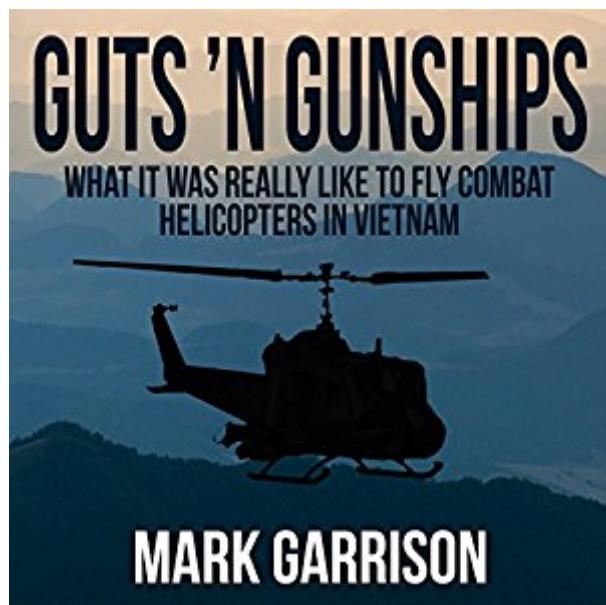


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# Guts 'N Gunships: What It Was Really Like To Fly Combat Helicopters In Vietnam



## Synopsis

In the summer of 1967, Mark Garrison had dropped out of college at Southern Illinois University just before entering his third year. He had run out of money and had to work for a while. These were the days before the lottery and the draft soon came calling. In order to somewhat control his own future, he enlisted in the US Army's helicopter flight school program. Little did he know that this adventure would be the most profound experience of his life. Garrison flew hundreds of missions for the 119th AHC, stationed in the Central Highlands at Camp Holloway in Pleiku, Vietnam. He was awarded 25 Air Medals, four campaign Bronze Stars, and The Distinguished Flying Cross, among numerous other awards. His narrative takes you through the whole process, from basic training, flight school, flying combat in Vietnam, and his return to the United States. His description includes many incidents in combat flight, including being hit by rocket propelled grenades and being on fire in the air, over hundreds if not thousands of enemy troops. But this is not all. He elaborates on the daily lives, emotions, and nuances of the pilots and what they considered their mission to be. *Guts 'N Gunships* is a must listen if you are to have a realistic understanding of what flying helicopters in Vietnam combat was all about.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Having served in the same unit a year before Mark's tour of duty, it was a great way to reflect back and recall some similar stories of places and events that happened a half century ago. "*Guts N' Gunships*" is something that every Army helicopter pilot who flew in Vietnam can identify; the fears of going into the heart of the air war battle, the humor of pilots necessary to maintain their sanity, the

sadness of losing close friends and brothers of war, and the day-to-day courage that it took to be a part of the "Helicopter War." This is a book that will not only be enjoyed by helicopter pilots, but also by the troops who served in the jungles and rice patties and to the families of these brave young men.

A great read.....while an infantry soldier in Vietnam, I often envied the helicopter pilots with their cold beer and clean??? sheets. My outlook changed while convalescing at Brooke Army Medical Center after being wounded. Most of my burn ward fellow patients were chopper pilots, and the horror of their experiences stays with me today. There is no braver group of people than Vietnam chopper pilots...Mark hits the mark with his "young, dumb, and fearless" description. They always gave us (Infantry) their best, and their actions will never be forgotten as long as Vietnam Infantry soldiers are still around. As a disclaimer, although I haven't seen him since, I attended grade school and high school with Mark, and was one of the many from that group that ended up in Vietnam. I was commissioned as an Infantry Officer a couple of weeks after Mark was discharged, and started my tour in Vietnam in 1971. The war that kept on giving.....! If you have any interest in the Vietnam War from the viewpoint of a combat helicopter pilot, buy this book: it's the real deal!!!

Often, I've wondered what it was really like in Vietnam. Guts 'N Gunships fills a long-time communication gap about what the Vietnam Veterans endured for the rest of us Americans safe here at home. Mark has a way of introducing humor into otherwise serious situations. At the end of most chapters, I felt compelled to read more. His descriptions made me feel as if I was sitting right next to him in that cockpit. What an adrenaline rush!! I never laughed so many belly laughs or had a need for so many kleenex in any book I've ever read, and that's a lot. Thank you Mark (Pigpen), for your courageous service in Vietnam and your lifetime of recovery. We're privileged to have you home!

No frills and no exaggerations, Garrison tells it like it was. Unfortunately, by the end of the war, the helicopter pilot casualty rate approached 30%. Even more unfortunate, the Veterans Administration fought tooth and nail to exclude diseases such as prostate cancer and diabetes from Agent Orange exposure. It is very easy to say "Thank you for your service," it is much more difficult to serve in the face of a hostile homecoming and then watch the country become embroiled in the same kind of wars.

Any book that pulls you in & takes you on a journey while making you care for its characters is worthwhile in my opinion, and this was one of those books. I was born during the Vietnam era & always respected the men/women who experienced the war first-hand, but this book gave me new insight into what many of the pilots & soldiers were really experiencing. Well done.

Illinois author Mark V. Garrison has written a timely book “timely because it is Veterans Day in a year when the public is finally understanding and appreciating the sacrifices and sheer bravery the soldiers of all ranks from the trenches to the war rooms in Vietnam, that most unpopular war in the nation’s history. Mark served from 1967 to his honorable discharge from the U.S. Army on December 31st, 1970. He went on to receive a bachelor’s degree from Southern Illinois University in 1973. Mark then completed four more years of study at the oldest and largest chiropractic school in the world, Palmer College of Chiropractic in Davenport, Iowa, where he received a doctorate in 1977. Dr. Garrison then practiced in Illinois for 30 years before retiring in 2006. The special requirements of helicopter pilots in the bizarre terrain of Vietnam are to Mark’s credit in writing this excellent adventure of life in the war zone. As is stated well in the synopsis, “In the summer of 1967, Mark Garrison had dropped out of college at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois, just before entering his third year. He had run out of money and had to work for a while. These were the days before the lottery and the draft soon came calling. In order to somewhat control his own future, he enlisted in the U.S. Army’s helicopter flight school program. Little did he know that this adventure would be the most profound experience of his life. Garrison flew hundreds of missions for the 119th AHC, stationed in the Central Highlands at Camp Holloway in Pleiku, Vietnam. He was awarded twenty-five Air Medals, four campaign Bronze Stars, and The Distinguished Flying Cross among numerous other awards. His narrative takes you through the whole process, from basic training, flight school, flying combat in Vietnam, and his return to the United States. His description includes many incidents in combat flight, including being hit by rocket-propelled grenades and being on fire in the air, over hundreds if not thousands of enemy troops. But this is not all. He elaborates on the daily lives, emotions, and nuances of the pilots and what they considered their mission to be.” For those of us who shared that time and experience in Vietnam this book brings back many memories and makes this into the sort of novel we all wish we could write. It is rewarding to find authors of Mark’s caliber taking on the history so many of the flower child set wish to erase. It all needs to be said so that we hopefully will not repeat that particular miscalculated war again. Kudos, Mark, for bringing this fine book to the public’s attention “ and to the veterans of that war who remain bonded through the

experience. Grady Harp, November 15

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