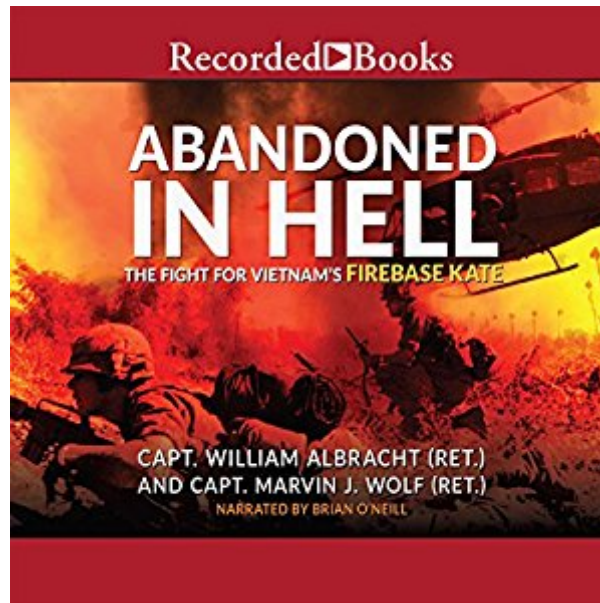




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Abandoned In Hell: The Fight For Vietnam's Fire Base Kate



Synopsis

In October 1969, Captain William Albracht, the youngest Green Beret in Vietnam, took command of a remote hilltop outpost called Fire Base Kate, held by only 27 American soldiers and 150 Montagnard militiamen. He found their defenses woefully unprepared. At dawn the next morning, three North Vietnamese Army regiments - some 6,000 men - crossed the Cambodian border and attacked. Outnumbered three dozen to one, Albracht's men held off repeated ground assaults by communist forces with fierce hand-to-hand fighting, air support, and a dangerously close B-52 strike. For days, the NVA blanketed Kate in a rain of rockets, mortars, artillery, machineguns, and small arms, blocking efforts to resupply, reinforce, or evacuate the outpost. Albracht continually exposed himself to enemy fire to direct air strikes, to guide re-supply helicopters, to distribute ammunition and water to his men, to retrieve the dead and to rescue the wounded, often shielding men with his own body. Wounded by rocket shrapnel, he refused medical attention or evacuation. Exhausted from days without sleep, he continued to rally his men to beat off each new enemy attack. After five days, Kate's defenders were out of ammo and water. Aerial resupply was suicidal, and reinforcements were denied by military commanders who had written off Kate. Albracht refused to surrender or die in place. Refusing to allow his men to surrender, Albracht led his troops, including many wounded, off the hill and on a daring night march through enemy lines. Abandoned in Hell is an astonishing memoir of leadership, sacrifice, and brutal violence, a riveting journey into Vietnam's heart of darkness, and a compelling reminder of the transformational power of individual heroism. Not since Lone Survivor and We Were Soldiers Once, and Young has there been such a gripping and authentic account of battlefield courage.

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Customer Reviews

I read *Abandoned in Hell* in three sittings over a two day period and I found it to be very well written and researched. Being a Vietnam combat veteran myself I can very well comprehend the anguish and frustration that Captain Albracht must have felt being denied the support and supplies that were needed to defend Firebase Kate. When Captain Albracht was wounded he was given a ticket out, but he chose to stay and I am greatly surprised that Captain Albracht only received the Silver Star award for commanding Firebase Kate when his actions went far and above the maximum required performance of any member of the military.

A well written, accurate, detailed account of what took place on that small hilltop in the Central Highlands of Vietnam in the Fall of 1969. Surrounded and outnumbered by a vast enemy force the American and Montagnard soldiers bravely defended Fire Base Kate. Finally after five days of continuous battle with the enemy and failed attempts at getting reinforcements, running dangerously low on water, food and ammunition, the order was given to evacuate the hill. Special Forces Capt (Green Beret) William Albracht, led the American and Montagnard force on a daring and dangerous night E&E (Escape & Evasion) through heavily enemy infested jungle. Capt Albracht's outstanding leadership, calmness, courage/heroism and professionalism during the entire five day battle and E&E off the hill and his refusal to be evacuated after being wounded, are in this man's opinion the reason I'm here today. I was there. Another outstanding leader and Special Forces soldier I would like to mention, Sgt Dan Pierelli. His leadership, courage/heroism also outstanding. If you are interested in reading a good book on the Vietnam war, then this is a must read. Nelson F. Koon

This read is gripping, compelling, stunning and accurate. Marvin Wolf, a decorated Vietnam Veteran himself, does a superb job of capturing the technical accuracy of the situation and evoking the emotion at the same time. I have heard this story in parts since Hawk came back from Vietnam. While I heard all or most of the stories, I never heard the entire saga from end to end. I was stunned to the point of goose bumps while reading the full accounting of the story all the way through. You are right there with Captain "Hawk" Albracht, Sgt Dan Pirelli and the rest of the American Artillerymen and Montagnard Soldiers getting pounded by NVA Artillery and fighting off superior forces and their ground assaults! Outnumbered 40 to 1, This young Green Beret Captain in his first

taste of combat fought off one of the elite fighting forces of the North Vietnamese Army! Through his heroic leadership, 150 American and Montagnard lives were saved. The title implies and illustrates how this band of brothers was abandoned even if inadvertently by the politicization of the war in Vietnam. President Nixon's policy of "Vietnamization", that is turning the battle over to the ARVN Army, was a failure regarding Firebase Kate. With ample ARVN troops within striking distance to refortify, resupply and even rescue them, They were told NO by higher command. The Americans couldn't and the ARVN wouldn't! Escape or die trying was their only option. It is a truly compelling story of leadership under fire and I cannot recommend it highly enough.

I thoroughly enjoyed "Abandoned in Hell" by co-authors William Albracht and Marvin J. Wolf. The story begins with William joining the Army after high school and following him through the many training schools he opted for - eventually completing Officer Candidate School and Special Forces training prior to going to Vietnam. His goal was to become a member of a "Green Beret Mike Force", instead, he is sent to command a Special Forces firebase in the Central Highland only a couple of miles from the Cambodian Border. Firebase Kate comprised of a handful of American soldiers and a few hundred Montagnards to provide perimeter security. The firebase was in a disarray; defenses were almost non existent, American Special Forces members and artillery crews played volleyball, the Montagnards randomly left the firebase to hunt food and leaving their portion of the perimeter unguarded. The overall atmosphere was laid back and peaceful. Little did they know that 6,000 NVA soldiers were encircling the camp and planning to attack and over-run Kate. The first shot fired later that first day! The battle for Kate began in earnest, NVA soldiers used mortars, rockets, recoilless rifles and artillery to soften up the camp - successfully knocking out most of the camp's artillery guns before mounting their first infantry assault. This battle continued over the next five days, no sleep, constant shelling, friends wounded and killed, battle stress causing breakdowns - yet the camp defenders successfully repelled several human wave attacks. The military built three firebases: Kate, Annie and Susan in a diamond configuration to support the main province of Ban Me Thout near the Cambodian border in the Central Highlands, however, they were each out of range of one another and could not provide close support, if needed. As a result, Firebase Kate had to depend upon air support. Helicopter pilots braved the onslaught, dropping supplies and pulling out the wounded until enemy anti-aircraft fire took away that option. Jets, gunships and Spooky aircraft were all the defenders had left and Albracht made the best use of them. During that time, he directed aircraft fire and repeatedly placed himself at risk by moving around the firebase to manage his forces - eventually wounded, but continuing to fight. He was awarded a Silver Star for his actions, but many

others attest that he deserved "The Medal of Honor". Reinforcements could not reach the survivors, ammo was dangerously low, and it was obvious that they couldn't stop another ground assault. Albracht was denied permission to evacuate the firebase by the powers to be! When the dark of night settled upon the besieged firebase - only one option remained...and Albracht took it! During the story, the author's also writes about various sub-topics, the hate between the Vietnamese people and the Montagnard's, how the U. S. Air Force and Warrant Officer ranks originated, details of aircraft and the pros and cons of becoming an aide to a general officer. He'd even located soldiers who had participated in this battle - providing excerpts of their versions of the battle. The author's also provided bios of the main characters in the story and their status today. Well worth reading and highly recommended. John Podlaski, author

Cherries - A Vietnam War Novel

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