

Lightning From the Sky, Thunder From the Sea

Thomas Petri

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Sub Unit One of 1st Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO) was made up of Marines who were assigned to direct air, artillery, and naval gunfire support of military operations in South Vietnam. ANGLICO teams of two or three men were assigned to US Marine units, South Vietnamese units, and the Republic of Korea Marines fighting the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army in the jungles and rice paddies of that war-torn nation. Thomas Petri tells the story of this unit in a book that is difficult to read for a number of reasons, but that deserves a place in the libraries of those who remember-or want to understand-the sad, bloody Vietnam War.

Lightning from the Sky is a reminder of the sacrifices a few warriors made in order to carry out a foreign policy that many thought wrong-headed. Petri's writing is a vivid reminder of the personal courage displayed in spite of the lack of political will.

Petri's writing style is "just the facts, please," and occasional grammatical errors pop up; but the story doesn't pretend to be literature. It is, instead, a thorough and insightful history of a little known military unit. The book also provides revelations about ANGLICO's liaison work with the Republic of Korean Marine Corps. That nation made a considerable sacrifice in the name of Vietnamese democracy. Petri notes, "Over 5,000 South Koreans were killed in action in Vietnam and over 17,000 received wounds while in-country."

The chapter, "Will the Last Man Standing Please Call a Medevac?" chronicles a hard-fought battle between Korean Marines and the NVA which involved three ANGLICO fire-control experts. This chapter also illustrates another flaw that makes for a sometimes disjointed read. Throughout *Lightning*, Petri offers vignettes about US Navy vessels which served offshore during the conflict. After the above chapter, he gives a two-page history of the *USS Goldsborough*, DDG-20, then returns with a chapter titled "What the Hell Happened to You," in which he relates the culmination of the rice paddy battle. Interjections like these might sidetrack the casual reader.

Petri has included four useful addendums, a glossary of military acronyms and terms, a glossary of Korean terms, and a bibliography. Perhaps it is the epilogue that will resonate most deeply with those who lived through that era. There, Petri continues the stories of numerous ANGLICO veterans. Many of them went on to successful civilian careers, some continued to serve the nation, and more than one was left dead or missing in the jungles of that far-off nation.

The author served in Sub Unit One of 1st ANGLICO in Vietnam, and his voice rings with the authenticity of a front-line veteran, right down to his characterization of Jane Fonda as an "arrogant, useful idiot" because of her support of the North Vietnamese effort. History lovers will find *Lightning* a worthwhile addition to their book shelves; casual readers will be reminded that their postman or family lawyer might once have been a hero; and scholars will appreciate Petri's work for decades to come.

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