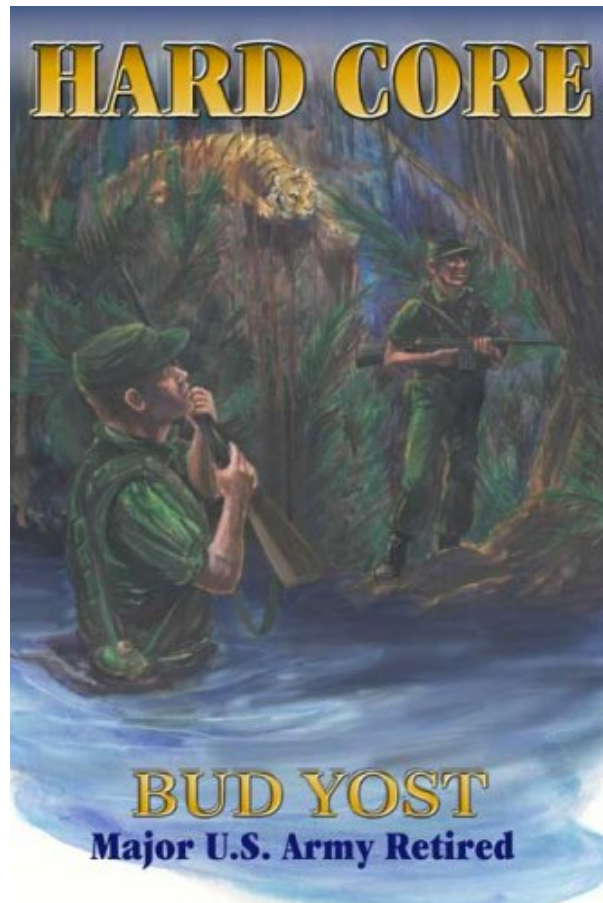
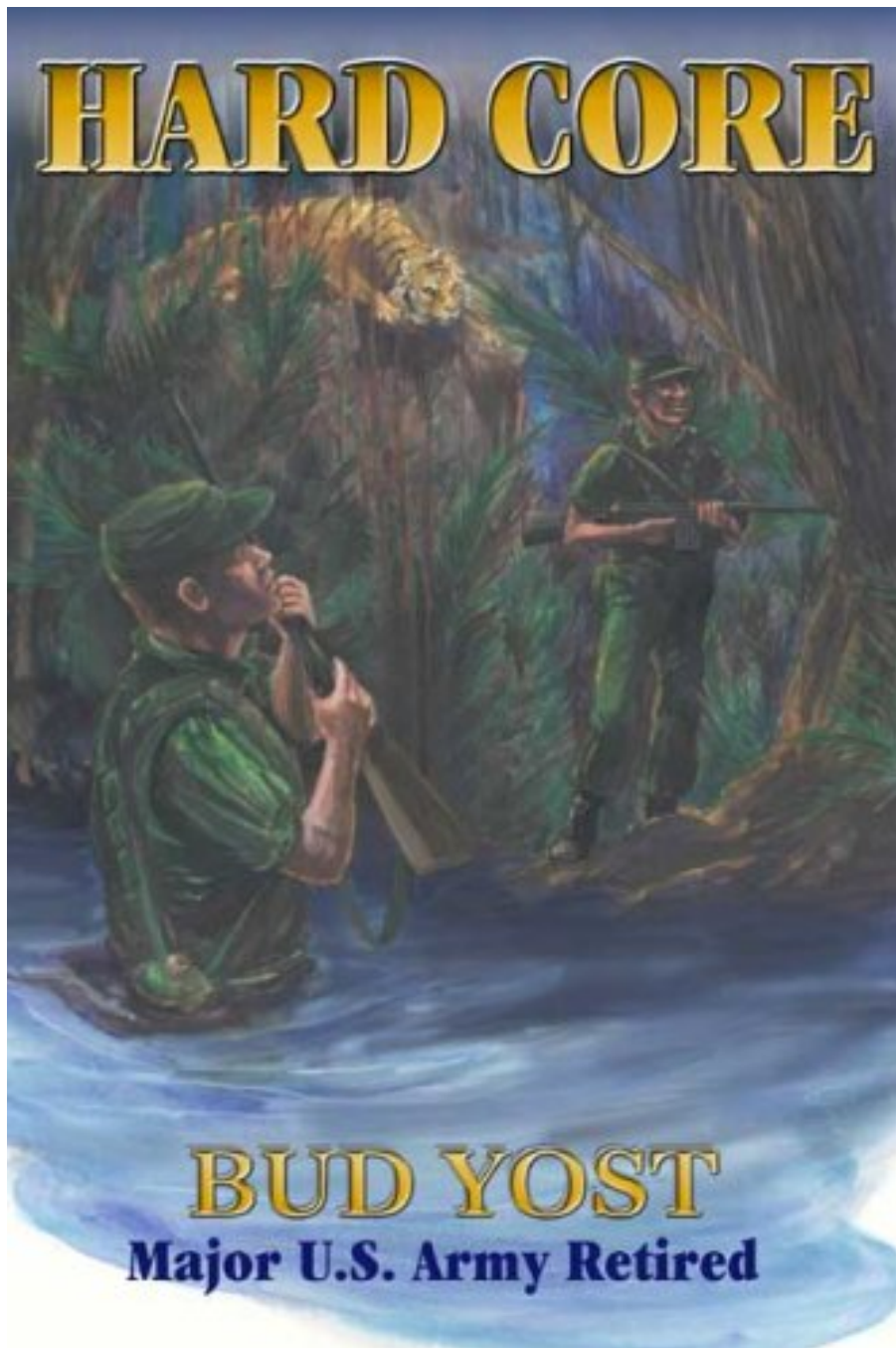


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About the Author

Bud Yost resides on Amelia Island, Florida, with his wife, Kay. His military career, which began when he was sixteen years old, spanned two decades. During these twenty years, he served as a paratrooper and ranger, being promoted from Private to Major, and is the recipient of a Battlefield Commission, the Distinguished Service Cross (our nation's second-highest award for valor), among a number of other valorous awards.

Since retiring from the Army in 1981, he has been a merchant mariner. For the past twenty-five years, Bud has traversed the world's oceans on a variety of vessels: oil tankers, container ships, tugs and tows, research ships, and small boats. Additionally he is a past president of the Exxon Seamen's Union and served as a representative for the Sailors' Union of the Pacific. When not at sea aboard ships, both he and Kay enjoy sailing on their forty-one-foot ketch, the Seafarer. Bud feels blessed he has lived such an adventuresome life and for his many friends at virtually every point on the globe.

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PDF

Death always stalked close to the "Hard Core" squad in the jungles of Vietnam, but now they faced another threat. These paratroopers of C Company of the 502nd Airborne Infantry had already endured relentless, fierce close combat with Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army, oftentimes facing overwhelming odds. Besides fighting a formidable enemy, they also had to battle the harsh elements of the jungle: excessive heat; insects; snakes and leeches; jungle foliage and thorns ripping into their skin, causing festering infections; jungle rot; constant dysentery; malaria; and other maladies; months of being soaked from monsoon rains and filth and bone-wearying fatigue. On March 5, 1967, near Song Mau, the squad was on a reconnaissance patrol when they encountered a new and unexpected enemy, a large Bengal tiger. The tiger was stalking and about to pounce on the point man, PFC Wendell Rose, when SSG Bud Yost and SP4 Jim Buppert killed it. This encounter was just another saga added to the exploits of the "Hard Core" squad.

From the jump towers at Fort Benning, Georgia, and rigorous training at stateside Army posts to combat in Vietnam, this is the poignant story of a group of tough, battle-hardened soldiers and their twenty-two-year-old squad leader as told by one who experienced the hardships and witnessed their extraordinary feats of bravery and survival. Unlike so many other chronicles about the early years of the Vietnam conflict, this story contains many little-known facts. Much of the equipment, training, tactics, leadership, and even the rations during the initial years of the conflict were from World War II. Living off the land; eating snakes, water buffalo, and captured Vietnamese rice; and remaining in the jungle for months without relief was the norm.

This is must-read book for military history buffs or anyone interested in an authentic account of the travails of paratroopers during the early years of the Vietnam War.

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and for his many friends at virtually every point on the globe.

Most helpful customer reviews

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

A Must Read

By medic6566

Hard Core is one of the best books I have read regarding the 101st Airborne during 1965/1966 and Bud Yost is more than qualified to tell the story. Bud was a real "trooper" (a professional soldier) in every sense of the word and a recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross and a battlefield commission.

He lived this story and tells it in a way that makes you feel like you are there with him. I was so captivated that I read this book in one sitting. I just could not put it down even though it brought back a lot of painful memories for me. This book can help those who were not there, understand what the soldiers of the 502nd Inf., 101st Airborne faced every day in the jungles and rice paddys of Vietnam.

Great book Bud and I really want to encourage you to write the sequel. We both know there is a lot more story to tell.

I am truly honored to be able to call you a brother and a good friend.

Airborne All The Way, Sir

John Eagle (doc) Smith

Combat Medic

D.M.O.R. HHQ Co. 502nd Inf. 101st Airborne

Vietnam 1965/1966

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Vietnam: The First War Brought into U.S. Living Rooms, Won On The Battlefields And Lost Lacking Public And Political Support!,

By Bernie Weisz

I have personally read countless memoirs of soldiers, sailors and aviator's accounts of their travails during their participation in Vietnam Conflict. However Bud Yost's "Hard Core" is one particular chronicle that is so outstanding, uncommon and extraordinary that one might find it hard to believe that Mr. Yost is not writing a work of fiction! Mr. Yost never intended to write this book, letting his outlandish experiences of what he witnessed in Vietnam go with him to the grave. Reminding himself of the peacenik antiwar demonstrations, the sell out of South Vietnam, and the unpopularity of the draft towards the end of the 1960's, he wondered who in their right mind would want to read a book about Vietnam? Attending a Vietnam Reunion in 2006, he met comrades and friends he hadn't seen in over forty years. Cherries : A Vietnam War Novel Yost mentioned that he was contemplating doing just that to one of his reunion friends but also voiced his reticence. What finally changed his mind was a quote by his old friend Morgan Massaker, who sagely told Yost the clincher: "Hell, they are still writing and publishing books about the Peloponnesian Wars and every war ever since. Get it written!" History owes Mr. Massaker a debt for this, as this book is a true gem!

As the title of this review suggested, Vietnam was the first war delivered into American living rooms via the television on a nightly basis. However, unlike W.W. I, II and Korea, this was the first war that seriously lacked public support and caused mass political upheaval. Between violence at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago, Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King's assassinations, Lyndon B. Johnson

refusing to run for reelection and Walter Cronkite claiming that victory in Vietnam was unattainable, America's will to win this conflict certainly had to be called into question! But it didn't start that way for Bud Yost, who enthusiastically volunteered for the Navy at age 16 in 1961. When the Navy found out his age, he received a minority discharge, and immediately enlisted in the Army. ...and a hard rain fell (20th Anniversary Edition) Thus in 1962 Bud Yost embarked on a twenty year career serving as a paratrooper and Ranger, going from a Private to a Major, and by the time he retired from the Army in 1981, he had the uncommon distinction of garnering during two hair raising tours of Vietnam the Distinguished Service Cross, a Bronze Star with V-device and 3 Oak Leaf Clusters, A Presidential Unit Citation, a Combat Infantryman Badge as well as combat patches for the 82nd and 101st Airborne Division and the 173rd Airborne Brigade. However, Mr. Yost's description of what combat was like in the early years of the Vietnam War and some of the situations he found himself in would cause the reader to search long and hard to find a story that rivals his!

In 1965, trouble was brewing in the Dominican Republic. With American communistic fear at it's height, particularly after the Bay of Pigs Incident and the Cuban Missile Crisis being so close to home, when Marxists threatened to take over the Dominican Republic, President Johnson intervened. Citing as an official reason for the invasion the need to protect the lives of foreigners, none of whom had been killed or wounded, L.B.J. sent a fleet of 41 vessels to blockade the island, and an invasion was launched by Marines and elements of the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division on April 29, 1965. Ultimately, 42,000 soldiers and marines, Bud Yost included, were ordered to the Dominican Republic. The intervention ended in September 1966 when the 1st Brigade of the 82nd Airborne, the last remaining American unit in the country, was withdrawn. Intervention in the Caribbean: The Dominican Crisis of 1965 Incredibly, Bud Yost was flown in on a C-130, given an M-16, and was given an assigned position-a whorehouse! Yost commented on this: "When I discovered what was happening at my position I became an entrepreneur and called all of my buddies on the phone to tell them to come by my position." Bud Yost, at age 21 continued: "I became popular very quick with both the girls and the company troopers. This didn't last very long, however for within a few days we were moved to another sector of the city."

Needless to say, it was while Bud Yost was in Santo Domingo that he began to hear of large military deployments , particularly of the 173rd Airborne Brigade and the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne being rapidly deployed to Vietnam. The war in S.E. Asia was heating up fast. The Gulf of Tonkin Incident, occurring August 2nd and 4th of 1964, convinced Congress to allow President Johnson and his henchman, Robert S. McNamara, unlimited war making decisions in Vietnam. The first major battle in Vietnam, The Battle of Ia Drang, between the U.S. Army and the N.V.A., took place between November 14 and November 18, 1965, at two landing zones northwest of Plei Me in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam. XO: Into the Ia Drang Valley The battle cost the Americans 155 men killed and 124 wounded, and can be seen as a blueprint for tactics by both sides. The Americans used air mobility, artillery fire and close air support to accomplish battlefield objectives. The NVA and Viet Cong forces learned that they could neutralize that firepower by quickly engaging American forces at very close range. The North Vietnamese commander, named General Nguyen Huu An, included his lessons from the battle in his orders as follows: "Move inside the column, grab them by the belt, and thus avoid casualties from the artillery and air." Bud Yost found himself on a commercial airliner departing Travis Air Force Base, with a stopover in Alaska, to South Vietnam on December 8th, 1965. His ordeal was just about to start.

As with most Americans experiencing their first taste of Vietnam, Yost quipped: The first thing we noticed when we got off the plane at Tan Son Nhut Airfield was the stifling heat. Within minutes we were soaking wet with sweat." This would prove to be his most minor upcoming inconvenience. He was eventually assigned to "Charley Company, 2nd Battalion of the 502nd Airborne Infantry. He would be fire team leader, with his squad being sent out on missions west of the coastal city of Tuy Hoa. The tactic the Army used was

called the "Checkerboard Concept." Simply, if Yost's squad made contact with the enemy, they would be reinforced by other squads in the Area of Operation (AO). LBJ'S HIRED GUN: A Marine Corps Helicopter Gunner and the War in Vietnam The concept of "Airmobile" (movement from base to AO and back by helicopter) had not caught on yet, and all movement was on foot. Yost and his men were fighting amateur, unprofessionally armed Viet Cong, and were doing this on foot. Yost commented: We were a motley looking bunch as our leather jump boots separated and were kept together by duct tape. As soon as we killed a VC we would take his canvas rucksack, empty the contents and pack our gear in it. At least these rucksacks had shoulder straps and were infinitely better than the Army issued packs. Whenever a GI was killed or wounded we would take his canteen and M-16 magazines." Combat in early 1966 was sudden, violent and quickly ended. The VC's main tactic was setting booby traps and punji pits, which accounted for a large percentage of U.S. casualties.

As 1966 dragged on, the war changed. Yost explained: The company continued into the mountains and jungles. We no longer encountered the VC, but began fighting the much better equipped North Vietnamese Army (NVA). The nature of our mission changed and we no longer employed the "Checker Board" concept, but conducted "Search and Destroy" missions in platoon and company sized elements. as the battalion pressed further into the mountains we began to encounter more NVA. Skirmishes with the NVA were frequent, almost on a daily basis, but these were small units never larger than platoon size." The NVA were not the only opponent. Yost wrote about deadly snake encounters, and whenever the company moved at night, snakes, particularly Cobra and toxic Bamboo Vipers were very real threats. Once, Yost even had to shoot and kill an attacking Bengal tiger, weighing over 450 lbs.! Why did Yost call the book "Hard Core?" Simply because his existence was nothing less than that. Selective Memories of Vietnam 1969-1970 Not brushing one's teeth or wearing underwear for weeks at a time in sweltering hot or torrential monsoon rain was a way of life only for the most hardened. At night, one would sleep an hour, then man one's post as lookout for another hour, all with very little water, and two skimpy meals a day.

There is no history book that explains what it is like to sleep in a pitch black, triple canopied jungle in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam, in a life and death struggle with the best jungle fighters on the face of the earth, the North Vietnamese Army. Bud Yost's account is memorable: "It's much like being locked in a windowless closet. No light peers through, no luminescence from the distant stars or solar bodies penetrate. Just darkness, pitch darkness, an eerie darkness, not even your hand is visible before your face. You just lay there on the ground in silence having lost the sense of sight and listen to the sounds of the jungle. The monkeys squealing, slithering sounds, hearing the sounds of other animals which you can't identify moving through the underbrush and the constant sound of the gecko lizards with their shrill cries. The mosquitoes are relentless, buzzing in your ears, biting every exposed piece of skin, getting into your ears, nose and mouth. You can feel the leeches extracting your blood, but you don't move a muscle. Your skin is cut and bleeding from the thorns that have ripped into you." Yost describes ambushes, death and battle that transports the reader right onto the battlefield. Vietnam No Regrets (Volume 1)

As 1966 turned into 1967, Yost became more calloused, this time on his second tour of combat. He lost all sense of day, date and time, leaving it to "short timers" who kept a DEROS calendar. This is a calendar drawn on the camouflage cover of one's helmet, marking the day one's one year tour of duty was over and they can go home and leave Vietnam. In one encounter, Yost's indifference manifests when he walks up on an enemy soldier he just shot in the chest and killed and recorded these thoughts: "I see the dead NVA soldier only a few feet to my left. I can't see his face, only his crumpled and bloody body. NVA, I can tell from his khaki uniform, AK-47 assault rifle and tire truck sandals. I walk over to the dead NVA, only a few feet from my position. He's laying on his back, covered in blood, still clutching his AK-47. I see he is young, but never have been able to figure the ages of Asians. I push him over on his side to get his half full rice bag, pull his rucksack off and look through it. I see a picture of a young Vietnamese woman, a packet of letters wrapped

in brown cellophane and a cooking pot. Not much else, no watch or jewelry. I feel no remorse about killing him. Actually, I feel nothing. Missions of Fire and Mercy: Until Death Do Us Part Its not that I am hard-hearted or calloused. Somehow killing an NVA just does not equate to the taking of a human life in my psyche. I take his AK-47 and the ammo. Flies are in the dead soldier's open mouth, eyes, nose and in the coagulated blood in his open chest cavity." While the aforementioned is extremely graphic, this is actually what a soldier had to experience and adapt to in his tour as a foot soldier during the Vietnam War.

Bud Yost elaborates more on the "hard core" element of being on an operation for 5 to 6 weeks with constant stress, being hunted and hunting for human prey. Here is another realistic description of the deprivations he and his men endured: "We usually remain in the boonies for 30 to 40 days and when the brass determine the operation is concluded we go back to the forward base camp to re-equip, receive replacements, and if we are lucky and get hot chow, a shower and a change of jungle fatigues, and maybe a chance to go to Tuy Hoa for a few hours to drink LaRue (French beer) or Ba m' Ba (Vietnamese beer rumored to contain formaldehyde). Of course we will go to the whore houses as well. There is a reckless mentality among the young GI's to seize whatever moments of pleasure or enjoyment one may. For we all know our young lives can end abruptly at any time." Bud Yost also described the way he and his men navigated through the jungles of Vietnam. Called "dead reckoning," between the use of one's compass, counting the paces men take, and tying a boot lace or parachute cord to a tree every hundred paces helped these men get around dense triple canopy forest." These "Hard Core" men also carried no tooth brushes, tooth paste, had to "dry shave" for weeks at a time, drink swamp water purified with iodine tablets, and take a weekly orange anti malaria pill that only sometimes worked.

This book is short, only 114 pages, but extremely intense! There is not a word, sentence nor paragraph wasted. Bud Yost puts the reader vicariously in Vietnam, suffering with his men, making the reader himself become "hard core." Yost's indifference to the war shows, as the peace demonstrators and politicians back in the U.S. sabotage a clear American military victory over the NVA. The irrelevance and insignificance of this war manifests in the following comment Yost made in 1967: "Another operation is completed. the brass give these operations names, like Hawthorne, Beuregard, and Seward, but the grunts never know, nor even care what they are named. Every day in the bush is the same for us, nothing ever changes. We hump our heavy rucksack through the jungles, eat C-rations, get shot at, lose friends, and struggle to survive. Never knowing when we'll be next or if we will ever see home again. The brass will tally the number of enemy wounded, count the weapons captured, and declare the operation a success. But we care little about these pronouncements, they have little effect upon our circumstances." Interestingly enough, Yost remarked that he and his men were not aware that despite their efforts to combat communism, back in the U.S. the Vietnam War created tremendous political upheaval and lack of public support: "Quite frankly, the GI's out in the field knew little about the politics that brought us here. We did not have access to the print media, seldom seeing a "Stars and Stripes" or any other newspaper, nor did we hear Armed Forces Radio. During the early years of the conflict we didn't go diddy-bopping around the jungle with a transistor radio as portrayed."

Bud Yost gives the reader other pearls virtually not found in the official history books. The incidence of support troops (cooks, engineers, mechanics) to those deployed in the field was approximately to be 7 to 1. Yost made many friends, and some enemies, once being the target of an attempted fragging. On drug use in Vietnam he commented: "I can not recall ever seeing drug abuse among those I soldiered with. It was difficult enough to detect a booby trap, punji pit or an ambush without having your head torqued out of shape by some substance. Besides, even if you wanted to, where would one find drugs in the jungle?" Yost admitted that despite the rules of engagement prohibiting U.S. ground forces crossing into Cambodia or Laos to pursue fleeing NVA forces, there were times when he inadvertently did. There were occasions when the only thing that could stop the fleeing NVA were B-52 air strikes. Yost's description of these strikes is impressive, although quaintly enough he claims red ants seemed to be impervious to these carpet bombings.

all his men suffered with dysentery, dinghy fever and malaria, with Yost at one point succumbing to Malaria's effects. Bud Yost's second tour of duty in Vietnam was from December 28, 1968 to December 5th, 1969, and what he saw and observed did not bode well for a victorious American conclusion. The U.S. role had shifted from "Search and Destroy" missions to what he called "Pacification," i.e. securing South Vietnam from North Vietnamese infiltration. Men were getting sloppy, wearing gun ammunition bandoleer fashion, instead of in ammo boxes, where it stayed fresh. Yost saw too many things he didn't like and knew it was time to get out of Vietnam.

The American conduct of the Vietnam War in 1969 was not the same as it was in 1966 or 1967. Yost negatively perceived the following: Most of the WW II era NCO's and officers had completed one or two tours in Vietnam and were retiring from service. Gone too were the enlisted soldiers, who had been trained in the airborne divisions. Virtually all the replacements now only had completed basic, advance infantry and jump school before being shipped to combat. There was tremendous social upheaval in the states, Vietnam was no longer popular, and these attitudes were reflected by the soldiers. Racial incidents, drug abuse, malingering and slovenly appearance were prevalent in the rear areas. I simply could not abide these problems and took a very hard-line stance. I would not tolerate slovenly appearance, insisted the soldiers have a regulation haircut, and would make sure the replacements and those returning from the hospital or leaves were sent to the field as quickly as possible. I did not want those soldiers affected with the apathetic attitude found in the rear area." Yost actually fined any soldier a week's pay who drew a peace symbol on his helmet. Yost's biggest beef was with incompetent, ineffectual leadership. Yost lamented: "Aside from the general lack of support on the home front, the principal problem was the void of experienced leadership at the squad and platoon levels. The protracted nature of the Vietnam War had seriously depleted the non-commissioned officer corps. The Shake 'n Bake Sergeant: True Story of Infantry Sergeants in Vietnam To compensate this shortage the Army created an accelerated NCO training program. Promising soldiers would be identified in basic and advanced individual training and sent to a six week course and be graduated as buck sergeants and in some cases as staff sergeants. Some of these instant NCO's or "Shake and Bakes" as they were known became excellent NCO's given the tutelage of experienced NCO's and officers. However, many just simply never came to understand the responsibility that having stripes bore."

Bud Yost's book is sad in a sense, as the reader sees an overly idealistic patriot who endures inhuman conditions in an attempt to victoriously prevail militarily over the Communists and gradually becomes totally disillusioned with the entire war. Before he left Vietnam, Yost noticed that after his troops were re supplied in the field and moved out, he would dig up sumps containing grenades, jettisoned ammunition and even Claymore mines. The NVA and VC always visited these areas after the U.S. moved out, and recovered and used all of the aforementioned in killing young Americans. The final straw that drew Bud Yost's ire was a new rule that an air strike against the NVA could not be initiated unless it was first cleared with the South Vietnamese District Chief in that particular area. Not only did that give the enemy time to escape, but there was a high probability that these district chiefs were in collusion with the enemy and tipped them off. Incredulously, Yost confessed the following about getting approvals: "The time lapse was unacceptable (minimally 30 minutes or longer to get these approvals) and I circumvented the system. This was risky and could have cost me my career, but it did save American lives." Booby Trap Boys Simply, Yost called in fierce mortar barrages directed at the enemy until the clearances were received to use air power. Integrating Vietnamese companies with U.S. units did not sit well with Yost, who found these soldiers (called "Ruff Puffs" or Regional Popular Forces) untrustworthy, undisciplined and treacherously undependable. This was later referred to by President Nixon as "Vietnamization." Regardless of your opinion of Bud Yost, his ideas or tactics, or even the Vietnam War, this is a momentous, educational, one of a kind book guaranteed to enlighten! Highly recommended!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Hard Core a Must Read

By Dale A. Joritz

After meeting many of the "Hard Core Squad" members (including Bud Yost) in Atlanta, 2006 and reading the book Hard Core, my respect for these men has been elevated to a higher level.

I also was a member of C/2/502 101st Airborne 1st Platoon. My service with the company came after the famed Hard Core Squad had already served in Vietnam. My tour was from early 1968 - mid 1969.

The depiction of the accounts that Bud Yost has written are truthful and accurate.

Yost has told the story of the brave men who served under him, not only in the 101st but also during his command with the 173rd.

Yost has taken his accounts, in Vietnam and Stateside, and directed the focus and honor to the men who gallantly served our nation, while giving an in-depth look at the Vietnam War, that only a few have seen or experienced.

For those who study Vietnam or for those who want to know "What it was really like", This book is a **MUST READ**.

Dale Joritz

C/2/502 101st Airborne

1968-69

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About the Author

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