



NAM SENSE: Surviving Vietnam with the 101st Airborne Division

Arthur Wiknik Jr.

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An honest tour of the Vietnam War from the soldier's eye view . . .

Nam-Sense is the brilliantly written story of a combat squad leader in the 101st Airborne Division. Arthur Wiknik was a 19-year-old kid from New England when he was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1968. After completing various NCO training programs, he was promoted to sergeant "without ever setting foot in a combat zone" and sent to Vietnam in early 1969. Shortly after his arrival on the far side of the world, Wiknik was assigned to Camp Evans, a mixed-unit base camp near the northern village of Phong Dien, only thirty miles from Laos and North Vietnam. On his first jungle patrol, his squad killed a female Viet Cong who turned out to have been the local prostitute. It was the first dead person he had ever seen.

Wiknik's account of life and death in Vietnam includes everything from heavy combat to faking insanity to get some R & R. He was the first man in his unit to reach the top of Hamburger Hill during one of the last offensives launched by U.S. forces, and later discovered a weapons cache that prevented an attack on his advance fire support base. Between the sporadic episodes of combat he mingled with the locals, tricked unwitting U.S. suppliers into providing his platoon with a year of hard to get food, defied a superior and was punished with a dangerous mission, and struggled with himself and his fellow soldiers as the anti-war movement began to affect his ability to wage victorious war.

Nam-Sense offers a perfect blend of candor, sarcasm, and humor - and it spares nothing and no one in its attempt to accurately convey what really transpired for the combat soldier during this unpopular war. Nam-Sense is not about heroism or glory, mental breakdowns, haunting flashbacks, or wallowing in self-pity. The GIs Wiknik lived and fought with during his yearlong tour did not rape, murder, or burn villages, were not strung out on drugs, and did not enjoy killing. They were there to do their duty as they were trained, support their comrades - and get home alive. "The soldiers I knew," explains the author, "demonstrated courage, principle, kindness, and friendship, all the elements found in other wars Americans have proudly fought in."

Wiknik has produced a gripping and complete record of life and death in Vietnam, and he has done so with a style and flair few others will ever achieve.

NAM SENSE: Surviving Vietnam with the 101st Airborne Division Details

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John Phillips says

Really Recaptured Old Feelings

If you have ever served in a combat unit, even if not necessarily in a hot zone, this book evokes those emotions you experienced when you finally emotionally escaped orbit of your last duty station. Reading NAM SENSE brought back that feeling I had after four in the Corps and seeing Camp Pendleton in my rear-view mirror.

MR. S. BEATTIE says

The Vietnam war story from a soldier

He did not volunteer like others he only did his best to survive a situation he was forced into.. Having read similar books from wars, we have learned nothing.
The book deserve four stars, easy to read with amusing stories.

David says

I don't know what to think

When we were young we were soldiers and we went off to fight in a war that was poorly understood then as now. And as old men we write boos and articles about what we experienced and what it all meant. A lot of things in this book seemed true, but I could not relate to other parts at all.
Mostly, in the end, I was left wondering what Sgt Wiknik did with the life that was granted him after he got back to the world. I'll never know: the book just ends.

Jim Crownover says

Good field level experience

A good narrative of a draftees experience in the tough part of the Vietnam war. He tells it like it was, not glossing his interpersonal experiences.

Jeffrey Saltzman says

Sheer B.S.?

I....look....I didn't get past the first three sentences before I KNEW I was in for a load of crap. Drafted in 1968....went through basic/AIT and went to 'Nam as a NON-COMMISSIONED PLATOON LEADER! Really? Really? Non-commissioned = not an officer. Best he coulda done is he was "da bomb" outta Basic/AIT woulda been as a PFC E-3. No soldier in the HISTORY of the US military was platoon leader as a PFC E-3. Remember he was DRAFTED...two year hitch. He might, might have left as a SPEC4 E-4 when his hitch was up. TO&E or a platoon calls for a MINIMUM of a SGT E-6. If his platoon was at full strength he wouldn't even had been a SQUAD Leader unless he as an SGT E-5!! And straight outta boot camp? Come on...REAL soldiers are going to read this book and he's already made it unbelievable! To be frank I didn't get past the first page as I knew I was in for a load of made up bullshit. Sorry...it didn't pass the smell test

Jim Dulin says

"Hell of a thing. "

Well written account of a "Shake and Bake" sergeant's year in Vietnam. He was in the famous 101st Airborne at Hamburger Hill, Awshau Valley, and DMZ and did his job and kept his guys alive. Those who have been there will understand his not so gung ho point of view.

Ryan K. says

Saying I 'read' this book is giving it too much credit as a piece of work. Do you know the last time I bought a book and hated it so much I couldn't finish it? I'll tell ya - never. Until this one.

This utter crap that I spent my money on was so terrible I actually quit it last night at the beginning of the third chapter and refuse to give it another moment of my time. The best thing that can happen is that I can save some poor reader from wasting both their time and money on this train wreck of an offering.

Now, I also feel compelled to state that I have read a lot, and I mean a metric shit ton of books on the Vietnam War. Like, more than I can honestly remember. I have always been intrigued by this war and period of American history since I was 13. Suffice to say, I am pretty confident in my ability to filter out the good and bad within this realm.

Where to begin... First off, the trip flares went off for me when he stated he went through NCO training to become a Platoon Leader. What? Noooo... You need to be a commissioned OFFICER to become a platoon leader. NCO's are enlisted ranks and don't lead platoons unless the Lt. is away on leave or killed... I am already smelling the BS.

Next, in the remarkable short amount of time I spent reading this garbage, was the crappy dialogue as he recounts various encounters with the standard Vietnam archetypes from clerks, to the 'seasoned angry vet', to the mouthpiece, California surfer grunt, and eventually his own members within his platoon. It is borderline

insufferable. Between the farcical conversations he recounts and cramming his descriptions with every stereotypical language you could expect to read about Vietnam (FNG, piss tubes, gook, 'Injun Country', etc), I was left with the feeling that this was done by someone who never went to Vietnam yet watched every movie out there and tried to write a book. It's goddamn terrible.

Lastly, as someone who spent a good deal of my life in uniform and going places and doing things, this guy is a straight up shitbag NCO. He self professes two weeks into his tour to shirk his duties as an NCO on patrol, lie to his superiors, and has the audacity to think he has it all figured out. How someone thought this dirtbag had the potential for leadership back in the day is a mystery to me. Apparently from the description of the title on Amazon, it gets worse. Utterly shameful.

So there you go people, I jumped on this grenade so you don't have to. Sometimes your only purpose in life is to serve as a warning to others. Let me be that warning for you.

Matthew says

Amazing detail and real-world expertise that brings the day to day experiences to life, lots of details that really "teach" what it was like to be there.

Followed by stories that, while they could very possibly be true, are written in a way to sound incredibly unbelievable. I guess its possible that every other NCO and officer in the 101 didnt care if their troops lived or died, and that Sgt Witnik repeatedly made heroic efforts and stood up to lieutenants and captains, but they read like Tropic Thunder scenes. Highly unbelievable, and if true, astonishing he wasnt executed for treason.

There is a reason why biographies are written instead of auto-biographies and this is the poster child.

Kelly Burgin says

He didn't want to be there but served anyway.

This is a well written story of a draftee serving and surviving his year in Viet Nam. The delimas seem endless. A good read to the very end.

Cyndi says

Very disappointed. As a veteran, it is easy to see that the author significantly embellished the story.

Jacqueline A says

It stinks

Never met an NCO with such a bad attitude towards his superiors. He spent all his time trying to figure out how to beat the system. This doesn't come close to resembling the 101st that I served in RVN. From a 26 yr Army vet.

Itsoruss says

I liked the book and thought the author did a good job of relating the every day trials and tribulations of the war. He didn't make himself out to be a hero, just a GI doing his job. Brutally honest read.

Thomas R. Winscher says

A terrifying reminder

This book is well written and describes the feeling many Vietnam veterans experienced and continue to feel in their hearts, minds, and souls. "We did not fight the enemy, we fought ourselves, and the enemy was in us, fighting for possession of our souls".

Vernon Neece says

Good Read

Wiknik provides a good 1st person account of a grunt's experience in Nam. His recollection include both tragic, heart rending episodes and humorous episodes.

I spent 14 months in Northern I Corp with combat engineers at about the same time as Wiknik. So, I recognized some of the places he names.

I have read several books on the Vietnam war since being discharged from the army on 1971 & Wiknik's book is among the best.

Ana says

Deployed with the 101 Airborne Division in Vietnam and promoted before he could gain on the ground experience, Wiknik paints us a picture of what the jungle war looked like, what encounters with the Vietnamese looked like and what it feels like to fight a war when you are not supported at home. More importantly - and what I liked most - he is heavily critical of a certain branch of soldiers he calls Lifers, those men who have no other purpose but to further their career in the military, for which they are willing to risk

their men's lives in batshit crazy operations that should've never happened. Wiknik recounts how his own life was put in danger, and the methods by which he tried to stop these commanders from hurting other people as well. Well written, paced properly and interesting from a military history point of view, I'd recommend this to anyone with a special affinity for war stories.
