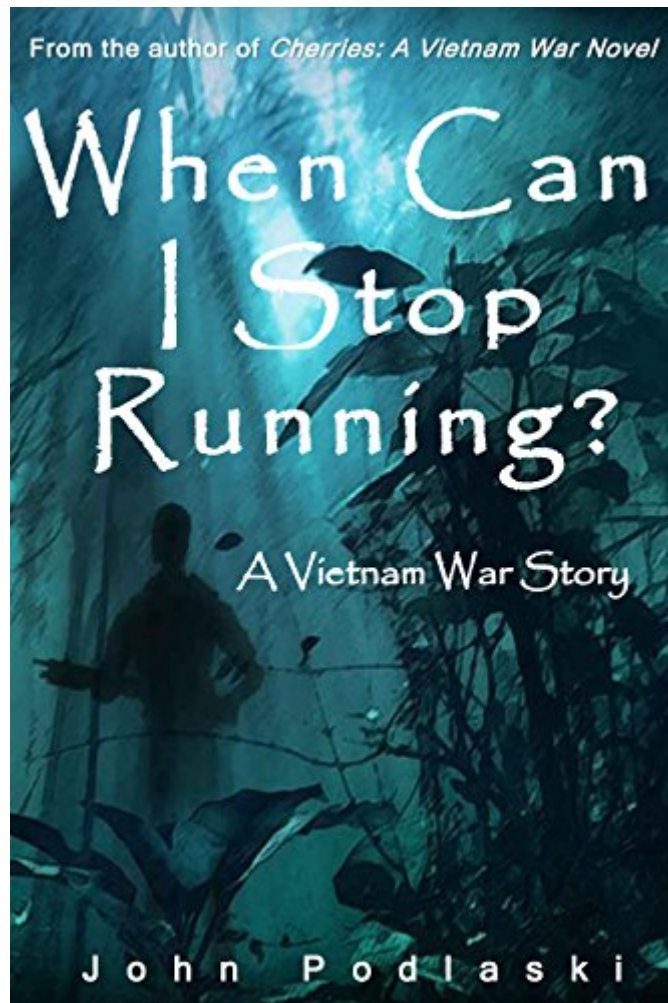




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When Can I Stop Running?



Synopsis

A vivid depiction of a terrifying night as an infantryman on a listening post during the Vietnam War. Two teenage soldiers, friends and fellow Detroiters, are alone and positioned in the dense jungle three-hundred meters beyond the barbed-wired perimeter and relative safety of their firebase - their assignment as a "human early warning system", is to listen for enemy activity and forewarn the base of any potential dangers. As they were new to the "Iron Triangle" and its reputation, little did they know that units before them lost dozens of soldiers in this nightly high-risk task and referred to those assigned as "bait for the enemy" and "sacrificial lambs". Sitting in the pitch black tropical jungle - with visibility at less than two feet - one character's imagination takes hold throughout the agonizing night, and at times, transports him back to some of his most vivid childhood memories - innocent, but equally terrifying at the time. As kids, we instinctively run as fast as we can to escape imaginary or perceived danger, but as soldiers, men are trained to conquer their fears and develop the confidence to stand their ground and fight. At least in theory, this is how it's supposed to work. But when enemy soldiers surround their LP - discovery or trying to run will result in instantaneous death...nothing in life had prepared them for this moment in time!

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Outstanding read that paints a dramatic picture of what it was like to man an LP (listening post) in enemy territory on a night that never seems to end. Interwoven with the story is flashbacks from the author's youth, when terrifying events scared him into running for his life. But now, in the darkness, a short distance from the enemy, he cannot run. He must stay at his assigned station, maintain total silence, and report enemy activities to his headquarters. This book reminds me a lot of the Pulitzer-nominated book *The Things They Carried*. It's one thing to read that our soldiers were sent out from their outposts, in teams of two, to maintain reconnaissance of the enemy territory. It's quite another to learn the intimate details of what that entailed. This book paints a graphic picture of everything involved in LP duty - constant mosquito bites, sitting in a mud hole being pelted by rain, hearing (and smelling) enemy soldiers taking their latrine breaks mere feet away. The descriptions are extremely well-crafted and vivid, and the flashbacks evoke memories from my own reckless youth. After you read this, you will really want to find a vet who humped the boonies in Vietnam just to say "Thank you for your service"! Welcome home, brother!

What I have found to be true about most of the personal memoirs and novels about the Vietnam War are the authors trying to lay to rest the ghosts of their pasts. Everyone has a story to tell, and each one collectively becomes part of our national consciousness as we can continue to heal from this conflict. That's exactly what's happening in John Podlaski's thin, but moving account of the war, specifically, a night at a listening post. War is not just about the firefights, the ambushes, mortar attacks, artillery barrages and the like; it's also the time between these events when sometimes the stillness and solitude could be just as nerve-wracking and deadly as a firefight. It was a time for reflection and soul-searching; a time when one's thoughts tried to make sense out of conflict where so many young men would lose their lives and many others, wounded forever. It was a time for a person's mind to wander...wander back in time to childhood memories to forget the horrors of war, and perhaps, if only for a few hours, to find some peace and solace. This is a brilliant story; especially the way Podlaski weaves a night on a listening post with his own childhood memories. In as much time as it takes to read his story, if you were to read it in one sitting, would be about the same amount of time one would spend out there beyond the wire in the jungle, wondering, worrying,

if this night the enemy would appear and all the while hoping and praying that morning would come soon. This is not just another Vietnam War story. This is not a story about the horrors of war. It is, though, the story of every young man who found himself halfway around the world in Vietnam, trying to stay alive. Jeffrey Miller, Bureau 39

Certainly a different adventure than his first book "Cherries". More of an in-depth slice, a single mission, from his year in Vietnam. Already an experienced soldier on a typical but dangerous mission. Paired with his friend from the east side of Detroit. They set out to simply complete the mission assigned. Some humor, some drama and always danger. "Polak's" method of coping is definitely worth the read !

I particularly enjoyed the story as it went back to his youth in the story and then compared his mindset to the present in Vietnam. Having lived 2 years in Detroit, 4 miles from where his story begins, while in High School brought another interest to me. His ability to tell the story is very, very good and makes you feel you are there with him.

Oh how I could relate to his stories of his youth. To tie them together with a description of an OP night was pure marvel. A job well done.

Incredibly well written. It took me back to Nam in a positive way and brought back some great childhood memories.

This was a excellent book I read it in two nights. What I liked about the book he compared his stories growing up of being scared and being on a Listening Post in Vietnam. The book kept your attention and interested and at times made you laugh and feel his fear. I would highly recommend it a very good author. By John Schrank

John does an outstanding job of describing his time in Nam, and referencing some of his experiences as a young man in Detroit adds not only some humor and also some comparisons to his Nam experiences in Nam. This is a GREAT book to read as is his other book, Cherries.

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