



Bury Us Upside Down: The Misty Pilots and the Secret Battle for the Ho Chi Minh Trail

By Rick Newman, Don Shepperd

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They had the most dangerous job in the Air Force. Now *Bury Us Upside Down* reveals the never-before-told story of the Vietnam War's top-secret jet-fighter outfit—an all-volunteer unit composed of truly extraordinary men who flew missions from which heroes are made.

In today's wars, computers, targeting pods, lasers, and precision-guided bombs help FAC (forward air controller) pilots identify and destroy targets from safe distances. But in the search for enemy traffic on the elusive Ho Chi Minh Trail, always risking enemy fire, capture, and death, pilots had to drop low enough to glimpse the telltale signs of movement such as suspicious dust on treetops or disappearing tire marks on a dirt road (indicating a hidden truck park). Written by an accomplished journalist and veteran, *Bury Us Upside Down* is the stunning story of these brave Americans, the men who flew in the covert Operation Commando Sabre—or “Misty”—the most innovative air operation of the war.

In missions that lasted for hours, the pilots of Misty flew zigzag patterns searching for enemy troops, vehicles, and weapons, without benefit of night-vision goggles, infrared devices, or other now common sensors. What they gained in exhilarating autonomy also cost them: of 157 pilots, 34 were shot down, 3 captured, and 7 killed. Here is a firsthand account of courage and technical mastery under fire. Here, too, is a tale of forbearance and loss, including the experience of the family of a missing Misty flier—Howard K. Williams—as they learn, after twenty-three years, that his remains have been found.

Now that bombs are smart and remote sensors are even smarter, the missions that the Mistys flew would now be considered no less than suicidal. *Bury Us Upside Down* reminds us that for some, such dangers simply came with the territory.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This thoroughly readable, absorbing history chronicles the air operations known as Misty (officially called Commando Sabre) along the Ho Chi Minh trail during the Vietnam War. Flying mostly F-100s, the air force pilots acted as FACs (forward air controllers) for strike aircraft, directing them to North Vietnamese supply convoys and other targets along the conduit. Newman, a journalist, and Shepperd, a retired two-star air force general and current CNN commentator, launch their account with the story of Howard K. Williams, a pilot shot down on a Misty mission in 1968 and declared deceased in 1978 (his remains were recovered in 1991). They also bring to life a wide cast of Misty characters, including Williams's long-suffering widow, Monalee, daredevil Jim Fiorelli, hyperconfident pilot Dick Rutan and several airmen who were shot down, captured and tortured. Shepperd, a former Misty pilot, also figures in the story, as does Sen. John McCain, who provides the book's foreword. The courage and skill of the pilots emerges clearly, as does the dubious bureaucratic rationale that subjected their families to nightmarish ordeals. A distinguished addition to Vietnam War aviation literature, the volume raises serious questions about both tactics and politics. (Feb.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Review

Praise for Bury Us Upside Down

"The stories . . . are vivid and timeless: : the North Vietnamese gunner who was so inept that the Mistys had a standing order not to shoot him; the pilot who dissuaded his new commander from launching night Misty missions by taking him on a night flight and surreptitiously switching on the outboard lights over heavy ground fire; the Misty custom of igniting their afterburners over POW sites, sending out a familiar booming noise that told the downed airmen they were not forgotten. [A] gripping narrative. . . . It's a fabulous read."

—The Washington Post

"This is a true story about real warriors—both those who came home and those who did not—and the legacy they left. The story of the Misty pilots fills a gap in our understanding of the Vietnam War, and reminds armchair tacticians what the true cost of war is, and who pays the price."

—Joseph Galloway, co-author of *We Were Soldiers Once . . . and Young*

"Rip that Nintendo out of your kid's hands and hand him *Bury Us Upside Down!* This outstanding book will give him insight into what real aerial combat, flown by real heroes, is like. Undoubtedly the best book of its type, *Bury Us Upside Down* is the truth writ bold and simple—the story of the men who fought the war flying the toughest missions imaginable, and their families. It is a book of heroes, and just reading it gives you insight into what a true hero feels."

—Walter J. Boyne, former director, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution

"With its great in-the-cockpit stories of the first jet-fighter combat forward air controllers, *Bury Us Upside Down* is an incredible account of how it all started. The reader will feel the G forces, the strain of avoiding ground fire, the satisfaction of a completed rescue, the black humor of combat-hardened pilots, and the effects on the families of those who didn't return. But most of all the reader will feel proud America can produce such men."

—Mark Berent, author of the *Rolling Thunder* series

“[A] thoroughly readable, absorbing history . . . a distinguished addition to Vietnam War aviation literature.”
—Publishers Weekly

From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author

Rick Newman is a writer and editor at U.S. News & World Report who covered the Pentagon for seven years, including U.S. missions in Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Persian Gulf. He has written hundreds of stories on the military, including dozens of exclusives, and more than twenty cover stories.

Don Shepperd (Misty 34) reported for duty at Phu Cat Air Base on December 19, 1967, and flew fifty-eight missions as a Misty during his four-month tour. With a total of 247 combat missions in Vietnam, he retired from the Air Force in 1998 as a two-star general and head of the Air National Guard. In 2001 he joined CNN as one of their principal military analysts.

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Sharpton:

In this 21st one hundred year, people become competitive in each and every way. By being competitive currently, people have do something to make them survives, being in the middle of the crowded place and notice simply by surrounding. One thing that often many people have underestimated the item for a while is reading. Yep, by reading a guide your ability to survive increase then having chance to stay than other is high. For you who want to start reading a new book, we give you this particular Bury Us Upside Down: The Misty Pilots and the Secret Battle for the Ho Chi Minh Trail book as nice and daily reading publication. Why, because this book is more than just a book.

John Valdez:

Reading a guide can be one of a lot of pastime that everyone in the world adores. Do you like reading book therefore. There are a lot of reasons why people like it. First reading a e-book will give you a lot of new facts. When you read a publication you will get new information mainly because book is one of many ways to share the information or even their idea. Second, studying a book will make you more imaginative. When you looking at a book especially fictional works book the author will bring you to imagine the story how the character types do it anything. Third, you may share your knowledge to other folks. When you read this Bury Us Upside Down: The Misty Pilots and the Secret Battle for the Ho Chi Minh Trail, you may tells your family, friends in addition to soon about yours reserve. Your knowledge can inspire others, make them reading a reserve.

Roger Cooper:

In this particular era which is the greater man or woman or who has ability to do something more are more important than other. Do you want to become certainly one of it? It is just simple solution to have that. What you are related is just spending your time little but quite enough to enjoy a look at some books. On the list of books in the top listing in your reading list is Bury Us Upside Down: The Misty Pilots and the Secret Battle for the Ho Chi Minh Trail. This book that is qualified as The Hungry Mountains can get you closer in becoming precious person. By looking up and review this reserve you can get many advantages.

Bethany Zuniga:

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