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Flying Through Midnight: A Pilot's Dramatic Story of His Secret Missions Over Laos During the Vietnam War

John T. Halliday

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Riveting, novelistic, and startlingly candid, John T. Halliday's combat memoir begins in 1970, when Halliday has just landed in the middle of the Vietnam War, primed to begin his assignment with the 606th Special Operations Squadron. But there's a catch: He's stationed in a kind of no-man's-land. No one on his base flies with ID, patches, or rank. Even as Richard Nixon firmly denies reporters' charges that the United States has forces in Laos, Halliday realizes that from his base in Thailand, he will be flying top-secret, black-ops night missions over the Laotian Ho Chi Minh Trail.
A naive yet thoughtful twenty-four-year-old, Halliday was utterly unprepared for the horrors of war. On his first mission, Halliday's C-123 aircraft dodges more than a thousand antiaircraft shells, and that is just the beginning. Nothing is as he expected -- not the operations, not the way his shell-shocked fellow pilots look and act, and certainly not the squadron's daredevil, seat-of-one's-pants approach to piloting. But before long, Halliday has become one of those seasoned and shell-shocked pilots, and finds himself in a desperate search for a way to elude certain death.
Using frank, true-to-life dialogue, potent imagery, and classic 1970s song lyrics, Halliday deftly describes the fraught Laotian skies and re-creates his struggle to navigate the frustrating Air Force bureaucracy, the deprivations of a remote base far from home and his young wife, and his fight to preserve his sanity. The resulting nonfiction narrative vividly captures not only the intricate, distorted culture of war but also the essence of the Vietnam veteran's experience of this troubled era.
A powerhouse fusion of pathos and humor, brutal realism and intimate reflection, *Flying Through Midnight* is a landmark contribution to war literature, revealing previously top-secret intelligence on the 606th's night missions. Fast-paced, thrilling, and bitingly intelligent, Halliday illuminates it all: the heart-pounding air battles, the close friendships, the crippling fear, and the astonishing final escape that made the telling of it possible.

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