



Not All Heroes: An Unapologetic Memoir of the Vietnam War, 1971–1972

Gary E. Skogen

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Gary Skogen's tour in Vietnam (1971–72) was the best year of his life. Living with fellow CID investigators in an isolated hooch overlooking the South China Sea at the U.S. base at Chu Lai, Skogen enforced military drug laws during his working hours and yet managed to pursue a life of perfect hedonism—far from the farm life in southwestern North Dakota where he grew up. With unlimited access to cheap beer, a wide variety of compliant Vietnamese women, and a jeep he had somehow commandeered, Skogen perfected his criminal investigative skills at a time when U.S. troop morale had reached its nadir.

This unconventional, unheroic, and unapologetic book is not a typical Vietnam memoir. Together with 80 percent of the two million men and women who served in Vietnam, Skogen spent his time behind the scenes at a large support base. He did not slog on midnight patrols through Viet Cong tunnels or rice paddies studded with booby traps. He spent his year investigating the men who endangered the lives of their fellow soldiers by giving themselves over to unrestrained drug use.

Skogen's gritty narrative proves that some whose names are incised on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall died in less than heroic circumstances. Backed by impeccable research in the files of the National Archives and Records Administration, this unromanticized account reveals the sordidness of the war in its late phases, and questions the validity of seeing all Vietnam veterans as victims.

Originally entitled *The Best of Times*, *Not All Heroes* is really two beautifully integrated narratives in one: a gripping account of the *Apocalypse Now* endgame of the Vietnam War, and a M*A*S*H-like romp through Skogen's yearlong tropical vacation in a pleasure ground where sexual favors were too cheap to meter.

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