



Whisky Tango Foxtrot

Lynne M. Black Jr.

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SOG Recon at its best

This is Lynne Black's first book, it will not be his last. You have to know Lynne, he is one of those easy going guys that just do everything well. Lynne was on his second tour in Vietnam when he came to SOG recon. He was a grunt in the 173rd Airborne on the first tour and returning to Vietnam and SOG recon as a SP4 right out of Special Forces Training Group. So there was nothing special that prepared him for the day that Spike Team Alabama invaded a division base camp. But that day Lynne became a 10 (Team Leader) in one of the most successful small unit actions against a large enemy concentrations in military history. There have been a lot of lobsided "last stands" in military history, but there has been one that I know of where a small Special Forces led team completely outfought (with the dead enemies weapons and ammo) and out maneuvered a division on their own ground. ST Alabama lost two men in the fight and according to an enemy survivor of that engagement the NVA lost 80% of a division (a large portion was KBA called by the team and covey rider). That was Lynne's first mission in SOG recon, read this book to find out the rest and when you are done you will be waiting for his next book.

To order this book contact Lynne Black at idahonezero@msn.com the cost is \$25.00 (includes S&H).

Whisky Tango Foxtrot Details

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From Reader Review Whisky Tango Foxtrot for online ebook

Suzanne says

The plot and characters were a little confusing in the beginning. Characters were introduced in individual chapters. It was a little confusing but then as the story progresses, the interconnection is explained. The story is based on 3 individuals who are very different and for different reasons become involved in uncovering a scheme to control personal information via technology. Other characters are introduced but are not fully developed. Several of them I'm not sure why they were introduced. The story is set several years in the future with technology being an even bigger part of everyone's lives. The book definitely had me thinking about how we are putting so much of our information on the internet and who really "owns" and/or controls the information.

Steve says

Very well-written and contemporary semi-noir semi-thriller, an enjoyable novel even though not too convincing in the credibility department. Seems to be set up for a sequel, which I would definitely want to read - lots of threads still dangling.

Bryan j Butler says

If you are into sog ops or the secret war this is a must read

Like the head line says if you like to learn more about special ops in south east Asia this is a must read

James says

Loved this first hand account of SOG. Yes, the writing style is unorthodox and chronology jumps around, but if you can get past that, there are some amazing stories and insights here. I hope Mr. Black writes a follow up to cover his experiences at Da Nang in 1969.

Bernie Weisz says

Review Written by Bernie Weisz, Historian, Vietnam War July 19, 2011 E Mail: BernWei1@aol.com
Pembroke Pines, Florida, USA

Title of Review: Here I Am, 23 Years Old, Look 40 and Feel 90. I Live For The Field, The Mission, That's Okay, What's The Next Rush?"

"Whisky Tango Foxtrot" is a memoir about the early life of a unique man who was part of an exceptional period in American history, experiencing events and life and death situations a scant few will ever know

about. It is the story of Lynne M. Black, affectionately known as "Blackjack," and his triumph over adversity as an elite member of the "Studies and Observations Group" during the Vietnam War. This is also a story of a man that faced hardship in various forms, nevertheless always finding a way of coming out triumphant regardless of the fiasco. While in his acknowledgement in "WTF," he gives kudos to his wife Judith for the encouragement to complete this seven year endeavor, Black asserts that this book amounted to: "Picking at very personal wounds and grievances in order for me to better understand my place and contributions in this life. The theme of this memoir is clearly determined perseverance regardless of the calamity anyone is faced with. Black never had a childhood. He was born on April 22, 1945, the same day Adolf Hitler declared defeat in Nazi Germany, deciding he would commit suicide as a consequence. As an adolescent, Black was reluctantly placed in charge of his two younger brothers, as well as forced to defend his masculinity due to being taunted about his name by his peers. Black graduated from high school in 1963 in Seattle, Washington. Immediately following that, he was informed by his parents that he either starts paying rent to live at home or move out. Faced with either homelessness or three hot's, a cot and a rifle, he enlisted in the Army. With the conflict rapidly gathering momentum in S.E. Asia, he would soon be transported to a world where the grim reaper would never be far away. Black was about to partake in a situation so unusual, rare and testing of human courage and fortitude that when he suffered through the divorce of his parents, grappled with survivor's guilt over the near death of his brother and close friend, as well as agonized over an atrocity where the victims were small homeless children living in an orphanage, they would be considered minor events. Lynne M. Black would experience all of the aforementioned, plus be part of a brigade that arrived in Vietnam in May of 1965 that proved to be the first major ground combat unit of the U.S. Army to serve in the Vietnam-all before he turned 21 years old. By the time he was 25, he had experienced two additional tours of duty in S.E. Asia as part of the exclusive Special Forces branch the U.S. Military had to offer, the "Studies and Observations Group," known as the acronym "SOG." Eventually he would be a participant in one of the most lopsided battles America has ever been engaged in, coming out the winner. Black was caught by the North Vietnamese Army in an ambush with eight other SOG team members. When the dust cleared, three of his associates laid dead on the Laotian terrain, 17 helicopter crew members lost their lives attempting to support or extract RT Alabama, and incredibly over 5,000 of the enemy perished.

SOG was charged with the responsibility of retrieving lost equipment or documents captured through enemy action. SOG Recon Teams entered their mission, referred to as the "area of operation" (AO) with no personal identification nor serial numbers on their weapons. To complete a SOG assignment, a volunteer was required to run a minimum of three cross-border operations referred to as going "Over The Fence." There were times when teams were covertly inserted wearing NVA uniforms carrying AK-47's. Recon Teams were led by three Americans and supported by nine mercenary commandos, making a 12 man team. The American team leader was designated a "One-Zero, the assistant team leader a "One-One," and the radio operator was designated a "One-Two." The nine Vietnamese mercenaries were paid by SOG and functioned as armed security for their American counterparts. Similarly, the mercenaries were designated as follows: the "Zero-One" was the mercenary team leader, "Zero-Two" the interpreter, "Zero-Three" the point man, all the way up until "0-9." All members carried CAR-15's or M-79 Grenade Launchers with the exception of the Zero-Nine who was the tail gunner. SOG had its own air force, the 90th Special Operations Wing. This consisted of a squadron of UH-1F Green Hornet helicopters which generally performed search and rescue missions. The fearless Vietnamese 219th "King Bees" H-34 helicopter squadron did the majority of insertions and extractions of SOG teams that went on missions "Over The Fence." Insertions were either by a normal helicopter landing and the RT member hopping off the chopper onto hostile terrain or by the more difficult method, rappelling down rope in areas inaccessible to a normal landing. When a reconnaissance team became compromised, ambushed or overwhelmed and could not break contact with the enemy, an emergency aerial extraction was requested. Often the jungle canopy was impenetrable making it impossible for a helicopter to land. The teams were then extracted on "strings," which were 100 foot long ropes dangling from the extraction ships.

Lynne Black completes "WTF" with entertaining anecdotes of various missions and experiences he had during his first tour of SOG, which ran from July of 1968 to June of 1969 as a member of RT Alabama, as well as RT Idaho which he later joined as the "One-One" pairing up with team leader John Stryker "Tilt" Meyer. When Tilt went back to the U.S. in April 1969, Black went on to become Idaho's team leader. However, Black leaves the reader numb with the bone chilling, nerve racking description of RT Alabama's fateful mission on October 5, 1968. It would leave three Alabama team members, 17 aircrew personnel, and incredibly 5,000 North Vietnamese soldiers dead on Laotian soil. On this day, RT Alabama inadvertently landed right on top of both an armed 2000 man "Binh Tram" unit as well as a 3000 man NVA regiment they were sent in to find, with odds very highly stacked against them to survive. The "One-Zero" was James "Bulldog" Stride, the "One-One" was Stephen Engelke, the One-Two was Black. The Indigenous force consisted of Loc A. Hua the "Zero-One," Doan "Cowboy" Khan was the "Zero-Two," (Cowboy now lives in California), Hoa Nguyen was the "One-Three" who sadly was killed shortly after landing, along with the tail gunner, Cuong T. Nguyen. Black's description of what happened to Cuong is both awe inspiring and simultaneously tragic. The mission had all the omens of disaster even before it happened. No Recon Team wanted this mission, as the last twelve that went in there were either never heard from again or so shot up the team had to be folded. The moniker "Oscar Eight" was used to designate a suicidal area of operation that would result in a "one way mission," and this assignment fit all of its requirements. Therefore, it became necessary to be involuntarily assigned to a team via a lottery system., which tragically Alabama won. On October 3rd, 1968, two days before the doomed mission, Black and Stride flew a visual reconnaissance over the target in a Vietnamese Air Force U-17 to take photographs and study the area. The plane took off from Phu Bai airfield and circled over the South China Sea. Black noticed from the air sampan fishermen carefully observing the U-17 as they flew over.

Flying west over South Vietnam's rice paddies which gave way to towering mountains, the plane cruised at a safe altitude. When they reached the Laotian area of operation, Stride ordered the pilot to pass over the projected landing zone to make a photo pass at a hundred feet. When the pilot objected, deeming it unsafe, Stride slapped the pilot in the head and reiterated his command. The plane dropped down to tree level, and Black managed to take one photograph. Before he could take a second one the plane was stitched with multiple rounds of machine gun fire exiting the ceiling of the aircraft. The copilot's head was blown apart with parts of it landing in Black's lap. Black believes that the sampan fishermen tipped off the 5000 NVA soldiers in "Oscar Eight" that the U-17 was about to fly over their Binh Tram and to take action accordingly. The one photo Black took actually picked up the NVA tracer rounds fired at the plane, the fusillade was so intense. Another of the idiosyncrasies of MACV/SOG at Phu Bai was the infamous "Green Beret Lounge." In his memoir "Bright Light, Steve Perry describes the lounge as follows: "The Green Beret Lounge was a place for social interaction within FOB-1. It was one of the few air conditioned places in the compound and therefore, a good place to escape the almost unbearable heat and humidity of S.E. Asia. We would gather here as a family to share a drink, a sad story of a lost friend, or the joy of something good happening back in the world." When Black first came to FOB-1 he thought everyone was sitting around the lounge playing a ridiculous game called "liars dice" and bragging what they did. His opinion changed, recalling: "It didn't take me long to figure out we were all telling each other how to stay alive...how to transfer the battle lessons learned." Despite going over with his 1-1 every bit of intelligence they could get their hands on of "Oscar Eight," Black knew there were times more information could be picked up in the club other than in official reports. Black later reflected: "Not in this case. There were no surviving old hands to talk about "The Lottery."

On Saturday, October 5th, at 8 AM, the fateful day of the mission, two Kingbees loaded with RT Alabama took off from Phu Bai. They flew into Laos and prepared to touch down to infamy. The first H-34 had "A Team" and the second had "B Team" with Black in the second Kingbee. He recalled the following: Several feet off touchdown, I spotted an NVA flag posted near the edge. I remember thinking Ooooooh Crap!" The

mission should have been aborted right then and there, considering they were landing on a hornet's nest buzzing with 5000 NVA heavily armed soldiers. Immediately after his team was inserted the Kingbee that Black debarked from was shot out of the sky and crashed violently into the Laotian landscape. The team moved off the landing zone into the jungle to find cover, as the NVA set up on all sides of them, drawing the ambush tighter. Hoa, the point man, saw this and advised Stride to call for an immediate extraction. Stride ignored this advice and ordered the mission continued. Despite being a Korean War Veteran, Stride made a fatal mistake that would cost both his and Hoa's life by ordering the team to move over a well traveled trail across the LZ into the jungle. Reflecting, Black wrote: "The first rule of recon is, never use trails, especially well traveled trails. That trail, I said to Stride, definitely fits that description. He told me he was in command and that I would follow his orders without question." Immediately after that, a torrent of NVA lead flew out at RT Alabama, with Hoa hit multiple times in his chest and lower body. Jim Stride would be shot over 20 times, three fatally to his head. What happened next would make the reader think Lynne Black is another superman or a raving lunatic. He assumed command of RT Alabama and calmly ordered his team to form a circle giving 360 degree coverage. Every man laid prone or got down on one knee and fired repeatedly on automatic at the enemy except Black. He stood up, changed the selector on his CAR-15 to single shot and from left to right methodically killed one NVA after another. He killed so many charging NVA that the team stacked corpses of dead NVA around them and built a "cadaver wall." Another NVA charged up on Black and screamed "Chieu Hoi." Black answered by blowing the Communist soldier's head off, simultaneously declaring: "I don't think so!" RT Alabama would be on that piece of Laotian real estate almost until sundown.

What followed next is one of the most incredible stories of courage, determination, and intestinal fortitude ever in print! The NVA threw concussion grenades at Black and his team, only to be caught and thrown back! Black remarked: "You're mine now you bastards!" He even yelled out to the NVA as he continued to kill one NVA after another with expert marksmanship: "Chieu Hoi, surrender!". Eventually an NVA soldier hit Black in the head with a grenade, which dropped to his feet and exploded. The blast bent the barrel of Black's CAR-15, knocked him unconscious, and filled him with shards of shrapnel. After Cowboy poured water on him, Black came to, making him even more determined to kill every living NVA soldier on that battlefield. Black recorded his thoughts: "You have now officially pissed me off. I am declaring a Prairie Fire Emergency! A Prairie Fire should drop enough Napalm on you suckers to ruin your day!" In a Prairie Fire, all aircraft in South Vietnam that were within flight distance of Black's position were obligated to immediately divert to support him. With 5000 Communist soldiers against one surrounded SOG Recon Team, it was obvious they could have overran Alabama anytime they wanted to. There were multiple extraction attempts with repeated disastrous results. As long as the NVA were downing American birds, they were content. Whisky Tango Foxtrot is a story of American perseverance, never quitting regardless of the odds. How that day ended has to be read to be believed, as only Blackjack can tell it. He paints a poignant mental image, as if the reader is right next to him firing over the cadaver wall at the charging NVA onslaught. At a post battle debriefing, he was asked why he reenlisted a second time. Aside from avenging his brother, his answer was classic Blackjack: When I got out the first time and went home it bugged me that so many of us had been killed or wounded and I couldn't say I had really seen the enemy. If I'm going to fight a war, I want to see the enemy. I want to see the look on their face when I pull the trigger or have them roasted with napalm. Don't ask me this crap again. I'm doing a job that most guys back home don't want to do. Just be satisfied you can get people like me who want to be here and are qualified."

On his own mortality, he would comment later in his tour: "The enemy might shoot me, fill me full of shrapnel, or blow me up, but I'm not going to die. I refuse." Blackjack would later soften his position, realizing the biggest danger to him would ironically be himself. Experimenting once with C-4 he blew himself up on the range, being unconscious and AWOL for 2 days until he came to. Although WTF only describes his first tour of SOG, he would go back for a second dose. Doug Le Tourneau, Blackjack's 1-1 with

RT Idaho, would remember him as follows: "Black's one of those guys you can go to the field with and come back alive, but go to the firing range with him and you'll get a Purple Heart!". Addicted to the combat adrenalin, Black explained himself: "I'm not even interested in sex most of the time. I calm my nerves with alcohol and after mission stories in the club. I live for the field, the mission, that "Okay what's next?" rush. Fast forward to 2011. Blackjack has put it all down for others and can now move on, without living in the past, living on yesterday's emotions. There were other participants of October 5th, 1968, that could not leave the past in the past. According to Michael Orban, author of "Souled Out," he asserts that: "More Vietnam Veterans have died by suicide than died in the war." This includes a few veterans Black knew. Blackjack puts it all in perspective: "It's the quality of our lives that count. If we are staring at "The Reaper" and are in debilitating pain, ending our own lives is a viable option. Many of my friends have ended their lives under those circumstances. I miss them, but am happy they are at peace." While simultaneously being both horrifying and astonishing, WTF tells this Sogger's story, allowing Lynne Black his personal serenity to move on! This is a memorable book about an incredible man you will never forget!

Jeff says

Started well fell apart at the end.

Phil Polich says

The real deal. Actual on the ground Green Beret action.

This book is well written and well edited and proofed.

The author has both a sense of humor and a sense of duty.

This is the real story of a real Green Beret on incredibly dangerous missions "over the fence" in Laos during the war in Viet Nam.

It is not written like a lot of military history that is long on details and short interesting and good writing.

Maybe the best Viet Jam history I have read.

Bodybuilder

Hunter McCleary says

Sparkling writing. Wonderful turn of a phrase such as "Nigel was well past his expiration date" or "greener pastures schtick." Can't wait for the sequel.

Louis Reichenbach says

Hero's we never New about

Good book about heros we never knew about that managed to accomplish so much with so grew . I am glad for the guys that made it back to tell about it and grieve for the

Good book about hero's we never knew about. I am glad for the ones that made it back to tell about it and grieve for the ones that did not. It is amazing they were able to accomplish so much with so few.

ian porter says

"Just great"

Wow wot a read, this man has seen an done things that would turn your hair grey. But a fantastic read really enjoyed it, just wish there was more of it. Any one interested in this subject will appreciate this book.

Donna A. says

Whiskey Tango Foxtrot

A story that grabs you, pulls you in and doesn't let go till the end. The story carries you from mission to mission and makes you feel the downtime as well. An interesting look at what one of my family members did in service. Thank you for your service and the sacrifices made!

Kim Korich says

Apocalypse Now

Reading the author's accounts of covert operations during the Vietnam war couldn't help but wonder if the movie director Coppola patterned the lead character on Mr Black. Puts the reader right in the AO during missions. Realistic depiction of life "In Country" during the Vietnam War.
