



## The Price They Paid: Enduring the Wounds of War

**Michael Putzel**

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*A Vietnam War correspondent poignantly shares the perilous stories of US chopper pilots and crews and the PTSD that ravaged their lives ever after.*

The helicopter battles of the failed, “secret” 1971 incursion into Laos were some of the bloodiest campaigns of the Vietnam War. In this attempt to cut off North Vietnam’s major supply route, the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the United States and South Vietnam’s best trained forces were outmatched by North Vietnam’s combat-hardened army. The bravery of US chopper pilots and crews, so vividly portrayed in Michael Putzel’s important *The Price They Paid: Enduring Wounds of War*, is remarkable because by this time, the war had demoralized both citizens on the home front and US forces, who saw no light at the end of the tunnel and often turned to drugs, alcohol, and officer fragging to cope with daily dangers.

Putzel covered the wars in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia for the Associated Press and served as Washington bureau chief for the *Boston Globe* from the Nixon through the Clinton administrations. His wartime experiences contribute to the gripping you-are-there narrative, which will introduce readers—even those who have read widely about the war—to the perils facing chopper crews who flew twenty feet off the ground in small, lightly protected crafts.

The book follows the exploits of Major James Newman, Commanding Officer of C Troop Air Cavalry, simply known as Condor 6. Newman was an enlisted man’s soldier, a grunt who reluctantly accepted a commission. He became a major who was decorated for bravery and earned the admiration of his men for never leaving a soldier behind. Although most of Newman’s men were saved, even those suffering grievous injuries, they fought and continue to fight a second war against post-traumatic stress disorder. The second half of the book tells movingly of the broken lives the former soldiers and their families endured, ravaged from PTSD.

At times, the narrative is mired in too much military jargon and details about rescue missions and weaponry. However, this is not significant when compared to the author’s skill at relating how Newman and his fellow Condors never stopped paying the price, suffering physical and psychological torments for the rest of their lives.

KARL HELICHER (Winter 2016)

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