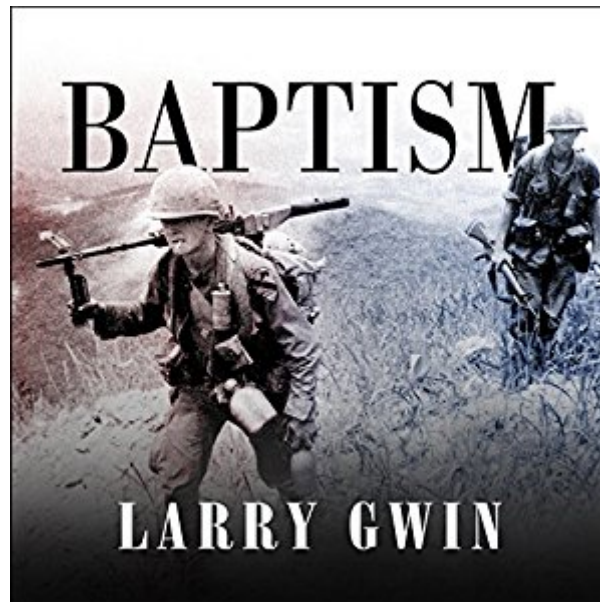


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Baptism: A Vietnam Memoir



Synopsis

A Yale graduate who volunteered to serve his country, Larry Gwin was only 23 years old when he arrived in Vietnam in 1965. After a brief stint in the Delta, Gwin was reassigned to the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) in An Khe. There, in the hotly contested Central Highlands, he served almost nine months as executive officer for Alpha Company, 2/7, fighting against crack NVA troops in some of the war's most horrific battles. The bloodiest conflict of all began November 12, 1965, after 2nd Battalion was flown into the Ia Drang Valley west of Pleiku. Acting as point, Alpha Company spearheaded the battalion's march to landing zone Albany for pickup, not knowing they were walking into the killing zone of an NVA ambush that would cost them 10 percent casualties. Gwin spares no one, including himself, in his gut-wrenching account of the agony of war. Through the stench of death and the acrid smell of napalm, he chronicles the Vietnam War in all its nightmarish horror.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 13 hours and 17 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Tantor Audio

Audible.com Release Date: February 24, 2015

Language: English

ASIN: B00TIW71WG

Best Sellers Rank: #132 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Military > Vietnam War #186 in Books > History > Military > United States > Veterans #284 in Books > History > Military > United States > Vietnam War

Customer Reviews

One of the few narratives to come out of Vietnam that digs deep under the camouflage of a sensitive yet tough infantry officer. AUTHOR Larry GWIN took over thirty years to reveal this wonderful memoir, and readers will surely feel the wait was worth it. BAPTISM is not merely an I-was-there war story, even though it blasts its way through some of the bloodiest encounters of the war. Rather, this book is the haunting story of a man who was proud to answer his country's call to arms, urged on by family history and the single mindedness of Yale ROTC training (ranger, airborne all the way). To such an idealist, the mud-and-blood sacrifice and idiotic blundering inherent in war

was almost certain to offer a very painful baptism indeed. Whether he is describing the anguish of seeing comrades blown to bits by friendly fire or an act of cruelty imposed on a boom-boom girl, the author's eye is merciless and all revealing. Gwin deals with the twilight of war, bringing those of us who were grunts back to the alien landscape we struggled against but did not understand. His book is lyrical at times, all about the death of valor and the angry rebirth of an American fighting man, "doomed from here to eternity". VETERANS will recognize the honesty of this book, while civilians, especially women, will better understand the flak jacket that conceals every combat soldier's heart. A MAGNIFICENT book. It should be enjoyed along with Joseph Galloway's and Hal Moore's WE WERE SOLDIERS ONCE AND YOUNG, a best seller that provides a big picture of the FIRST CAV in combat, and covers some of the battles and firefights so poignantly described by LARRY GWIN.

This book I shall keep in my library forever. I hope someday my kids will read this. I was at An Khe and Larry captures it exactly as I remember it. Many books have been written about Vietnam, and each person's recollections are personal to his own perceptions of his time there. No two are the same; But Larry tells it like I remember it. This is an outstanding book! I couldn't help but make notations as I read it. A classic to my way of thinking. Anyone that wants to know what it was like, read this book.

After reading the first chapter of Larry Gwin's book, I was hooked. This memoir, a story of a naive 1st lieutenant who is sent to Vietnam, survives a nearly disastrous battle, then is horrified by the reality of war and death and suffering, is well-written and spellbinding. He writes openly and honestly about himself, warts and all, as well as his fellow officers (the good, the bad, and the cowardly) and the "grunts" in his platoon. Many of the NCOs and enlisted men who go into battle with lieutenant Gwin prove to be brave in the face of death and loyal to their buddies who are either wounded or dying... "No one is left behind." I felt as though I was there with lieutenant Gwin as he and his men are airlifted into a hot LZ, praying to come out alive and in one piece. While this is a story about the horror of war, there are quite a few light moments which are humorous. All in all, this book is a real page-turner. Perfect for a rainy afternoon's read in a comfortable chair.

Larry Gwin doesn't pull his punches with this very good book. I must admit that when I picked it up I couldn't put it down. I appreciated his refreshing honesty, his humbleness and his humanity. As a former infantry/paratroop officer myself I can relate very directly to his experiences - though

thankfully I was spared the horrors of the Vietnam conflict that Larry Gwin had to endure. I hope that he chooses to write more.

This book gives you the perspective of a combatant rather than a historian or journalist. A gripping account of real events that left me thankful I wasn't there and appreciative of those who were.

I salute Larry Gwin for giving me, no grunt, a new and vivid appreciation for the infantryman's Vietnam. Vietnam vets especially, buy this book, read it, then give it to your wife, your children. You owe it to them.

For those who supported the war in Vietnam, those who opposed it and those who weren't yet born, understanding what the war was about is only possible by reading excellent first-hand accounts like this one by Larry Gwin. The very nature of the fighting has been obscured by 35 years of polemics, propaganda and politically-driven historical analysis. Here is the bare-knuckles reality of the war: a battle at death grips between the People's Army of North Vietnam and American forces, not primarily a "counterinsurgency" effort directed against revolutionary Viet Cong guerillas. That's what it was in late 1965, when Larry Gwin's 1st Cavalry troopers fought for their lives in the Ia Drang Valley, and that's what it was nearly four years later in the Tet offensive.

Barrels of blood, not one drop of ego. I am very suspicious of anyone who claims to be the most highly decorated soldier, the bravest or the strongest. Dig beneath the surface, and there's always a rich lode of puffery, ego and phoniness. Gwin makes no claims, yet his episodes are, literally, spell-binding. He doesn't hesitate to pin the tail on the donkey...or himself.

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