



The Proud Bastards: One Marine's Journey from Parris Island through the Hell of Vietnam

E. Michael Helms

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A riveting memoir of one marine rifleman's journey from Parris Island through the hell of Vietnam and the Tet Offensive with the Second Battalion, Fourth Marines.

In 1967, a young E. Michael Helms boarded a bus to the legendary grounds of Parris Island, where mere boys were forged into hardened Marines—and sent to the jungles of Vietnam. It was the first stop on a journey that would forever change him—and by its end, he would be awarded the Purple Heart Medal, Combat Action Ribbon, Presidential Unit Citation, Navy Unit Citation, and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry.

From the brutality and endurance-straining ordeals of boot camp to the endless horror of combat, Helms paints a vivid, unflinchingly realistic depiction of the lives of Marines in training and under fire. As powerful and compelling a battlefield memoir as any ever written, Helms's “grunt's-eye” view of the Vietnam War, the men who fought it, and the mindless chaos that surrounded it, is truly a modern military classic.

The Proud Bastards: One Marine's Journey from Parris Island through the Hell of Vietnam Details

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Author : E. Michael Helms

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From Reader Review The Proud Bastards: One Marine's Journey from Parris Island through the Hell of Vietnam for online ebook

Sierra Ronspies says

This book is definitely one of my new favorites. It's a little difficult to understand at times, because it's written in the form of stream of consciousness. The author's personality is clearly known throughout the book because he tells his thoughts, exactly as they were. The book is about a man and his comrades in the Marines fighting in Vietnam.

Mark Mortensen says

Through his memoir, E. Michael Helms details the good, the bad and the ugly of his active tenure as a Marine beginning in 1967 at Parris Island boot camp to his tour of duty during the height of the Vietnam War. Spiced with salted military jargon Helms tells it like it was among the grunts, setting the tone early on and never letting up. His letters sent home enhance the atmosphere.

Fashioned with a WWII era backpack filled with life's basic essentials of a poncho, socks, rations and an M16 Helms was prepared when duty called. The dawn of each day brought forth new learning experiences and on the job training towards a full education. The reality was much more than simply following orders. Days filled with prodding the enemy, pursuit, combat, point position patrols, tripwires, and the call of "*Corpsman up!*" melded into weeks.

Reflecting upon a sunrise, a mid-day view, a sunset or an ink black evening gazing at the stars, natural settings could look both majestic yet so terrifying. The reality of war and the fear of the unknown remained constant. Faced with the art of kill or be killed the desire to survive was ever powerful.

In the vein of "you never come out the way you went in" Helms served his country well. Through his dedication and acknowledgments Helms notes his loyalty to the comrades still in his mind. As a combat Marine, who came home from Vietnam, Helms can hold his head high.

I received this book from the author without any obligation for a review.

Jeannie Walker says

"Lock and Load" - For some reason, this reminds me of Flight 93 with Todd Beamer and the heroism shown by him and all the 40 victims on that flight. Todd's last audible words on the last day of his life, "Are you guys ready? Okay, let's roll!" The heroes on that doomed flight fought to stop terrorists from reaching their target, and ultimately gave their lives in order to save others on September 11, 2001.

This is a memoir and grunt's eye view of the jungle combat in Viet Nam and the fierce fight with the NVA (North Vietnamese Army) with occasional battles waged by the Viet Cong. The author saw and experienced the horrors of combat. He didn't die in the jungle warfare, but he lived with the scars and vividly remembered the heroism and courage of the men who fought with him.

I personally applaud the young E. Michael Helms, who boarded a bus and took a journey that made him a hardened Marine. I am sure he deserved each and every medal that was awarded to him.

The author tells it like it was. He describes the brutal war with authenticity, truthfulness and faithfulness. What more can anyone ask for in a memoir?

I believe anyone who takes the time to check out and read "The Proud Bastards" will come away with what it is like to face, encounter and relive painful memories of things you will never forget, but people you will always remember.

It took a lot of courage to become a Marine, and journey into jungle warfare. It also took a lot of courage to write this battlefield memoir.

Some of my relatives were Marines, and they were known to swell with pride from time to time. Marines are ingrained with Semper Fidelis and they are "Always Faithful". Their brotherhood is something that we can all learn from. I hope everyone picks up and reads this compelling book. If there ever was a modern day classic - this is it...

Jeannie Walker - Award Winning Author

Fighting the Devil: A True Story of Consuming Passion, Deadly Poison, and Murder

I Saw the Light

Thomas, The Friendly Ghost

The Rain Snake: A True Story of Love, Faith and Trust

Darcy Koch says

I read this book several months ago but have not had the chance to review it until now. I apologize for the delay. I found this to be a very interesting account of the author's experience. Once I began reading it it was hard to put down. I finished it in 2 sittings. I believe that writing and expressing our thoughts to others is very important for our mental and emotional health. Congratulations to the author on a job well done.

Dianne says

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It takes courage to enlist knowing you will be dumped into one of the ugliest and most controversial wars of recent history, Vietnam. To bare your soul and write about the horrors, nightmares and fear endured while trying to maintain your humanity and come home alive, well, that goes beyond any courage I could ever possess. E. Michael Helms has given this reader an eye-opening experience into the hell he lived in from Boot Camp to Vietnam and he does it with dignity, grace and stark honesty. **Proud Bastards** is Mr. Helms' journey, the good, the bad and the ugly, told as only one who lived through the assault on his senses, his person and his heart as he struggled to survive intact, emotionally, mentally and physically. Watching comrades fall, dealing with the brutality of an extreme foreign climate, smelling death and suffering all around, Mr. Helms brings each page to life with his words until, from the safety of your arm chair, one feels

they are there beside him every step of the way, from the young man naïve to war, to life as a fighting marine whose heart and mind are forever filled with people, places and events that are a huge part of the history he lived.

E. Michael Helms knows how to tell a story from the heart, pulling no punches, while riveting his audience to every single word he writes as his tale honors all of those who have stepped onto a battlefield knowing they may never leave. Mr. Helms makes his personal journey, our journey, I laughed, I cried and my heart raced as I hung on every word. Despite one's personal feelings about war, there is no way to ignore the strength and courage of the individuals who stood tall and dug deep when needed. That is how powerful E. Michael Helms' writing is. Well Done!

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Kait Carson says

Amazing book. Definitely five stars and I don't give those out very easily. Reading this book takes you to the heart of the action. it's a view of war that you can only get by being there. Far and away the best account of Viet Nam from the soldier's point of view I have ever read. It's clear this book was written from experience. Serving in Viet Nam was an act of courage - the author enlisted. Writing this book is an equal act of courage. Easy to see why it has been in print so long.

M.J. Payne says

E. Michael Helms opens a window into Hell. He weaves descriptions of the loveliness of Vietnam in prose reminiscent of Hemingway with images of the countryside after craters created by B52s. He does this seamlessly, and the contrast makes "Proud Bastards" a haunting book. The eerie beauty of the sunsets as a backdrop for horror reveals the dual nature of life itself. The constant, freakish changes from calm to danger jolt the reader. Life in the Marines itself is a poster boy for the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Young Helms and his comrades are victims of this in Vietnam, which he describes as "luring, lovely, and lethal", "Beautiful and deadly." This book is honest and the reader sees through eyes that do not look away. It is a graphically detailed view of War. It is a coming of age book. Helms has to cadge drinks from Marines who are not teenagers. It shows in stages the brutal circumstances that strip away human comforts, modesty, and illusions about life. Exhaustion, tasks like burning the human waste created by the men, and constant screaming about their maggot stature are the tools that strip the boy/men at boot camp to the point that the genie is out of the bottle and Helms realizes in surprise that he can kill. The necessary tearing down and rebuilding of the guys into fighters who can protect themselves and their fellow Marines is part of the basis for the legendary camaraderie of the Marine Corps. Helms has structured this book expertly with the stages of his exhaustion, despair, disillusionment with the brass and decision to keep his mind on his safety and the protection of his fellow Marines. This stream of

consciousness narrative leaves nothing human out of bounds as subject matter. Accurate strategic decisions made under almost unendurable pressure, decisions to follow orders that seem insane, boredom followed by endless battles and noise threaten each Marine's sanity at some point. After Helms decides to go on into a battle he intuitively knows will almost kill him, and prior to that his aggressive refusal to sit out the war in an office position give the reader the feeling that despite the glamorous Marine posters recruiters show, he would have forsaken his college offer and joined the Corps anyway.

concludes that "I turn from the suffering within and concentrate again on the beauty without..." "A smile crosses my face. I am going home. It is time to heal."

This coming of age war story is, in my opinion, on a par with the timeless classics of literature.

April Khaito says

War is hell and THE PROUD BASTARDS is your ticket in. Helms writes with a refreshing and terrifying level of honesty. From his days on Parris Island and basic training to Nam and back to 'the world', Helms takes the reader into the setting of war and what's more, into the minds of those it affects. I can't speak to the experiences Helms had while in Vietnam, but I can assure you that his portrait of basic training was spot on. I remember my own time in basic--a mere six weeks compared to Helms' ten--as one of pride, confusion, exhaustion, and a conglomeration of other emotions easier experienced than described, yet Helms manages to do just that with frankness and a splash of humor.

As for his time in Vietnam, I can only say that we owe a debt of gratitude to those willing to do what Helms did. I won't go into the politics of that particular war or into the rightness or wrongness of the actions that compiled his or any other experience. If anything, THE PROUD BASTARDS serves as a wake up call to those that may think the world can be so easily divided into blacks and whites. I found this memoir to be a brave account of war in a time when judgment is too readily passed and individual empathy often overlooked. War may be systemic--orchestrated by the powers that be--but its effects are personal and vary as much from person to person as they do between times.

Thank you for sharing your experiences, E. Michael Helms. (And I can forgive the few pot shots taken at the Air Force.)

Kade Worry says

An excellent page turner that walks the reader on a journey from a little Georgia town through the hell of Vietnam. In your face honesty paints a very real picture of boot camp and the recruits mindset, and make you feel like your boots are on the ground in 'Nam. If you love history, war stories, or are prior military you owe it to yourself to read The Proud Bastards

Christy says

This is by far the best combat book I've read. It sucks you into the story in a way that makes you feel like you are there with the soldiers and feeling what they feel. You can't help but feel a variety of very real emotions both mental and physical. The wording paints vivid imagery in your mind that will stick with you long after you've read the book. It is a very powerful and moving read.

Michael says

I received this book through a First Reads Giveaway on GoodReads. The Proud Bastards is the battlefield memoir of E. Michael Helms, who joined the Marines in 1967 and served in a front-line combat company in Vietnam from the fall of 1967 through the spring of 1968. Mr. Helm's narrative is direct and powerful - I do not know when he wrote the book, but the narrator's perspective is very much in the "you are there with me" vein - the language is of the time and of a Marine, it is the E. Michael Helms of 1967-1968 that is conveying his experiences and perspectives to the reader. What the book sacrifices in taking this "immediacy" approach is the opportunity to provide much introspection and reflection upon those experiences - for example, we learn that Mr. Helms volunteered for the Marines despite having an opportunity to go to college on an athletic scholarship, but the book doesn't really explore his motivations for making that choice, and how his experiences in boot camp and combat may (or may not) have caused him to revisit or rethink any of the values or beliefs that shaped that decision. That additional perspective might have further deepened my understanding and connection to the narrative. But what the book does very effectively convey is both the terror and tedium of his time in boot camp and the war and how young Mr. Helms and his compatriots were - we tend to forget many of the men who fought in Vietnam were eighteen and nineteen year old kids(!). I wish to thank Mr. Helms for writing this book and for his service and sacrifice to our country.

Martie Nees Record says

This is a coming of age memoir of a young soldier that was written twenty-seven years ago. The author, E. Michael Helms, was kind enough to send me an e-copy while also sending me another one of his book's, "Deadly Spirits" for review. In "Proud Bastards," we follow Helms from his brutal experiences during boot camp to the unspeakable acts of violence he witnessed in combat. I have never read a memoir about Vietnam before, so even though I had heard of the horrors I was still often shocked reading (and mentally seeing the pictures in my mind) of a Marine grunt's experience of life and death inside a foxhole. The book begins with an 18-year-old Helms, joining the Marines with John Wayne glory in his eyes. As a mother, I found the brutality of boot camp difficult to read. The recruits are immediately thrust into the stressful whirlwind of in-processing, haircuts, uniform and gear issue. It appeared to me that from day one, the recruits must begin to learn how to cope with emotional and physical abuse. Just as in the movies, confused kids really were screamed at from the moment they woke up till the moment they went to bed. "Get out of them goddamn racks you goddamn shit maggots." The author was such a sweet kid, after any day where he might be forced to eat his own vomit, he writes home "Dear Mama...I am getting along fine." His charming ways allowed me to continue reading without breaking for this poor disillusioned boot camp abused kid.

It has been said, Marine Corps recruit training will be the most difficult thing one endures in life that is unless you are sent into the Vietnam War. I thought boot camp was an impossible situation to live through, and then I read about combat and realized boot camp was a piece of cake compared to what went on during

the Vietnam War in 1967. I found myself in hell with the author and his buddies – especially when he wrote of watching friends die violent combat deaths. Reading about teenagers with peach fuzz on their chins in horrifying battles scenes often had me in tears. (Think of the movie “Full Metal Jacket”). Helms is a talented writer who managed to capture every horrifying experience down as if he experienced it yesterday. It amazed me that even at war he managed not to lose his natural humor and wit (which I think helped keep him alive) into his writing. When he first arrives in Vietnam and is meeting his fellow soldiers, he makes a comment that doesn’t come out right and thinks “Way to go Mikey. Real smart move, boy. How to win friends and influence people.” How can the reader not like this kid?

In this riveting memoir, the author does not talk about politics or of the controversy that surrounds the Vietnam War. Instead, he gives the reader a mix of emotions he felt during the good times (usually the bonding with other young men) and bad times (literally everything else.) So many heroes, so much maiming and killing of young men had me thinking of the author’s story long after I finished the last page of his memoir. Helms always made me think, he frequently made me laugh and his book often made me cry. I highly recommend reading this memoir, even if you are not interested in war stories. I found it hard to put down, needing to know what would happen next to our endearing and very brave 18-year-old “grunt.”

<https://www.amazon.com/Proud-Bastards...>

Find all my reviews at <https://books6259.wordpress.com/>

Jeanne says

Raw and real, “Proud Bastards” terrified me. It brings home the meaning of “War is Hell.” This is the detailed story of one young recruit’s experiences as a Marine, from boot camp to the battlefield, during the Viet Nam era. Had I not known the author lived to write the story, I would have had to stop reading about the terrible events. I cried for the young man who survived, for those who did not, and when remembering the lack of respect given Viet Nam warriors.

This is a page-turning story for veterans of any war, for those who “have been there” ... if they can bear to relive it. It’s also a must-read for spouses and other family who watch their young men go off to war and want to understand what it is they refuse to talk about, their pain, regrets, and nightmares.

Thank you, E. Michael Helms, for your story and for your service.

Nancy Steinle gummel says

The Proud Bastards: One Marine's Journey from Parris Island through the Hell of Vietnam by E. Michael Helms is a first reads win and I am giving my honest review. The brutality of war leaves your eyes wide open. The terrors of bootcamp shrivel in comparison. War is a non stop terror ride. This story starts out the Mike Helms entering Parris Island as a civilian and leaving as a Marine. Michael makes PFC after boot camp. Then off to Camp Lejune for further training. Michael is assigned office work. He petitions to be able to join his fellows which is granted. Then they are off to Vietnam. No initiation, you're thrown right into the middle of everything. Assigned to a patrol and unit. In no time they are broken into fighting forces. The

North Vietnamese Army AKA as NVA can cross the DMZ and cross into South Vietnam then cross over back to the North. US troops were not able to cross the DMZ (de-militarized zone). The fear is powerful but they keep going into villages, cleaning out the NVA and bivouacking for the night where you were lucky to get two hours of sleep. They run out of c-rations and fresh water. Seeing friends get killed and not all by the NVA. The Marine's exist in a never land/zombie mentality.

Read on for nor of the horror.

J.R. Wright says

This may very well be the best book I've read in my life. It's a very gripping story of a young man's tour in Vietnam. I actually thought I was part of the story for a time - beads of sweat broke out on my forehead. If you're into action and suspense, please don't pass this one by. It was an all nighter for me - I couldn't force myself to put it down. Excellent read - beautifully written.
