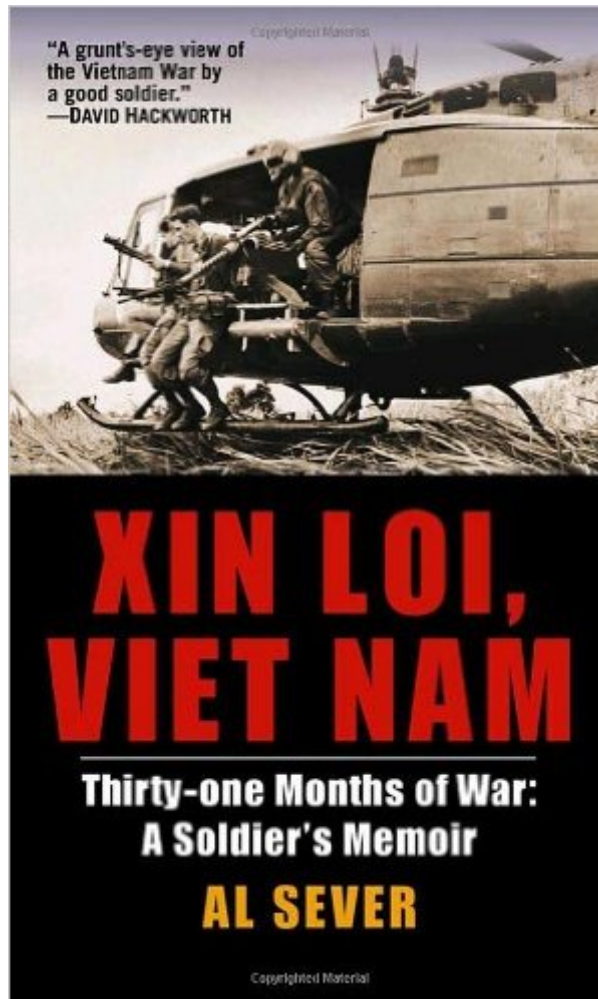


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Xin Loi, Viet Nam: Thirty-one Months Of War: A Soldier's Memoir



Synopsis

No one in Vietnam had to tell door gunner and gunship crew chief Al Sever that the odds didn't look good. He volunteered for the job well aware that hanging out of slow-moving choppers over hot LZs blazing with enemy fire was not conducive to a long life. But that wasn't going to stop Specialist Sever. From Da Nang to Cu Chi and the Mekong Delta, Sever spent thirty-one months in Vietnam, fighting in eleven of the war's sixteen campaigns. Every morning when his gunship lifted off, often to the clacking and muzzle flashes of AK-47s hidden in the dawn fog, Sever knew he might not return. This raw, gritty, gut-wrenching firsthand account of American boys fighting and dying in Vietnam captures all the hell, horror, and heroism of that tragic war.

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Customer Reviews

Al Sever is a unique individual. In his book, he credits me by name for training him as a crewchief. He writes as if my training intensity was somehow special or above the call of duty. I didn't think of it that way. I thought of it as doing what I could to survive, and to help my brothers survive. It was frankly comforting to me to know that the crewchief in the gunship behind me knew what he was doing when he covered our tail. And he did. The only thing that he did wrong was to volunteer for a second tour in Viet Nam. And that brings me to his uniqueness. Al survived his second tour both physically and for the most part, psychologically. Most of the men who re-upped for a second tour didn't get back in one piece. I'm glad he did because he wrote a helluva book with an incredible memory for details. I honor him for his service and for his insights into the politics and sadness of that war. Every detail is true for the period we served together in '68 and '69 flying out of Cu Chi. Xin

Loi, Viet Nam is loaded with ironies and the title carries the most. Read the book.

Having served 12 months as a door gunner in 1965-1966 with the 1st Cav Div, I know a little bit about being a door gunner. This book is very realistic in what it portrays. I am amazed at the author's memory. His descriptions of everyday events are remarkably true to life. I highly recommend this book for the Veteran or anyone who wants to know how it feels to be a Veteran.

Al Sever is a dynamic author with an action story to share with his readers. His first tour of Vietnam around Cu Chi to the western area of Vietnam along the Cambodian border is non stop action. Mr. Sever saved hundreds of American foot soldiers with his machine gun expertise as a helicopter door gunner and crew chief. His valor and willingness to fight the enemy in the face of certain death is exemplary. In addition to relating war stories of success, the author has a unique ability to articulate the frustrations, disappointments and tragedies of life. He is able to describe the turmoil in his soul as he confronts the terror and tragedy of war, poor leadership and the selfishness of greedy politicians. As Mr. Sever vividly looks into the human soul, the reader will find his own soul stirred with similar emotions. As a Christian, I see Mr. Sever's escape from the hands of certain death as a testimony to God's mercy and power to preserve life in impossible situations. Al Sever returned to the United States to attend Penn State University from 1973-1977, majoring in civil engineering. He worked on soil, waterway and oil/gas projects after graduation. He won the Air Medal with 17 Oak Leaf clusters during his Vietnam War service (Linkedin). Al Sever is one of the top three authors, along with Don Hall "I Served" and Robert Mason "Chickenhawk", I've read with stories of the Vietnam experience. "Xin Loi, Viet Nam" is highly recommended.

Sever not only keeps the reader engaged, but is also a skilled craftsman in the mechanics of writing. I especially appreciated his introspection on the lives lost, and families forever changed, on all sides of the conflict. Though his accounts of the killing he personally did in his role as a helicopter crew chief/gunner may at first seem to be somewhat unfeeling, those who have never fired a gun in war must realize that he simply took it upon himself to do his job as well as he could, in a morally impossible situation. He volunteered to face risks so that others would be spared from doing so. And when he was able, he also took risks to spare innocent civilians. And like many who have served in war, he has carried the guilt and regret of his actions - and especially of the one day his courage failed him - for the rest of his life. Thank you, Mr Sever, for your faithfulness to comrades, and for sharing your personal feelings about how this war affected you, and others.

I honestly don't like giving my fellow Vietnam warriors five stars. We've all had so many rose petals and awards placed in our paths throughout the years, I worry about overdoing it. Still, Al Sever gets five from me simply because he's a Vietnam veteran who has somehow given up drugs and killing babies long enough to write a book, a good book. Hell, I flew some 1100 hours in the war and I didn't know that, "It's a lot easier hitting small targets if the AC watches the target through the chin bubble at his feet and gives the command to drop the grenade. Leaning out the door to the left while moving forward makes it difficult to be accurate when you throw the grenade." If I ever get my hands on a helicopter and a buddy to drop the grenade, I'll remember this when we get to Washington. Sever's book, "Xin LOI, Viet Nam" is what I call an energetic, entertaining, and crisply written book. I'm Bob Miller, author of "Kill Me If You Can, You SOB" (hint).

I've read a number of books by warrant and commissioned officer helicopter pilots, but this is the first by an enlisted crew chief. Since Al served with a company I knew, it had been part of the 11th Combat Aviation Battalion (with which I served in 1967) and flew in a III Corp AO I knew, I gave it a whirl. I wasn't disappointed. Not only is the tale he has to tell worth reading, I was struck by the fact that he was more reflective and was quicker to grasp that the way we were fighting, and our isolation from the Vietnamese, was diminishing the chances for any success, than were most of the pilot-authors I've read. Perhaps the multi-tasking required to keep a helicopter in the air left little time for reflection. Or maybe Al is just more perceptive than most. (We EM's thought many officers made a point of ignoring this.) Whatever the reason, this book is worth the read.

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