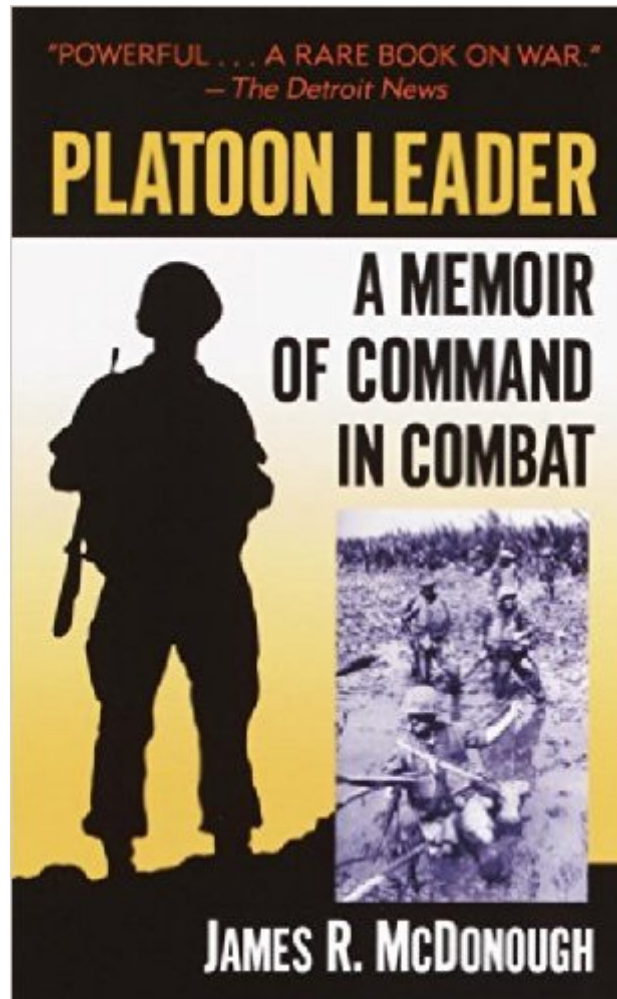


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# Platoon Leader: A Memoir Of Command In Combat



## Synopsis

A remarkable memoir of small-unit leadership and the coming of age of a young soldier in combat in Vietnam."Using a lean style and a sense of pacing drawn from the tautest of novels, McDonough has produced a gripping account of his first command, a U.S. platoon taking part in the 'strategic hamlet' program. . . . Rather than present a potpourri of combat yarns. . . McDonough has focused a seasoned storyteller's eye on the details, people, and incidents that best communicate a visceral feel of command under fire. . . . For the author's honesty and literary craftsmanship, *Platoon Leader* seems destined to be read for a long time by second lieutenants trying to prepare for the future, veterans trying to remember the past, and civilians trying to understand what the profession of arms is all about. • "Army Times

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I can't forget the characters in this book: Killigan, Nail, Donne, McDonough himself, and all the others. The prose is sparse but muscular. The author's passion for integrity in leadership and for his troops drips from the pages like tears shed at the Wall in Washington, D.C. The center piece of this unforgettable tale is the tragic truth that America would never know what good and honest and selfless men served their country in the Nam. I will use this book in my high-school English classes to teach new generations about the war, about the men who served, and about the strength of character that once existed in America and that made this country great. My favorite line occurs toward the end when Lt. McDonough, attempting to save the life of one of his troops, writes "I would not let him die. I would rip the world off its axis first." It's a powerful read and one you will not easily

forget.

"Platoon Leader: A Memoir of Command in Combat," by James R. McDonough, chronicles the author's experiences as an officer in the Vietnam War from 1970-71. His platoon is charged with manning an outpost next to the village of Truong Lam. This is a fascinating, well-written account. McDonough fills his narrative with vivid details that really made his story come alive in my mind. He doesn't flinch at describing the goriest and most horrific images of war. There are also moments of irony and bitter humor. Also noteworthy is the informative material about tactics used in Vietnam. And the author humanizes the story by touching on such "down-and-dirty" issues as the latrine his platoon used. McDonough's story is populated with a compelling cast of characters. Particularly intriguing is his exploration of relationships among the various groups he encountered in the war zone--U.S. enlisted men, his fellow Army officers, Vietnamese military allies, enemy forces, and the many civilians caught up in the conflict. While rich in scenes of combat, "Platoon Leader" goes beyond being just an action-packed war yarn. The book explores the ethics and morals of war. McDonough deals directly with the danger a soldier faces in becoming dehumanized by the brutality of war. He vividly portrays the struggle of a leader to remain wise and humane, yet also tough and resolute, under the most trying of circumstances. This book is both a profound meditation on wartime leadership and a powerful work of American literature.

Lt. McDonough writes of his experiences in Viet Nam in such straight forward language with little embellishment and an honest and humble attitude. This is one of the best written depictions of combat I've ever read. His experiences commanding a platoon in the heart of VC country surpass anything that has been portrayed by Hollywood in terms of the difficulty of the mission and the horror of day to day survival in a combat situation. This is one gritty and tough account of day to day life in the Viet Nam war that should be widely read. Ranks right up there with Philip Caputo, Michael Herr, Tim O'Brien and Tobias Wolff as a contribution to the definitive written record of grunt life in the war.

Well I found a book that ranks with Macdonalds' Company Commander, the best military memoir ever. Platoon leader is an unbelievable glimpse into the life of a typical platoon leader sent into the bush of Vietnam. After reading this book it is obvious why the Army chose it as required reading for officer candidate school. Macdonough describes clearly and with brutal honesty his tour as a young LT sent in the fight with no idea what to do. His platoon was on an isolated outpost and has to not

only spend the days patrolling but endures the nights of fierce enemy attacks. Here it is described in such a flowing exciting manner that I finished it in one sitting. This is no 'glory of war' type memoir, but a plain portrayal of the senselessness and viciousness of war. Truly one of the classic military memoirs ever written!

As a junior officer I have an entire list of professional reading that I am trudging my way through, but so far McDonough has been by far the most enjoyable and has made the biggest impact on my own leadership style. Both Platoon Leader and Defense of Hill 781 are great books, but Platoon Leader is so far the best military memoir I have read. It has been over a year since I read this book, but the three things that have stuck with me are:1. Do the right thing, at the right time, for the right reason.2. Death in a combat zone is more about just being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Sooner or later your luck runs out, but you have the duty to your fellow soldiers to do everything in your power to protect them.3. The stealing of a bottle of soda from a grandmother leads slowly but inevitably to the rape of her granddaughter. If you let your soldiers steal at all you are setting the stage for what atrocities they will commit later. You must always be vigilant in your discipline. While I do not have combat experience, I am currently serving in Iraq and know second handedly that these concepts still hold true. Other than the leadership aspect of the book, McDonough is just a great story teller and is able to make the book engaging and addicting.

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