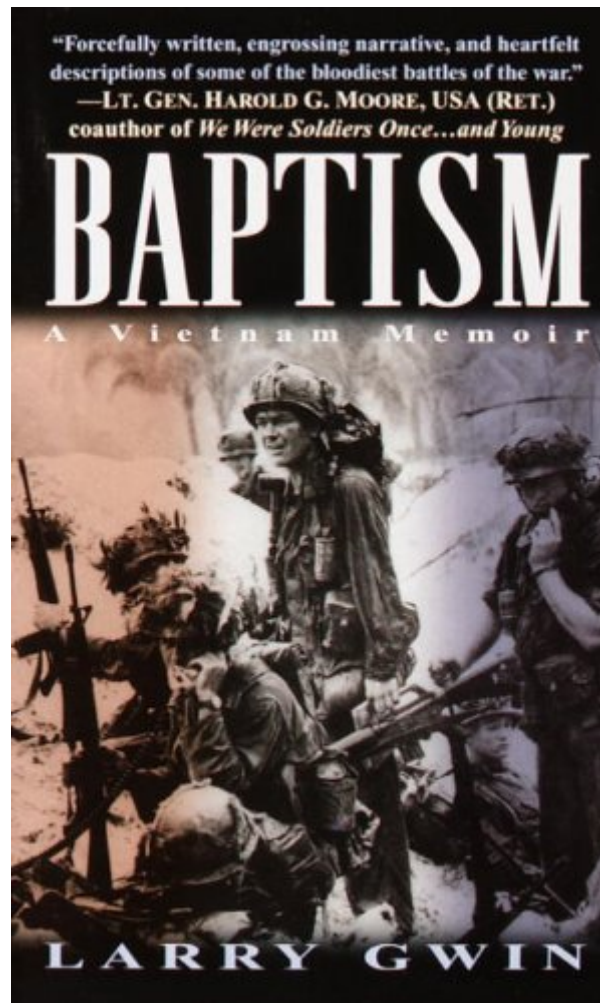




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Baptism: A Vietnam Memoir



Synopsis

"The 2nd Battalion of the 7th Cavalry had the dubious distinction of being the unit that had fought the biggest battle of the war to date, and had suffered the worst casualties. We and the 1st Battalion." A Yale graduate who volunteered to serve his country, Larry Gwin was only twenty-three years old when he arrived in Vietnam in 1965. After a brief stint in the Delta, Gwin was reassigned to the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) in An Khe. There, in the hotly contested Central Highlands, he served almost nine months as executive officer for Alpha Company, 2/7, fighting against crack NVA troops in some of the war's most horrific battles. The bloodiest conflict of all began November 12, 1965, after 2nd Battalion was flown into the Ia Drang Valley west of Pleiku. Acting as point, Alpha Company spearheaded the battalion's march to landing zone Albany for pickup, not knowing they were walking into the killing zone of an NVA ambush that would cost them 10 percent casualties. Gwin spares no one, including himself, in his gut-wrenching account of the agony of war. Through the stench of death and the acrid smell of napalm, he chronicles the Vietnam War in all its nightmarish horror. From the Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

I was torn between giving this book 4 stars or 5. I initially thought that the author spent too much time talking about himself. Then I realized that this type of book is supposed to be about what the author experienced during his tour. With that thought in mind, it was an easy decision for the 5 stars. This is the first book I have read that made me understand what the frustrations of the officers who commanded us were facing. I also had my first epiphany that the men who commanded us had the same hopes and fears that we Grunts had. Particularly the fear. It had never occurred to me that the officers leading us had the same trouble controlling their bowels and bladder that we Grunts had. I suppose that is a tribute to the professionalism, leadership skills and the raw courage of those men. I held all of our company leadership in what I thought was the highest esteem possible. I was wrong. After reading Captain Gwin's book, my respect for the men who commanded us has soared to new heights. I also came to the realization of just how lucky I had been to be lucky enough to have not had any commanders who were as incompetent as some of those that Capt. Gwin endured. All of the officers and NCO's I had were of the mold of the best of those that Capt. Gwin describes in this book. Capt. Gwin has written a keeper of a book. I highly recommend it. If you decide to buy it, I know that you will not be disappointed. It definitely deserves 5 stars.

Larry Gwin has delivered a first rate personal memoir of a grunt leader in the air mobile war. At about the same time he was came out of country, I began my two years as a Marine infantry officer in I Corps. He has the combat and the malaise exactly right. Of course, each guy fought his own war but so much was shared and he has it all beautifully written in his Baptism. For those who saw the movie, *We Were Soldiers*, but did not read the book, they missed the "whole story". Mr. Gwin, among other things, delivers on "phase two" of that book, the disaster at LZ Albany. "Baptism: A Vietnam Memoir" is a great read and the best of the personal memoirs that I have read.

I was there where this book takes place, as near truth as possible.

Having served in Vietnam in a support capacity, I recognize many of Larry's well described scenes as perfectly portrayed. At times this story is difficult to read due to the graphic details. It has given me a fine appreciation for the people who were asked to give so much for so little in return. Thank you very much Captain Gwin.

I was in Vietnam and knew right off that this man spoke from the truth when he wrote this book. It reminded me of "We were soldiers once, and young" that Hal Moore wrote of his experiences. I would recommend it to anyone who wanted to experience a view of that war through the ground troops' eyes. I shall never ever forget that place nor that time. It was (and still is) the darkest place my mind has ever been... I am 75 years old now and working full time as a quality engineer at the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center. I never forget those friends/comrades of mine whose lives were cut short by that hell. I am most fortunate. Having said that, I am a patriot and would still go in harm's way if my country needed me to... That war was a long time ago and was not popular. I cannot convey the terrible sense of loss I felt on coming back to the States and feeling that I had to justify having fought in that awful place at the behest of my government.

If you like history and reading Vietnam books this is the one. Well written and keeps you wanting to read more. A very good book!

This book is an excellent book to read after *We Were Soldiers Once... And Young*. The story of one of Vietnam's first big battles involving the 1st Cav's in the Ia Drang Valley in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. The movie, of the same name, memorializes the battle at LZ X-ray, but doesn't mention the second part of the battle at LZ Albany, which is covered in the book. The author vividly captures this battle and the terrific pounding the 2/7 took that day. Also it captures the daily routine of an Infantry company, and the different types of command. There were some issues with the divisions of names and a little continuity, but that could be the conversion to an e-book. Good easy read.

As an Infantry Platoon Leader and XO for the 4th Division, which followed the 1st Cav into the Central Highlands, I found Larry Gwin's book an exceptionally honest account of the company grade officer's life in combat. While fierce combat was realistically portrayed, Gwin had the integrity to discuss his fears and mistakes in battle. Gwin wrote: "Some of the memories I have about those weeks and months...are blurred, and the ones I've recounted so far involve a certain irony. That's how we remember things that happened over there. We remember the irony." I believe this to be a common behavior. For forty years when asked about Vietnam, I would tell about the baby chicks we liberated from an NVA camp on Easter Sunday, or the watermelons stolen from some basecamp warriors, the point man who led our platoon for two days without a round in his chamber. Firefights were only for the dark of night. If these emotions ring true to you, you will enjoy Gwin's account. I

highly recommend it.

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