

RECOMMENDED READING

# Books Reviewed

Unless otherwise noted, these books may be ordered from the MCA Bookstore. Subscribers may use members' prices. Include \$6.99 for shipping, plus \$1 for shipping each additional book. Virginia and South Carolina residents add 5 percent sales tax, North Carolina residents add 7 percent and California residents add 7 1/4 percent. Prices may change. Make check or money order payable to: MCA, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or call toll-free: (888) 237-7683.



**MARINES IN HUE CITY: A Portrait of Urban Combat, Tet 1968.** By Eric Hammel. Published by Zenith Press. 167 pages. Stock #0760325219. \$31.45 MCA Members. \$34.95 Regular Price.

Urban combat training for today's Marines is a requirement, but in the late '60s specialized training in the art of house-to-house warfighting was in short supply. When the Vietnam War's 1968 Tet offensive exploded in Hue City, Marines had to quickly acquire combat skills while fighting within the city's three-dimensional setting. In "Marines in Hue City," Eric Hammel tells the graphic tale of this heroic battle with a multitude of newly published photos.

As military historians go, Hammel stands among the very best. His 30-plus volumes dutifully record great Marine battle epics. Included among these earlier works is his classic 1991 (republished in November 2006) account, "Fire in the Streets," of the 1968 Hue City battle. In reading of "Hue City," Marine veterans of the battles for Fallujah, and other Iraq city fighting, will relate through the photographs included in this coffee-table-size volume.

The monthlong battle for Hue City commenced on Jan. 31, 1968, as part of a Vietnam-wide offensive conceived by Senior General Vo Nguyen Giap, com-

mander of the communist People's Army of Vietnam (NVA) and the Viet Cong (VC). The bloody offensive, designed to bring on a general uprising of the South Vietnamese population, is graphically presented by Hammel in a wide array of carefully selected but well-researched photographs.

The accompanying text is just enough to ensure each reader understands the magnitude of this particular battle in the overall offensive; the importance of Hue City to all Vietnamese; the communists' willingness to kill all civilians to accomplish their goal; and the Marines' efforts, which gained the victory.

Veterans of urban combat will readily identify with the numerous photos contained within this photographic collection. Additionally, readers unfamiliar with the complexities of today's modern city-street combat will swiftly grasp the need for advanced urban warfare training.

In "Marines in Hue City," Eric Hammel does an outstanding job of combining the account of the battle with a bevy of new, never-before-published photographic images.

Robert B. Loring

*Editor's note: "Red Bob" Loring provides frequent reviews for Leatherneck*

readers. A Marine veteran, he is a founding member of the Sergeant Major Michael Curtin Detachment (Det. 1124), Marine Corps League, and a leader in East Pasco County, Fla., community efforts, particularly Toys for Tots.

**TRIUMPH FORSAKEN: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965.** By Mark Moyer. Published by Cambridge University Press. 542 pages. Stock #0521869110. \$28.80 MCA Members. \$32 Regular Price.

If you are a Vietnam veteran, this book will make your heart bleed. Read it anyway. Mark Moyer states that he is part of the Revisionist School of historians of the Vietnam War. I would say he is part of the Honest School of Vietnam historians. Too many myths have been perpetrated for too long by reporters and public figures desperate to absolve themselves of any responsibility for the tragedy that overtook Southeast Asia following the defeat of the Republic of Vietnam in 1975, after America abandoned those who had supported our side.

The first book of a planned two-volume set on that war, "Triumph Forsaken" takes on the political orthodoxy. Many reputations will suffer as a result of Moyer's shining a much-needed light in dark corners. Not the least of which is that of Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, who clearly colluded in the coup against Ngo Dinh Diem, going beyond President John F. Kennedy's instructions, which Moyer calls the worst mistake of the war. Other reputations, including Diem's, will be enhanced.

Moyer has little tolerance for reporters, like David Halberstam and Neil Sheehan (author of the aptly named "A Bright Shining Lie"), who were players in the political struggle, rather than observers, and some of whose highly placed RVN government and military sources, like Pham Ngoc Thao and Pham Xuan An, who were in fact agents of North Vietnam, feeding these authors propaganda. Other cherished shibboleths of those

[continued on page 58]

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## BOOKS REVIEWED

[continued from page 46]

who aided the North's conquest of the South are destroyed by Moyer's work, using newly available sources from the North Vietnamese side.

These include the myths that Ho Chi Minh was a nationalist we could have worked with, that the Buddhist uprising against Diem and later leaders, led by monk Tri Quang, was not tied to the communist war effort, and that China would have entered the war if we had blocked the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos with troops, or more strongly bombed the North in the early years.

One of the most cherished beliefs held by the elites of the anti-war movement is that had Kennedy lived, he would have gotten us out of Vietnam early on. In fact, everything in his speeches and writing indicated he would have prosecuted the course of the war at least as vigorously as Lyndon Johnson did. About all this, vets may find themselves pounding the arm of their chairs and crying, "I knew it!"

Moyer, a Harvard and Cambridge trained historian who teaches at the Marine Corps University, uses primary sources and meticulous research to document his facts. He is well aware that he is challenging views that have become almost a religion and takes care to make his position highly defensible from the offended faithful.

This is not, however, a dry scholarly tome. Moyer is a fine writer and switches from broad strategic and geopolitical issues to heart-gripping accounts of key military actions. His most important point, however, is that it's not enough to be on the right side; how you fight a war determines the outcome. Vietnam, Moyer tells us, could have turned out differently. Today's military leaders and policy-makers would do well to ponder this book, especially where it describes how the hubris of civilian leaders led them to dismiss the advice of the military professionals.

Like "Stolen Valor," "Triumph Forsaken" will go a long way toward vindicating and restoring respect for Vietnam vets and those who supported the war, often at great personal cost. It won't do anything about the bitterness, but we can live with that. We have for more than 30 years.

Robert A. Hall

*Editor's note: Former SSgt Robert A. Hall served with Hq, 26th Marines at Khe Sanh in 1967. After college, he served five terms in the Massachusetts state senate, as well as six years in the USMCR. In 1980, he earned a master's degree in history from Fitchburg State College. Since 1982, Hall has been an association executive. He frequently contributes poetry to Leatherneck. His memoir, "The Good Bits: The Marines, The Massachusetts Senate and Managing Associations," was published in 2005.*



## Leatherneck Book Browser

"Yemassee Station (Where It All Began)." Marines of today don't know about Yemassee Station, S.C. That's where all recruits destined for Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island were deposited when they arrived by train before being shuttled farther into the lowland to Parris Island. Former Sergeant Theo V. Bennett, who served from 1950 to 1953, remembers it well and gives some laugh-out-loud vignettes about recruits entering their first military experience at the old Yemassee barracks, which today is a furniture store. Bennett traces more of his personal experiences in the Corps, all the way to Vieques Island, Puerto Rico, where they were filming the movie "Battle Cry." It is a paperback with some photos. At \$22.95, the 303-page account published by iUniverse Inc. is worth it. To order, call (800) AUTHORS (288-4677), or visit [www.iUniverse.com](http://www.iUniverse.com). (ISBN: 0595396720)

"The Names NOT on the Wall." John "Doc" Hutchings was a corpsman with Fifth Marine Regiment from 1968 to 1969 in Vietnam. The main character in his book is "Doc Bear," based on Hutchings, who is an unwilling participant elbow-deep in the carnage of war around him. Yet, he finds, as most corpsmen do, that he deeply loves his Marines and willingly risks his life for them, thus ensuring that many do not have their name on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. "The Wall." It is an old lesson in war that is relearned in every conflict. Hutchings tells his story and does it well. The 431-page hardbound novel is printed by Squidly Publishing, P.O. Box 249, Crescent City, FL 32112, (386) 316-7502, [www.theNamesNOTontheWall.com](http://www.theNamesNOTontheWall.com), and goes for \$29.95 plus \$4.49 shipping. \$34.44 total. (ISBN: 0977839400)