnam, this leaves historians and authors with a lot of material, anecdotes and information to process in order to create a compelling story. Fortunately, Marshall Harrison was not only a decorated Air Force pilot but also an effective author whose prose is elegant and plot structure specific to grabbing the reader in the beginning, telling the nuts and bolts of the operation, and finishing with an action-packed crescendo that is worthy of any fiction novel of action and adventure.

These types of books are a great kind of history for the general public because not only do they educate readers about the realities of an important part of American history, but they do so in an entertaining fashion that compels the reader to finish the book and not give up part-way through. Historians appreciate a serviceman who keeps a diary or plans to write a memoir. From remembering conversations to mission details, living history like this book is of great value to both historiography and the average reader alike. As a

result, we have a piece of history that can tell the story of those who served in Vietnam and sacrificed their lives for both contemporary and future citizens. The men and women who served in Vietnam deserve, if nothing else, to have their stories told and Marshall Harrison's *A Lonely Kind of War* accomplishes this goal.

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### **Tracy Colwell says**

Oh my, this is high on my re-read list. The first chapter is quite possibly the most engaging writing that I have ever read. This is a war stories book, but it completely conveys the feeling of being there - so say two different uncles who fought in this war (one who was also an FAC). Marshall tells of the amazing flying that he had to do to direct air-to-ground missile strikes against the Viet Cong, and of many ground experiences he had (including an AMAZING story of surviving a shoot-down).

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### **Brett says**

First, a quibble. Amazon has the author's name wrong. It is Marshall Harrison. Sheesh.

This is one of the truly outstanding accounts of one man's wartime experience. Harrison was a junior and (later field grade) Air Force officer and former jet pilot who was assigned as a Forward Air Controller (FAC) in Vietnam. These are not the memoirs of a general and that makes this book all the better.

Harrison and his team lived in the mud, the bugs, and the bombs in advanced airstrips from which they flew support for ground operations. Juggling fighter-bombers, directing artillery, and performing battle damage assessment, these pilots flew low and slow overhead and were subjected to intense groundfire on a regular basis. Harrison describes in vivid terms what his life was like during that yearlong deployment that included a stint flying covert missions over Cambodia and Laos. Harrison is not a revisionist and has no political axe to grind. He simply tells his story in a way that transcends tactical descriptions or equipment nomenclature. From one of the most gripping starting chapters I have ever read, Harrison leads us into a story that will keep readers rapt.

Although his efforts are quite serious, Harrison possesses a wicked sense of humor. The snakes in the bombshelter story never fails to leave me laughing hysterically. Just as adroitly, we catch an equally striking glimpse of terror when he gets shot down in Cambodia.

This is an honest, easy to read, and captivating account of wartime experiences recounted through the eyes of an everyday member of the military. I have probably read it ten times and find it just as enjoyable with every reading. I cannot recommend this book highly enough to anyone seeking a different perspective on Vietnam or even war in general.

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