

Whisky Tango Foxtrot

Lynne M. Black Jr.

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Lynne Black is one of those warriors who have added one more piece to the puzzle which was known as MACV-SOG and the secret projects that fought the silent, bloody contacts across the fence in the Second Indochina War. His details of a Saigon Headquarters debriefing by Chief SOG, Colonel Steve Cavanaugh, are the first, in-depth recorded recollections of one of those taut, sometimes combative, sessions between the desk jockeys and the men whom they sent, all-too-often, to their deaths. His narration of the events which a History Channel program labeled "Jungle Ambush," which is part of series titled "Heroes Under Fire", will immediately immerse the reader in what it meant to "win" The Lottery at FOB 1. The Target Area encompassing the crossroads of Routes 92 and 922, best known by the one name that to this day will conjure images of death and destruction to any recon man who ever ran there: Oscar Eight; was the "prize." That aspect of the book is sufficient to make the reader become glued to the pages, as the recon team faces what will eventually be revealed to be very, very long odds. The book is not simply about running and gunning, but also contains some intimate insight into the mind-set, the motivations, of these young men thrust into situations which few readers will ever come to understand. The fact that Black clearly states his initial motivation to return to Vietnam for a second tour does not mean that it truly reveals what will eventually be recognized by some readers as the great "game" - the subconscious need to feel the rush of these missions. In what can only be called an existentialist bar scene, the "liar's dice" played by the veterans of cross-border missions is a reflection of the "game" played for real by the teams on the ground in Laos, Cambodia, North Vietnam and in the DMZ. A careful reading of that chapter reveals much about the unwritten code of survival that was passed from veteran recon man to the new guys and will certainly draw the inevitable comparison to Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front. Black also keeps the reader interested in his narrative by the generous use of some greatly humorous stories of the relationships between the men of recon company, their "little people" and with his adventures in the rear. Although in some instances (see the Chapter dealing with "Sean Flynn") he leaves his readers wanting more answers (whatever happened to Bucky?) to some interesting side trips on which he leads us, it is fair to say that regardless of the destination, it will be memorable. Despite this very small criticism ("I gots to know" - to quote from Dirty Harry) my unquestionably favorite Black Op involves his experimentation with an unorthodox method to successfully capture a North Vietnamese Army POW. If that little episode does not put a smile on your face, you should check your pulse.



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