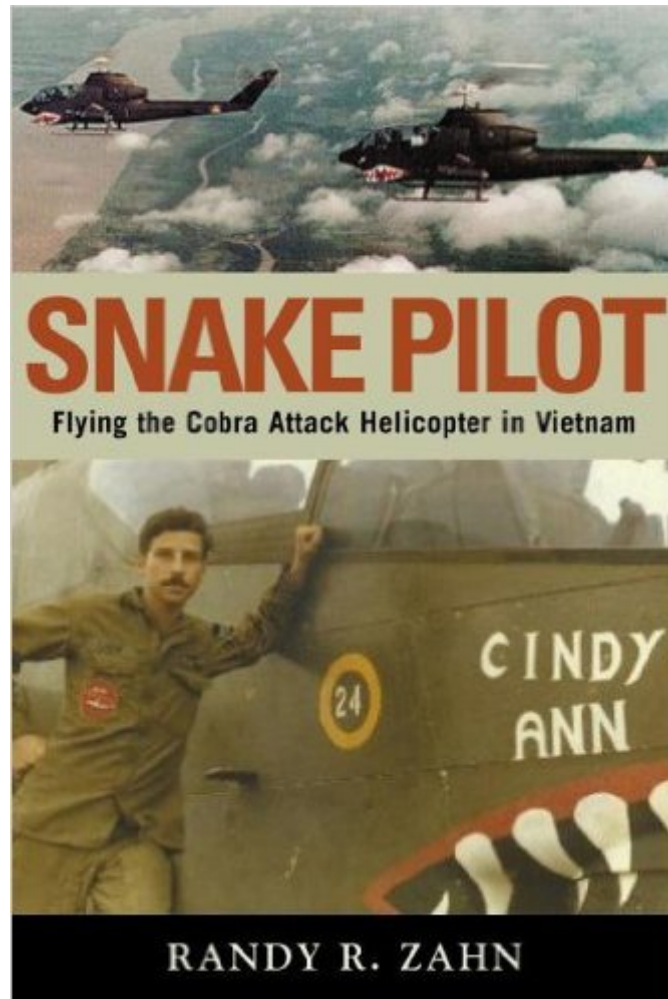


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Snake Pilot: Flying The Cobra Attack Helicopter In Vietnam



Synopsis

Based on audiotapes he recorded during the war and sent home to his family, Randy Zahn's Snake Pilot recounts his experiences flying AH-1 Cobra helicopters during the Vietnam War. First deployed in Vietnam in 1967 and loaded with a formidable arsenal of weaponry, the Cobra was the first helicopter designed from inception as an attack aircraft. It dramatically changed the nature of the war in Vietnam by offering the Army, for the first time, its own powerful and highly accurate weapons platform for close-air-support missions. Randy Zahn arrived in Vietnam shortly before the 1970 U.S. invasion of Cambodia, one of the most impressive demonstrations by the Cobra in the war. He describes his stunning transformation from a naive, middle-class teenager from southern California to a hardened killer during his tour in Vietnam. Unlike the pilots who flew the fast-moving strike jets, Zahn experienced the war as close and personal, witnessing the grisly effects of the Cobra's firepower on enemy soldiers. The author does not glorify killing but rather explains in sharp relief the kaleidoscope of emotions associated with combat: fear, revenge, hate, remorse, pity, and even ecstasy. He captures many of the ironies and nuances inherent in Vietnam, especially during the final years of the conflict. Zahn displays a sensitivity rarely found in memoirs written by battle-hardened warriors. This human element, combined with the vast amount of archival research and interviews with members of his former unit, ensures that Snake Pilot will become the definitive account of the role helicopters played in Vietnam.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Evidently, the publisher's printing press has a maximum number of pages that it can print in a book of this size. Regrettably, Randy was forced to cut major portions from the original manuscript that detailed more than the actions of a cobra pilot. In spite of this, Randy has completed the impossible task: He has documented the details correctly, and has also caught the tone, captured the frustration, and has put into writing what it was like to be a very young cobra pilot in Charlie Troop, 1/9 Cav. This is personal. This is a personal account; with all of the personal feelings and interactions that one is expected to have in combat. He has not blown his personal, the troop's, nor the 9th Cav's exploits out-of-proportion (like another author has), and has tried his best to describe the unit as it was.... a great Troop in the highly recognized 9th Cavalry, "doing it all like it was supposed to be done" in Nam. As such, the good and the not so good are both reported as fairly as any human being in combat can. When you are done reading his excellent book, you will no doubt have assimilated his personal feelings for what it was like to be a "Snake Pilot." Grover Wright

Charlie Troop, 1/9 Cav 1969-1970
Snake Pilot

I have to admit, I don't know much about how things were during the Vietnam War...mainly because I wasn't here yet. I know things weren't good at home and worse yet overseas. However I have the great opportunity to work with Randy and was thrilled to learn he was writing a book. When he told me about the letters and tapes his parents saved and what the book was about, I knew I had to read it. "Snake Pilot" is a brilliant telling of what went on day-in and day-out in Randy's world while he was in Vietnam. The book is written in Randy's own words and many times I felt as though he was sitting next to me telling the story. The language easily lets you imagine what it must have been like and while the pictures in my mind can't compare to anything Randy and his comrades endured, I could see the cities, hooches, aircraft maneuvers and what it must have been like to fly over the jungle....I could also imagine what his buddies must have been like and the bonds they formed. I can honestly say that I laughed, cried, shook my head in disbelief and cursed my way through the book. Of course, there is a waiting line in my family to read the book...so I couldn't give anything away even when I wanted to say, "listen to this!" I plan on buying this book for several people in my family who are history buffs. This gave me an amazing insight to the war in Vietnam and the adversity our soldiers faced. Don't worry if you aren't a military buff, there is a wonderful glossary that I had to refer to time and time again. That was a genius idea! Thank you Randy, for this glimpse into history. And although I wasn't here at the time...thank you.

Randy sent a copy with a very personal message and signature to my mom back in the states, upon

finally receiving it here in Iraq I read it cover to cover closing it only to go on mission. It brought back a lot of memories of stories my father, Charles Frazier, used to tell me about the days in Tay Ninh, Phouc Vinh and all the insanity of losing friends. Being at war myself, I really connected with a lot of the stories. It was a great book deeply personal, full of the heartache of Vietnam. PFC Frazier, Jason J21 M.P. (ABN)

This is an outstanding account of how things were in C-Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment in Vietnam. Randy has done an excellent job describing not only the events of his experience but also his feelings at the time. I served 3 years prior to Randy; but, the events amazingly paralleled each other. This is a must read for anyone who flew or crewed helicopters in Vietnam, and anyone who was ever exposed to the way the 1st of the 9th flew. Buy it and read it right away. You will not be disappointed. Great job Randy. Thank you.

Randy arrived in RVN almost the day I left. We have friends in common. Randy captured the emotions, and day-to-day life of those of us in C/1/9. His story very much parallels a lot of us. As I was reading the book, I occasionally had to take a break to come back to the current year. His telling of his story has told the story of all of us! Welcome Home!

I have gotten to know Randy and his family because they are neighbors of our son, a U. S. Air Force pilot in Anchorage. Randy is the real deal, as a storyteller, a helicopter pilot, a husband and father, and a loyal friend to our son and his family. If you know Randy at all, you know he puts his heart into everything he does. This book is no exception. It tells a story that is so gripping and so human, it could not be fiction. That said, I must add that this book is not for everyone. Do not read it unless you want to know what really happened. It is a tough read that pulls no punches. It names names, recounts vicious combat in great detail, re-creates helicopter missions with heart-pounding veracity, and makes the reader share the confusion, grief, terror, bravery, deep and abiding friendships, vulgarity and, yes, even the humor, of Randy's year as a "snake" pilot. In short, it is unforgettable, just like its author.

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