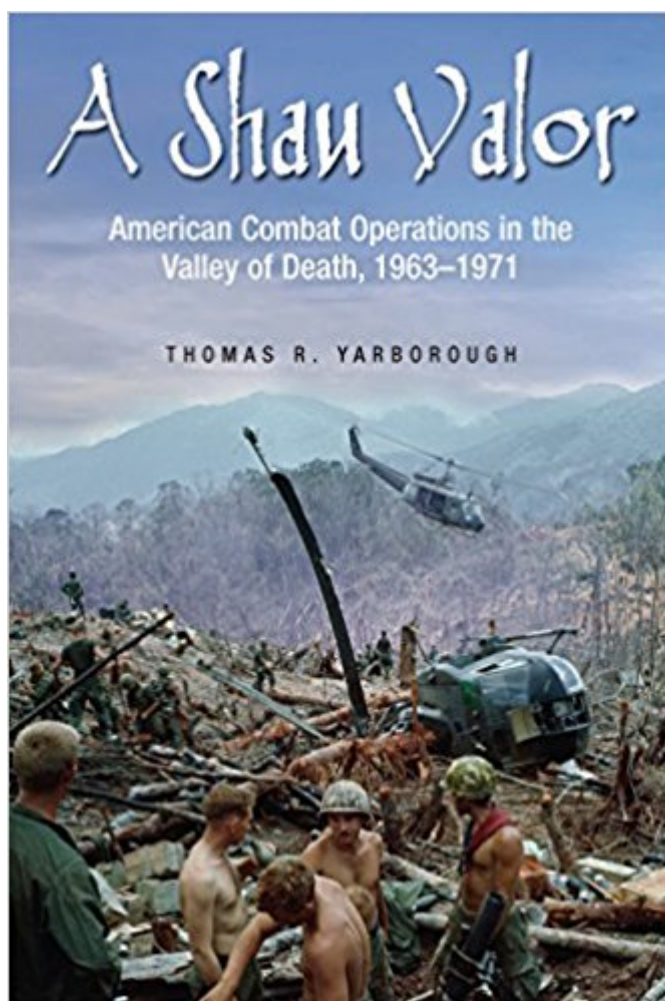


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# A Shau Valor: American Combat Operations In The Valley Of Death, 1963–1971



## Synopsis

Finalist, 2016 Army Historical Society Distinguished Writing Award. Throughout the Vietnam War, one focal point persisted where the Viet Cong guerrillas and ARVN were not a major factor, but where the trained professionals of the North Vietnamese and U.S. armies repeatedly fought head-to-head. A Shau Valor is a thoroughly documented study of nine years of American combat operations encompassing the crucial frontier valley and a 15-mile radius around it—the most deadly killing ground of the entire Vietnam War. Beginning in 1963 Special Forces A-teams established camps along the valley floor, followed by a number of top-secret Project Delta reconnaissance missions through 1967. Then, U.S. Army and Marine Corps maneuver battalions engaged in a series of sometimes controversial thrusts into the A Shau designed to disrupt NVA infiltrations and to kill enemy soldiers, part of what came to be known as Westmoreland's "war of attrition." The various campaigns included Operation Pirous in 1967, 1968's Operations Delaware and Somerset Plain, 1969's Operations Dewey Canyon, Massachusetts Striker, and Apache Snow—which included the infamous battle for Hamburger Hill—culminating with Operation Texas Star and the vicious fight for and humiliating evacuation of Fire Support Base Ripcord in the summer of 1970, the last major U.S. battle of the war. By 1971 the fighting had once again shifted to the realm of small Special Forces reconnaissance teams assigned to the ultra-secret Studies and Observations Group—SOG. Other works have focused on individual battles or units, but A Shau Valor is the first to study the nine-year campaign for all its courage and sacrifice—chronologically and within the context of other historical, political and cultural events.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Colonel Thomas Yarborough spent his time in the air over the A Shau Valley, but he has detailed knowledge of what took place on the ground. He insightfully covers the infantryman's hardships, difficulties, and physical price paid. Thanks to his extensive research, study, and personal knowledge, Tom describes the nine-year war in the A Shau in riveting detail. This book is a "must read" for all interested in why we did not close and win that war. (Wesley L. Fox, Colonel USMC (Ret), Medal of Honor recipient and author of *Marine Rifleman: Forty-Three Years in the Corps*.) Tom Yarborough provides a gripping, fast paced, page-turning account of America's finest warriors who fought in and above the most strategically important terrain in Vietnam. A masterful blend of history, national strategy, and warrior ethos which simultaneously highlights leadership attributes at every level. A must read for all warriors, scholars, and students of leadership. Additionally, it is a great tribute to the warriors who fought, and those who died, in the A Shau Valley. (General H. Hugh Shelton, U.S. Army (Ret), A Shau veteran, 14th Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and author of *Without Hesitation: The Odyssey of an American Warrior*) There is such a great deal we still don't know about some of the theaters of the Vietnam War - Yarborough writes as though he were there when it happened, such is the vividness with which he recounts some of the events... (Books Monthly UK) "Covers eight years of military action in chronological, episodic fashion in this detailed military history. The A Shau Valley, located about 25 miles south of the Vietnamese city of Hue and near the border with Laos, was a main entry route into South Vietnam for North Vietnamese forces on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Widely known as the 'Valley of Death,' this area was the site of many vicious engagements between the North Vietnamese Army and the U.S. Military. . . . Yarborough's volume is the first that looks solely at fighting in the A Shau during virtually the entire conflict. (Publisher's Weekly)...while much of this ground has been covered before in many books, this is the first volume that looks solely at fighting in the A Shau during virtually the entire Vietnam War. It is a worthy endeavor. (The VVA Veteran)... arguably the first full length account of American combat in the valley, stands as a sterling testament to the extraordinary courage- no less than 15 Medals of Honor were awarded for actions in and around the valley- displayed by the men who fought and died there. (Vietnam Magazine)"...author writes a history of the war as exemplified by actions, operations, successes and failures that took place in a fixed physical setting. It is a novel approach. It is more

narrow than a history of the war but broader in scope than a detailed examination of a single battle... Saving the best for his Epilogue, the author may have unintentionally asked a question that should have been considered then and should be considered today. "Despite America's enormous expenditure of firepower and men, MACV's strategy for winning the A Shau was neither realistic nor focused enough to ensure a successful outcome. Only taking and holding territory could have done that, something that was never seriously considered by American leadership. In effect, self-delusion substituted for strategy." Applying the lessons of the A Shau to today's conflicts one can also ask if its mistakes are being repeated today." (The Drop, Winter 2016) The North Vietnamese Army and the US Army clashed frequently in this strategic valley near the Ho Chi Min trail. The author covers the nine years of fighting that occurred there. (Military Heritage) This is a truly remarkable, well-written, thought-provoking book...will appeal to a wide audience interested in gaining a better understanding of the Vietnam War (on point)

Colonel Thomas R. Yarborough served as an Air Force pilot for 28 years and flew two combat tours in Vietnam as a forward air controller. His combat decorations include the Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, Purple Heart, Air Medal, and the Vietnamese Gallantry Cross with Bronze Star. A former professor and department chair at Indiana University, he now lives in West Springfield, Virginia, where he maintains ties to the academic community by writing articles for various scholarly journals and periodicals. He is the author of the critically acclaimed book, Da Nang Diary.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I was in the 101st in the '68-'69 time period and was aware of the significance of the A Shau, the NVA effectiveness and the terrible weather. The author covers these in detail. He also brings in the political, press, and other considerations that impacted and does a masterful job. I was amazed at the descriptions of some of the individuals involved. Spot on. I highly recommend this book. There were so many lessons learned and I would hope we take heed.

Very well done. I liked the references to the awards the many heroes received. To me, this book showed how poorly the top Generals at MACV ran things and caused many many more casualties as then continued to send these heroes into terrible losing situations. Also, I would have like more attention to the USAF pilots and crews and how they went in on on terrible conditions to support the Good Guys. I am especially familiar with C-123 missions were carried out under terrible wx conditions and enemy ground fire. The base at Kam Duc while not in the valley was fairly close. So sorry, I can't remember the pilot, but in the late stages of the war, that base was very nearly over

run while US military guys were still at the base when the pilot diverted from his mission to land there under fire from the bad guys who were very close. The runway was in bad condition, but they landed and waited for all the "good guys" including all the US military to come out of hiding and jump on. They took off while under heavy gunfire and safely flew to Danang. The Aircraft Commander, was deservedly awarded the The Medal of Honor.

Well-written account of A Shau operations during the Vietnam war. Takes an objective approach, describing successes and failures of American troops against the highly fortified and determined NVA stronghold. Read in conjunction with Zaffiri's book on Hamburger Hill and Boccia's memoir of the same battle to get a comprehensive view of the situation. Yarborough's account is excellent on its own, however, and I recommend it highly.

A very interesting book about some Major Battles and some even lesser-known Battles in the A Shau Valley. It was very intense reading. Once I started, I didn't want to put it down!! Had it read in 2 Days!! A FIVE STAR BOOK ALL THE WAY!!

Great book, big on details of operations and individual heroism. Tough to get a real feel for the people ( heroes ) involved, but the facts and the strategic / tactical view are very detailed. Some insight into the VC/NVA plan.Thanks for your service.

The best modern book on the war I have read. I remember hearing rumors of the valley when I was in country in 1967-68, and this book certainly explains why that place had obtained such an evil mythology even before the better-known battles had occurred. Highly recommended to anyone interested in the Viet Nam war because of the author's ability to link the history of A Shau with larger events outside the valley, making it a microcosm for the entire conflict. Like the other reviewers I also found this a fascinating read, and burned through it in a day and a half. Very well done.

A well-written and thoroughly researched book. Excellent context for the fighting and a great overview of operations. The book was obviously a labor of love. Thank you.

I am a big reader and a Vietnam Veteran. Anything well written about Our war gets a read. This book lays out the battles and GI's who fought them really well. I find the more I read the clearer the picture becomes.Thank you Mr. Yarborough

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