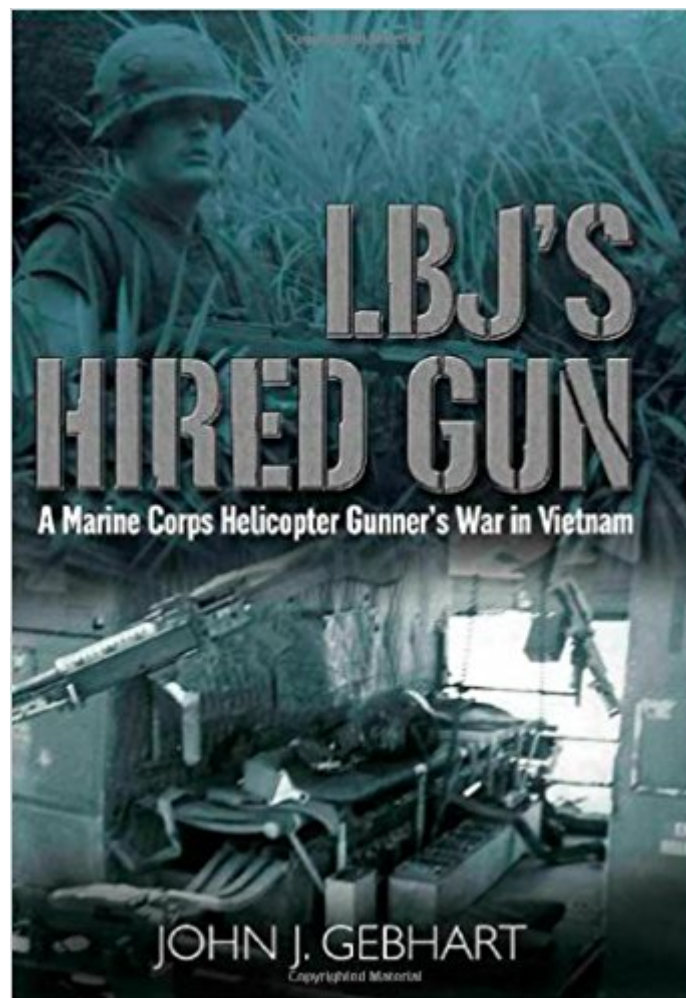




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# **LBJ'S Hired Gun: A Marine Corps Helicopter Gunner And The War In Vietnam**



## Synopsis

Many Vietnam memoirs have appeared in recent years, but not a single one has the humor, pathos, poignancy, and often sheer hilarity of John J. Gebhart's riveting *LBJ's Hired Gun*. As Gebhart tells it, he was a "smart-mouthed college boy" who joined the Marines to see the world and "dust a few black pajamas for Uncle Sam." Two grueling tours of duty later (1965-1967) he returned home as a sergeant after surviving 240 combat missions (12 air medals) and being shot down twice. On his chest was the Navy Commendation Award (with the combat V). *LBJ's Hired Gun* launches with Gebhart's grim recollection of the intense old-school brutality that was Marine Corps training on Parris Island before transitioning to his difficult journey for Southeast Asia aboard a troop transport with 2,000 other nameless grunts. These hardships offered but a glimpse of the suffering he and his comrades were about to endure. **PARA** His candid account of life and death in Vietnam is written with a lively, infectious flair. But be forewarned: no attempt has been made to sanitize this memoir with politically-correct language. Gebhart tells his story exactly as he and his comrades spoke in the 1960s. The result is a gripping, no-holds-barred memoir of his "misadventures in-country." He spares no detail and no one in his effort to convey exactly what he and his comrades experienced in Vietnam. Here is how the author describes Vietnam: "What was not to like about Vietnam? It was a tropical paradise filled with lush green forests and mountains, endless rice paddies, and beautiful beaches with clear green water. You get all the free ammunition you want, endless cold beer to drink, and boom-boom girls to party with. Who could ask for more? Of course, there were some minor problems like all the VCs and NVAs who wanted to kill us. Everyone counted the days they had left before rotating back to the land of the big PX. I was having such a great vacation I signed up for another 12-month tour. I spent twenty-four action-filled months dusting VCs and NVAs, rescuing reconnaissance teams, flying LZ prep missions, delivering mail to bases where you came in shooting and flew out the same way. Somewhere along the line they decided I should be decorated for killing the enemy." This is not just another book about Vietnam written by an officer. *LBJ's Hired Gun* is the story of an enlisted man who lived on a dead-end street in West Philadelphia, intent on lifting your spirits and putting a smile on your face as you journey with him across the world and meet the people, explore the places, and relive the events that shaped Marine Corps history in Vietnam from September 1965 to September 1967. There are many outstanding Vietnam memoirs. *LBJ's Hired Gun* stands heads and shoulders above them all.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 384 pages

Publisher: Casemate (December 13, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1932033653

ISBN-13: 978-1932033656

Product Dimensions: 6.3 x 1 x 9.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.6 out of 5 stars 23 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,299,793 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #54 in [Books > Engineering & Transportation > Transportation > Aviation > Helicopters](#) #775 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Military > Vietnam War](#) #1055 in [Books > History > Military > United States > Veterans](#)

## Customer Reviews

John J. Gebhart grew up on a dead end street in West Philadelphia and graduated from Monsignor Bonnor High School. In 1964, he quit St. Joseph's College after his sophomore year to join the Marines, his childhood dream, and spent September 1965 to September 1967 in Vietnam. Returning to St. Joseph's College in 1968, he graduated with a degree in Business Administration and started an employment service, which he still runs today. He also owns Iron Triangle Paintball Club, where famous battles from Vietnam are fought in bamboo forests and muddy swamps. He was inducted into the "Enlisted Combat Aircrew Roll of Honor" on November 14, 2003 aboard the USS Yorktown docked at Patriots Point in Charlestown, SC. He currently lives with his wife Betty and his German Shepard Corporal Logan in Zionsville, PA.

Since there are no former Marines anyplace, at any time, the name is Sgt Raymond L. Britt, USMC, Vietnam War Veteran, and fellow VMO-6 member of Sgt Gebhardt. I knew Gebhardt when he was then a Lance Corporal, just transferred into our squadron, and placed on the Ground Defense Force. My first impression of Gebhart was that he was a wise ass flunky, and he lived up to that reputation at first within the squadron. However, the Marine did what he did, and how can anyone in their right minds dismiss all he did during the two stints he served while in Vietnam. If you believed he was a shitbird, then be it, but I hand him a salute for his accomplishments - out of the norm for a Marine or not. Though I knew him in 1965-66, I did not know of his exploits until such time I read his book. I concur with his tales, slightly increased at times, for the sake of his story line. The book was

not written as an historic piece of works, but as a wise ass he was, which comes over loud and clear. Wise ass or not, he has my respect for flying daily and over 240 combat missions. My cover is off to you, my fellow Marine Corps Sergeant, for your works about your book, as well as for all you did within our historic squadron of VMO-6. It was this helicopter squadron, VMO-6, that first rescued a downed pilot behind enemy lines in the history of America, during World War II, that went on to fly over Iwo Jima at the Battle of Okinawa. We served, we did what was required, when it was required, just like Sgt Gebhardt did in Vietnam. Our squadron Commanding Officer, Major William Joseph Goodsell, Navy Cross winner, was killed in action over Hill 488, attempting to save then Staff Sergeant Howard and his other 17 Marines (Medal of Honor winner), and Captain Steven W. Pless, (Medal of Honor winner), both of VMO-6, join with the likes of Sgt Gebhardt for doing what was required, when it was required. It is men and Marines like Sgt Gebhardt, the wise ass he probably still is, that eventually placed VMO-6 where it rightfully belongs, as evidenced by the contents within his book. It takes a dedicated Marine to fly almost every single day, that has to face solid lead curtains of enemy rounds coming at you from everywhere at times. It is these kinds of actions that I take to heart for those who flew the daily combat missions to protect those on the ground we were flying over. We as air crew enjoyed flying and helping protect those ground pounders; and we knew they loved us being where we were, as they always gave us a thumbs up, showing their appreciation for our fire power and protection. I recommend his work, not as a historic meaning of facts or literature style, but simply in down to earth language about what he experienced in war for two years, two months. Well done, Gebhardt. I thoroughly enjoyed your works! For so called critics that bad mouth those that show what they have daily in combat when they write their stories, I would only suggest you grow some bigger male parts and expose yourself as Gebhardt did, and others within the Air Wing that hung theirs out to dry every single day during the Vietnam War. Only 3% of this nation has ever gone to war, when war called, and these 3% of heroes, protected your sorry asses back here in the states. Why isn't it I read of your spineless exploits within America? Sgt Raymond L. Britt, USMC, Vietnam Veteran with VMO-6.

An enjoyable book. I'm sure the politically correct among us will be offended by most of it. Too bad. Read it if you have any interest in the Vietnam War.

UH-34 not CH-34!!!

I bought this book thinking I was getting a memoir from a fellow marine air crewman and Vietnam

veteran. What I got was certainly not that. This man did not serve in the Marine Corps that I did. According to Gebhart anyone above E3 was an idiot and or incompetent coward. He went thru his first year or so in the Marines, lying, cheating, drinking and whoring. He routinely beat up and slapped around superiors with apparent impunity. As a PFC he managed to cut his own orders, divert aircraft in a combat zone, and single handedly save the day for the cowards and idiots he found himself surrounded by. I don't have any idea (and really don't much care) if Gebhart was a decorated vietnam veteran or not. What I do know, is if his recollections are anything close to being accurate, then he does NOT reflect what the USMC stands for, and how I saw it conduct itself in SEA. He is not representative of the brave and dedicated, honest and moral men and women that I served with. Was there many examples of the behaviour he describes (and revels in)? Yes. There were drunks, cowards, incompetents, misfits and bigots. It was my experience they were the exception and not the rule. Some readers have described this as a "comic book". I say it wasn't even that good. Halfway thru I tossed it.

Having been a former doorgunner, this brought memories of the war....it sights, sounds, smells, as well as the horrors and the hi-jinx. I would recommend this book to Vietnam vets that flew in the doors and to those that received our cover fire. Others may want to read it as well and try to understand what we went through during those trying times. Five Stars!

Sent as a gift

I am an avid reader of military history and particularly like personal accounts. Author Gebhart takes us from Marine Corps Boot Camp at Parris Island to a war torn Vietnam in 1966-67. As a marine corps helicopter door gunner, he completes two tours of duty in Vietnam and is awarded 240 air medals along with other decorations. His personal accounts are for the most part interesting. However, there is some skepticism on my part as to the veracity of all of his tales. In many ways he comes across as a braggard and a bully and he leaves the reader wondering how much of his stories are not embellished to some degree. So instead of getting a big "Bang" from this book, it only went "Pop." This is an entertaining read. If fact and fiction could have been discerned, I would have given this book another star.

I bought this book because I was a mech/Gunner on CH-46's in the Corps. It was twenty years after his time. Things don't change much. Shootin', Drinkin', and Whorin'. Different time. Same job! Just

wondering how our first guys did it. Good read I would recommend this to anybody interested in a little covered, but MUCH appreciated part of the war especially to the guys on the ground. (my dad-usmc, my father in law-us army). It was a F\*\*ked up war, but that is usually what happens when Democrats are in charge!!!!!! Semper Fi my brothers.

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