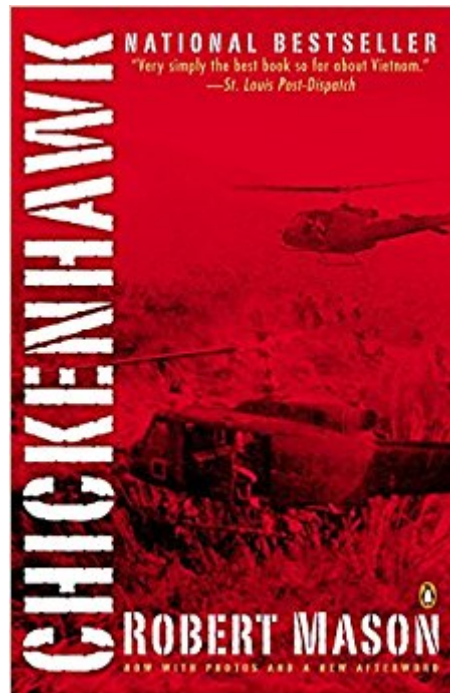




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# Chickenhawk



## Synopsis

A true, bestselling story from the battlefield that faithfully portrays the horror, the madness, and the trauma of the Vietnam War. More than half a million copies of *Chickenhawk* have been sold since it was first published in 1983. Now with a new afterword by the author and photographs taken by him during the conflict, this straight-from-the-shoulder account tells the electrifying truth about the helicopter war in Vietnam. This is Robert Mason's astounding personal story of men at war. A veteran of more than one thousand combat missions, Mason gives staggering descriptions that cut to the heart of the combat experience: the fear and belligerence, the quiet insights and raging madness, the lasting friendships and sudden death—the extreme emotions of a "chickenhawk" in constant danger. "Very simply the best book so far about Vietnam." -St. Louis Post-Dispatch

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Very simply the best book so far about Vietnam." -St. Louis Post-Dispatch "[Chickenhawk]'s vertical plunge into the thickets of madness will stun readers." -Time "Mason's gripping memoir . . . proves again that reality is more interesting, and often more terrifying, than fiction." -Los Angeles Times "More than any other writer, Mason has been able to capture the feeling of what it was like to be there." -The Philadelphia Inquirer "A hypnotic narrative." -The New York Times "Better than any movie about the war." -Boston Herald

Robert Mason was born in 1942 and grew up on farms in New Jersey and Florida. His boyhood

dream of becoming a pilot was finally realized when he earned his private pilot's license prior to his graduation from high school. After studying at the University of Florida from 1960 to 1962 and then working at a variety of jobs for the next two years, he enlisted in the army in 1963. He flew more than 1,000 helicopter combat missions in Vietnam before being discharged in 1968. He is now best-known as the author of *Chickenhawk*, universally regarded as one of the best books on the Vietnam war and a classic memoir of soldiering.

I had read *“We Were Soldiers Once and Young”* in December of 2012; I found this accounting of both Landing Zone X-Ray and then Landing Zone Albany of the Vietnam War riveting and flush with detail. I had appreciated that Mr. Joe Galloway added to the near end of his experience in Landing Zone X-Ray paid tribute to Dickie Chappelle as she was killed stepping on a landmine while the battle raged elsewhere for the men of “X-Ray.” The book by General Hal Moore and Mr. Joe Galloway should be a book read first prior to reading *“Chickenhawk”*. *“Chickenhawk”* is a book I for one am happy it just happened this way for me. The accounting of these battles in the Ia Drang Valley by Moore and Galloway give credence to the brave efforts of young soldiers on the ground and the pilots and crew members of the many slicks that fed the battle with dust-offs, re-supply, and fresh incoming troops. Mr. Mason's memoir captures an accounting of the Vietnam War first through the eyes of young exuberant American boy who simply wanted to fly. In a very short but descriptive fashion we read of his training, early assignment to Ft. Belvoir Alexandria, VA; and, then-sooner-than-hoped reassignment to the First Cavalry Division (Air Mobility). Reading through this torrential hell of the many valleys and outposts in Vietnam we the readers see the deep truth to the cynicism behind the events as they occur. Books by authors who write of their accounts of History and as they perceive it to have been all have this common thread in each of their books; Mr. Mason spent a lot of time recounting all of this and I can speculate it was for his own sanity later. Occasionally along the way we witness an honest caring side of Mr. Mason for the local Vietnamese people; he becomes amazed with their own ability of survivability and their engineering techniques that are considered (then) by most to be primitive; Mr. Mason acknowledges how important this is to the farmer of Vietnam. The book *“Street Without Joy”* is referenced along with Dr. Bernard B. Fall three times at various stages and based on conversations he recalls at the time. A revelation occurs when Mr. Mason acknowledges that neither JFK nor LBJ used Dr. Fall's experience nor his books to better understand the Vietnamese as a people as Dr.

Fall had embedded with the French in the early 1950s and wrote a Historically significant accounting of the differences of the Vietnamese people and of how the French were losing the effort. This is something that became lost in my view with regard to the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution of August 1964. Mr. Mason wrote a truthful and outstanding book of his experiences. I was a bit disappointed that he didn't reveal when he actually received the DFC. In no way does this diminish the significance of the book. I most certainly appreciated the new edition of this book. Afterward Mr. Mason inserted some 20+ years later after the first edition of this book. To all the Vietnam Veterans who served and believed they were doing good (regardless of your personal views later and regardless whether those views are for or against the war) I thank you! God Bless you! Welcome Home!

As a combat infantry veteran (aka "Grunt") of the Vietnam War I can fully appreciate this author's work. The concept of using helicopters as the primary means of inserting, supporting and extracting ground troops into hostile jungle territory was initiated in 1965 by the 1st Cavalry Division, dubbed "Airmobile" for this reason. The most famous "test" of this concept occurred at Landing Zones X-Ray and Albany in the Ia Drang Valley during November of that year under the command of Lt. Col. Harold "Hal" Moore, and is documented in both his written work and the highly acclaimed movie "We Were Soldiers." Mr. Mason served as a Warrant Officer / Pilot of the infamous "Huey" helicopter during this as well as countless other Combat Assault and other missions. Mason's writing is masterful; entertaining, highly credible and convincing. He takes us with him through the rigors of "chopper school" and subsequently half way around the world to Vietnam where he witnesses and experiences the sheer brutality of war. Chopper pilots and crews not only worked under extremely dangerous conditions for extended periods, but also worked exhausting schedules. The accounts of everyday life for him are a revelation to others who served in different capacities. Infantry soldiers naturally consider their personal battle experiences as the most graphic and dangerous, but after reading an account such as "Chickenhawk" we have to admit that while our life on the ground was not enviable, life in the air was no better, and often times much worse. I served a couple years later on the ground with the 1st Cavalry. We considered the choppers as our "lifeline" then, and we appreciate them even more today, attributing our survival in large part to their efforts and sacrifices. As with many who experienced the Vietnam War personally, Mason unfortunately brought the war home with him in the form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). His experience was the basis for the highly acclaimed book "Recovering from the War" by his wife Patience H. C.

Mason. My review cannot fully communicate the value of this exceptionally well written work. I recommend it highly to all those who served, but also to anyone touched personally by the Vietnam War, whether it be family, friend or others simply interested. And finally, I salute you Mr. Mason for your service and dedication; it has not been forgotten. David B. Simmons Author - Our Turn to Serve - An Army Veteran's Memoir of the Vietnam War (Xlibris 8.15.2011)

I first read this over 10 years ago and enjoyed it thoroughly. I recently remembered how much I liked it, so purchased it again and ended up reading it two times over a seven-day period. The combination of vicariously experiencing learning how to fly one of these incredible machines and dealing with the psychological, physical, emotional, etc. of war in Vietnam to me is both fascinating and humbling. I recently started a new company that operates 10 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year - renting kayaks and conducting guided eco-tours near Disney World in Orlando. Whenever I get into pity party funk where I think I'm working too hard, I reflect back on Chickenhawk and the incredible terror-filled grind these Army vets had to endure putting their life on the line day after day after day. As they say here in Osceola County, FLA, quick griping and cowboy up dude; you have it way better than most... Hope you enjoy this read as much as I did.

Excellent book! Robert Mason tells us of his year flying helicopters as a member of the famed 1ST Cavalry. Mason becomes an excellent pilot who carries troops into and out of combat. However He also begins to question the tactics and strategy of American leadership and the senseless way the Vietnamese people are hurt by the War. His candor about his post War mental state and his troubles for years afterward are understandable. I also appreciated his adding follow up of his life many years later.

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