



Rattler One-Seven: A Vietnam Helicopter Pilot's War Story (North Texas Military Biography and Memoir Series)

Chuck Gross

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Rattler One-Seven puts you in the helicopter seat, to see the war in Vietnam through the eyes of an inexperienced pilot as he transforms himself into a seasoned combat veteran. When Chuck Gross left for Vietnam in 1970, he was a nineteen-year-old Army helicopter pilot fresh out of flight school. He spent his entire Vietnam tour with the 71st Assault Helicopter Company flying UH-1 Huey helicopters. Soon after the war he wrote down his adventures, while his memory was still fresh with the events. Rattler One-Seven (his call sign) is written as Gross experienced it, using these notes along with letters written home to accurately preserve the mindset he had while in Vietnam. During his tour Gross flew Special Operations for the MACV-SOG, inserting secret teams into Laos. He notes that Americans were left behind alive in Laos, when official policy at home stated that U.S. forces were never there. He also participated in Lam Son 719, a misbegotten attempt by the ARVN to assault and cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail with U.S. Army helicopter support. It was the largest airmobile campaign of the war and marked the first time that the helicopter was used in mid-intensity combat, with disastrous results. Pilots in their early twenties, with young gunners and a Huey full of ARVN soldiers, took on experienced North Vietnamese antiaircraft artillery gunners, with no meaningful intelligence briefings or a rational plan on how to cut the Trail. More than one hundred helicopters were lost and more than six hundred aircraft sustained combat damage. Gross himself was shot down and left in the field during one assault. Rattler One-Seven will appeal to those interested in the Vietnam War and to all armed forces, especially aviators, who have served for their country.

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