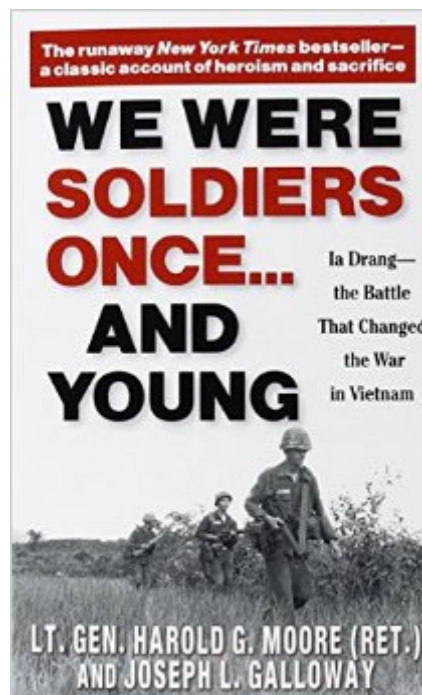


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We Were Soldiers Once...and Young: Ia Drang - The Battle That Changed The War In Vietnam



Synopsis

Each year, the Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps selects one book that he believes is both relevant and timeless for reading by all Marines. The Commandant's choice for 1993 was *We Were Soldiers Once . . . and Young*. In November 1965, some 450 men of the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, under the command of Lt. Col. Hal Moore, were dropped by helicopter into a small clearing in the Ia Drang Valley. They were immediately surrounded by 2,000 North Vietnamese soldiers. Three days later, only two and a half miles away, a sister battalion was chopped to pieces. Together, these actions at the landing zones X-Ray and Albany constituted one of the most savage and significant battles of the Vietnam War. How these men persevered--sacrificed themselves for their comrades and never gave up--makes a vivid portrait of war at its most inspiring and devastating. General Moore and Joseph Galloway, the only journalist on the ground throughout the fighting, have interviewed hundreds of men who fought there, including the North Vietnamese commanders. This devastating account rises above the specific ordeal it chronicles to present a picture of men facing the ultimate challenge, dealing with it in ways they would have found unimaginable only a few hours earlier. It reveals to us, as rarely before, man's most heroic and horrendous endeavor. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

I commanded A Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Cav under LTC Hal Moore at X-Ray. I lived the battle and led two assaults. Hal Moore's book is an accurate account of the events of those two days and reflects his love for his soldiers as well as his determination to close with the enemy. As another

reviewer described the book shortly after it was published it is "the best description of small unit combat since the Red badge of Courage". Having just read 71 reviews I note that some of the reviewers criticize Moore on issues of tactical considerations. Without going into a lot of detail the Hueys did well to carry 6 soldiers at the altitude of the central highlands of Vietnam. We did not have good intelligence as to where the enemy was so the operation was planned as a reconnaissance in force. Not much different than hundreds of other air assaults by both Army and Marine units during the war. The book was not written to glorify war but to demonstrate the courage and character of the American soldier.

The North Vietnamese soldier that Colonel Harold Moore's men captured in the Central Highlands of Vietnam on November 14, 1965 delivered chilling news: "There are three battalions [of Vietcong] on the mountain who very much want to kill Americans but have not been able to find any." A few hours later, those Vietnamese made contact with the 7th Cavalry --- and thus began the first battle of the Vietnam War to pit Americans directly against the Vietcong. The killing began right away. Not the killing of Vietnamese. The killing of Americans. Five died in the first few minutes. The hills were a concert of screams and explosions. Hiding behind a termite hill, Moore thought of another man who'd led the 7th Cavalry: George Armstrong Custer. Moore promised himself that he wouldn't let this battle --- Ia Drang --- repeat the sorry history of Little Bighorn. *We Were Soldiers Once...and Young* is the story of how close Moore and his men came to being slaughtered like Custer's troops. The numbers are spine-chilling: In four days of fighting --- with the enemy sometimes as close as 75 feet to the American line --- 234 Americans died. In this remarkable minute-by-minute account, you get to meet these men. And more: You watch each soldier die. And you get to grieve for every single one. The book's real subject isn't war. It's leadership. Consider the situation. Americans had been advisers in Vietnam, but they had never really engaged the enemy. Moore was career Army: West Point, Korea, advanced studies in fast-moving, guerilla warfare. In June of 1965, he began training his battalion for combat in Vietnam. In August, the Army pulled all six of his newly-acquired second lieutenants out. In August, any soldiers who had 60 days or less to serve were separated from the 7th Cavalry. So when Moore and his unit sailed to Vietnam, they had already lost 100 of their most experienced men. The difference between an under-trained unit that survives a fierce battle and one that becomes legendary in defeat is leadership. Listen to some of the ways Moore managed his troops. He told his men:--- "Only first-place trophies will be displayed, accepted or presented in this battalion. Second place in our line of work is defeat of the unit on the battlefield, and death for the individual in combat."--- "Decision-making will be decentralized: Push the power

down. It pays off in wartime."--- "Loyalty flows down as well."--- "I check up on everything. I am available day or night to talk to any officer of this battalion."Or this: Before the battle started, James Galloway (a United Press reporter who became co-author of Moore's book 25 years later) was watching Moore's soldiers shave as he boiled water for coffee one morning before the battle. Moore passed by. "We all shave in my outfit --- reporters included," he snapped. Galloway immediately repurposed his coffee water for shaving.And, finally, this: "In the American Civil War, it was a matter of principle that a good officer rode his horse as little as possible. There were sound reasons for this. If you are riding and your soldiers are marching, how can you judge how tired they are, how thirsty, how heavy their packs weigh on their shoulders?"Moore applied this philosophy conscientiously. He flew in to Ia Drang on the first helicopter. He led his men from the front. When he saw men from another company beginning to haul one of his dead soldiers out of a foxhole with a harness, he snapped, "No you won't do that. He's one of my troopers and you will show some respect. Get two more men and carry him to the landing zone." When it was over and it was time for Moore to turn over command, he requested a full battalion formation. One soldier recalls, "We stood in formation, with some units hardly having enough men to form up. Colonel Moore spoke to us and he cried. At that moment, he could have led us back into the Ia Drang."But it still wasn't over for Moore. His wife attended as many funerals as she could. And when he got back to the U.S., in April 1966, he visited some of the families of his lost men. One family thought his visit would last a few minutes. He stayed five hours. And he made sure he went with the family to visit the grave, and there he asked to spend some time alone there, kneeling in prayer and memory.This story --- the story of the relationship of a man to the men he leads and the families who sent those men to be in his care --- is why you want to read this book, and read it now. If you're an executive in charge of workers or if you're a parent trying to raise your children, you above all other readers will be able to read through the ugliness and the pain and understand why Moore's men fought and died for him.Should you ever be in Washington, D.C., the names of the soldiers killed at Ia Drang --- and there are 305 of them, in total --- can be found on the third panel to the right of the apex, Panel-3 East, of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. But you don't have to visit the Memorial to learn from them; thanks to Hal Moore, their deepest legacy is in the wisdom he can, in their names, pass on to you.

This ran in Army Times. In addition to being one of the under-reported stories of 9-11, it seems like a remarkable footnote to a remarkable book. 'The bravest man I ever knew'After a lifetime in which he cheated it many times, death caught up with Rick Rescorla halfway up the south tower of the

World Trade Center. But like a good soldier, he didn't sell his life cheaply. Death took him only after he had cheated it again, helping to save 2,700 lives by relying on the instincts and the preparation that had served him well in battles on two continents. Rescorla was a retired Army Reserve colonel and the head of security for Morgan Stanley's Individual Investor Group at the World Trade Center. But many readers will be more familiar with him as Lt. Rick "Hard Core" Rescorla, one of the heroes of the 1965 battle of the Ia Drang Valley in Vietnam. "Rick was the best combat leader I ever saw in Vietnam," said Pat Payne, the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment's reconnaissance platoon leader in Ia Drang. Featured in book Rescorla's role in that battle is recounted in detail in the book "We Were Soldiers Once... And Young," a searing account of the action by retired Lt. Gen. Harold "Hal" Moore and Joe Galloway. In 1965, Moore was a battalion commander in the center of the battle, and Galloway was a UPI reporter who covered the entire engagement. Even those only vaguely familiar with the book have seen Rescorla's image - he is the gaunt soldier on the cover with the 2-day old beard and the bayonet fixed to his M16. When Rescorla showed up for Basic Training at Benning in 1963, he'd already seen more adventure than most soldiers do in a lifetime. Born in Cornwall, England, he joined the British army's Paratroop Regiment as a teen-ager, then became a military intelligence warrant officer. He served in that position in Cyprus during the violence that wracked that island in the 1950s, then left the British Army for a London police job in Scotland Yard's famous "Flying Squad" of detectives. He left England for another military job, this time as a commando in the Rhodesian Colonial security force in Africa. From there he came to seek his fortune in the United States. After breezing through basic training, Rescorla was picked up for Officer Candidate School. Last year he was inducted into the OCS Hall of Fame. He graduated as a second lieutenant in 1965, just in time to ship out to Vietnam with the 1st Air Cavalry Division. In November of that year, still a British citizen, he would draw on all his youthful experience in the battle of the Ia Drang. Headed the 'Hard Corps' Ia Drang was the Army's first major battle in Vietnam, and one of its bloodiest. The battle claimed 305 American lives, soldiers who died in fierce combat with a North Vietnamese regiment that also took heavy losses. Rescorla commanded 1st Platoon, B Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, and was almost worshipped by his soldiers, who called themselves the "Hard Corps" after his nickname. But his courage and infectious optimism resonated beyond those under his immediate command. Payne remembers Rescorla "leaping off [a] chopper and strutting into our small very beat-up group of survivors" during the night. After placing his men to fill the gaps in Payne's line and pausing to speak quietly to each soldier, he walked toward Payne. "I was so amazed to see him walking around because we had all been crawling on our stomachs for eight hours," Payne said. Speaking in a low, confident voice, Rescorla complimented Payne on

establishing good fields of fire."Then he looked me in the eye and said, 'When the sun comes up we are going to kick some ass.' I will never forget his words or the look in his eye. He said it in a confident, matter-of-fact way. He was not boasting, it was resolve."Rescorla earned a Silver Star for his actions at Ia Drang, and, in Moore's words, "went on to establish himself as a living legend in the 7th Cav in Vietnam."But behind the swagger and the self-confidence, Rescorla hid a keen intellect, according to Dan Hill, a former captain who met Rescorla at basic and remained his best friend. This fine mind served Rescorla well when he left the Army in the late 1960s and put himself through college and law school, before going on to establish himself as a specialist in security for financial firms. His will to live came to the fore again three years ago, when he was diagnosed with inoperable cancer and given six months to live. Against the odds, he beat the disease into remission. As Morgan Stanley's security chief, Rescorla brought his belief in the "seven Ps" - proper prior planning and preparation prevents poor performance - to bear, to the immense good fortune of his co-workers. Morgan Stanley was the largest tenant in the south tower, with about 2,700 employees in 20 floors. But incredibly, only six, including Rescorla and two security folks who worked for him, still are missing. Everyone else made it out alive. Obsessed with preparation Those survivors owe their lives in no small part to Rescorla's quick thinking at a time of crisis, and his obsession with being prepared for every eventuality. "He'd take every possible contingency that could happen, and he'd come up with a plan for it," Hill said. When the first plane hit the north tower, the Port Authority told workers in the south tower to stay put. But Rescorla disagreed and immediately executed an evacuation plan he had made the employees rehearse twice a year. The plan worked, and when the second plane hit the south tower, almost all Morgan Stanley employees were on their way to safety. So was Rescorla, who made it to the ground floor, singing "God Bless America" to calm the nerves of the evacuees. But he insisted on going back upstairs to check for anyone left behind. He was probably still climbing when the building collapsed. His wife, Susan, and his two children likely will remember Rick Rescorla for his generosity of spirit and his dry English wit. But middle-aged veterans of a hellish battle long ago in the sun and the elephant grass are more likely to remember Rick Rescorla as Bill Lund, another second lieutenant in that battle, does: "This was the bravest man I ever knew."

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