



LRRP Team Leader

John Burford

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Vietnam, 1968. All of Sergeant John Burford's missions with F Company, 58th Infantry were deep in hostile territory. As leader of a six-man LRRP team, he found the enemy, staged ambushes, called in precision strikes, and rescued downed pilots. The lives of the entire team depended on his leadership and their combined skill and guts. A single mistake--a moment of panic--could mean death for everyone.

From the Paperback edition.

LRRP Team Leader Details

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Author : John Burford

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From Reader Review LRRP Team Leader for online ebook

KeriAnn Anderson says

Honest

Very honest account of his experience. Enjoyed the explanations of the military terms and inner workings. Will be looking for his teammates books.

Brian says

This was a very good book, well written and easy to follow. I'd recommend it to anyone interested in some first hand history.

yimei Mullen says

A great story base with clear descriptions of events experienced in a war zone. The seemingly trivial and mundane day to day existence in camp Eagle comes to life through humor and brotherly interactions. Although I served six years honorably in the U.S., I actually felt to be a team member of the LURPs!! What a great read!

See my reasons detailed above. (Oh well. I inserted my review in the wrong space.) I'm 70 yrs old and trying to master the tools of the 21st century. Give me "E" 4effort.

Jason says

I've read "LRRP Team Leader" before, but it has been a few years. After reading a lot of nonfiction war books recently ("Delta Force" by Charlie Beckwith, "Black Hawk Down" by Mark Bowden, and "Recondo" by Larry Chambers), I decided to read this one again.

John Burford's book forms a kind of trilogy (or quartet if you count both of Gary Linderer's books separately) with "Recondo" by Larry Chambers and "Eyes of the Eagle" and "Eyes Behind the Lines" by Gary Linderer. All three men served in F Company 58th Infantry from 1968 – 1969 (roughly), and all three men provide different perspectives of the same events.

SUMMARY

John Burford was a sergeant and had already spent a few years in the Army when he was sent to Vietnam in 1968. He volunteered for Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP) after arriving, and was soon an important member of a fraternity of fighting men engaged against a tough opponent with a nearly impossible mission; collecting intelligence in small, six-man teams operating deep in enemy territory.

Burford presents selected stories from his tour in Vietnam in the form of "interviews" conducted by his brother and nephews in the early 1980s.

OVERALL: 3.2 out of 5

"LRRP Team Leader" is a good book, but it feels to me like the reader can get the most from it by also reading the books by Gary Linderer and Larry Chambers. They each provide their own memories of the same events, and their own voices. For example, Linderer and Chambers both write positively about a helicopter pilot who pulled a rifle and got out of his chopper to help a LRRP team, while Burford has a less pleasant memory of the event.

Burford doesn't have a "last stand" battle to talk about like Gary Linderer, and he spends less time describing Recondo School than Larry Chambers. His stories don't follow a solid timeline, but are presented by subject matter. He doesn't spend any time at all in describing his personal life, wife, or family, and his previous time in the Army and his time spent as a "cherry" without field experience are condensed into one or two sentences at the most.

What Burford does provide is the perspective of a highly competent and respected leader who has to constantly appraise the soldiers around him, the environment, and his own performance. Burford is judgmental, but he has to be in order to present this leadership-view side of the story.

Despite the humor, Burford's book is also sad. Gary Linderer and Larry Chambers fantasize about going back home, girls (a fiancé for Linderer, and girls in general for Chambers), and so forth. Burford doesn't talk about his personal life until he gets home and finds himself totally estranged from his wife. More than any other story, Burford's "welcome home" is painfully depressing and written so simply and succinctly that it becomes perfect. It's impossible not to feel sorry for the guy, and some of his bad feelings about coming home from the war were obviously still pretty strong when he wrote the book. I don't blame him.

RATING BY CATEGORY

CHARACTERS: 3 out of 5

As an NCO (non-commissioned officer) and later team leader, Burford has a more appraising and critical eye toward the other soldiers around him. This is actually a good way to offer memorable descriptions to a reader though: Larry Chambers (who is filled with praise of Sergeant Burford in his book) is presented as a particularly competent LRRP, others get less-than-satisfactory opinions from the author.

In general, Burford spends less time on men he didn't personally work with in the field (though still might have had friendships with back at the base), but spends most of his time talking about a core of five or seven soldiers that he spent most of his time in the field with.

PACE: 3 out of 5

"LRRP Team Leader" has a fast pace; the only place it really slows down is when the author specifically describes missions where his team didn't make contact (encounter the enemy). It also suffers from a bit of repetition; some stories and events are mentioned more than once (enough that I was confused at some points whether he was repeating himself or I was remembering a similar story from a different book and author).

STORY: 4 out of 5

Burford's story is unique in that he was a leader (a sergeant, though not necessarily a team leader) before he had any field experience in Vietnam. He was also a married man, though the reader doesn't learn about that until the end. His perspective is very different from his colleagues, and he presents a more serious, no-nonsense approach to life and operations in I Corps (region of South Vietnam closest to North Vietnam) in 1968.

By providing a "framing story" of his family asking questions, Burford gives himself a good way to present a

variety of stories: ambushes, operations gone wrong, people he worked well with and those he didn't, tedium between missions, and close scrapes with enemy soldiers. There is humor, and his humanity is on display too; he comes to all the same conclusions and realizations that soldiers (the smart ones) seem to: the enemy is human but still needs to be defeated, death can be a second away at any time, his own youth and the youth of those around him.

DIALOGUE: 3 out of 5

There isn't as much dialogue in Burford's book; conversations and communication is typically summarized rather than provided in detail. The dialogue that is present is undoubtedly from the author's memory, and probably very accurate. Being quiet was important in the job of a LRRP, and the men communicated mostly through sub-vocal whispering in each other's ears or through hand signals, facial expressions, etc.

STYLE/TECHNICAL: 3 out of 5

Burford's book is well written, and the framing device of telling stories to his family works without feeling cheesy or contrived. Some events and missions are mentioned (or even described) more than once, and there is also some word or phrase repetition that bogged down the reading in a few parts.

John says

well written, personal, poignant. The "coming home" sentiments could have been mine 30+ years later...

lawrence edward hamlet says

Great stories well written. No b.s. just the straight stuff. Loved it could not put it down.

I would recommend this book to anyone who had military experience and too a lot the kids who were to young at the time to know what was going on. I would also include those who believed the B.S. the MEDIA has been putting out.
