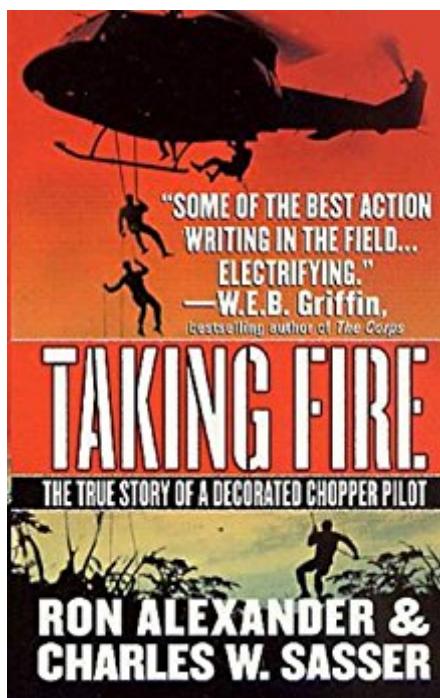


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# Taking Fire: The True Story Of A Decorated Chopper Pilot



## **Synopsis**

Nicknamed "Mini-Man" for his diminutive stature, a mere five-foot-three and 125 pounds in his flight boots, chopper pilot Ron Alexander proved to be a giant in the eyes of the men he rescued from the jungles and paddies of Vietnam. With an unswerving concern for every American soldier trapped by enemy fire, and a fearlessness that became legendary, Ron Alexander earned enough official praise to become the second most decorated helicopter pilot of the Vietnam era. Yet, for Ron, the real reward came from plucking his fellow soldiers from harm's way, giving them another chance to get home alive. In *Taking Fire*, Alexander and acclaimed military writer Charles Sasser transport you right into the cramped cockpit of a Huey on patrol, offering a bird's eye view of the Vietnam conflict. Packed with riveting action and gritty "you-are-there" dialogue, this outstanding book celebrates the everyday heroism of the chopper pilots of Vietnam.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Five stars all the way. Great book for anyone who enjoys reading true aviation stories of the

Vietnam era. Author balances personal life and professional military life story with anecdotes on military helicopter aviation and the life these pilots lived while serving in Vietnam. These pilots are true heroes !

This book is gut wrenching on the first helicopter dependent war. The charmed minimal was almost rejected, and did everything to avoid combat then found guts that he did not know he had. I gave it 4 stars because first hand memories of combat are important for history. There was no glossing over unpleasant accounts.

This was a book for my husband, who was a helicopter pilot of the same era. He loved it, and he will probably read it numerous times. Ordering and receiving it went seemlessly. Thank you.

perfect!

The book itself was REALLY good at explaining the AirCav way of fighting, putting it, along with a lot of other things about Vietnam in context. The pacing is fast, it's littered with great anecdotes about near-crashes, discovering a cobra that had gone missing, and shows as much as tells about the day to day of AirCav using Huey's and Cobras in the--at the time--new and innovative way.

I was one of Alexander's first Aircraft Commanders (AC) when he arrived in Vietnam, and I was still in the unit six months after he left. When I confronted his co-author Sasser about the ridiculous claims in this book, he told me "You don't know what the hell you're talking about." Oh, but I do. I read this "book" again and feel compelled to let other less-informed readers know that it goes beyond fiction to flat-out delusion. A classic example is the "Sergeant Snider LRRP" incident, where Alexander flagrantly steals the valor of his now-deceased AC Kit Beatton, (who was much loved and respected by the Troop and received a Silver Star for the action) as well as claiming kills that rightfully belonged to the LRRP Team Slashing Talon 36. Despite what Alexander and Sasser say, Alexander did nothing but sit in the helicopter; the landing zone never took a shot; the enemy were either killed, wounded or routed by the covering Cobras and the survivors of the LRRP Team (Slashing Talon 36) by the time Alexander's aircraft landed; a medevac had already extracted the wounded (and was not fired on either). I was flying above Alexander's (or more rightfully Kit Beatton's) aircraft the entire time. I never took a shot. My recollections are corroborated by SGT Paul Alfaro, one of the LRRP survivors and Assistant Team Leader, and the after action reports of

Company H, 75th Rangers. This sort of self-aggrandizing rubbish has no place on the fiction shelf, let alone the history shelf. Alexander and Sasser should be ashamed of themselves. But they apparently lack the ability, so the rest of the Troop has to do it for them.

"Legendary 1st Air Cavalry Division pilot Alexander was the most highly decorated American helicopter pilot of the thousands who served in the Vietnam War." I don't know and have never heard of the "Legandary" Mr. Alexander and have no doubt he did his duty but the "most decorated" in the war he was not. I cannot rank him at all. I do know combat scout pilots Larry "Kickass" Brown, Rod "Outcast" Willis, Ace "War Wagon" Cozzalio and Lou "Rocket" Rochat, and gun pilots Skip "Redskin" Butler", Ron Timberlake, Tim "Blue Ghost" Sprouse, Lou "Animal" Breuer, Mac "Charliehorse" Cocherell, Dean "Darkhorse" Sinor, Chuck Koranda and Steve Wing. Jolly pilot Rodney "Quang Tri" Griffiths and "Dustoff" MOH recipients Patrick Brady and Mike Novosel. I know "Legandary" Huey drivers like Joe Hogg, Wayne McAdoo, Bob Holmes, Joe Estes, Larry Ezell, Noel Harvey, and Mike Sloniker. You want "Legandary", I just gave you legandary. It would take Mr. Alexanders Huey to haul the medals these guys earned. Several of their crewchiefs are more highly decorated than Alexander. Mike Clausen comes to mind with his MOH. Jim parker and Ken Stormer are two. If the guys who were there with Alexander didn't "buy it", that's a bad sign. I hope this was someones else's fault and not his, but it is just not true.

After an internal review at the NASM, the Executive Director ordered "Taking Fire" to be removed from the gift shop due to fraudulent claims and highly racist rhetoric. For example, the back cover of the paperback states that Mr. Alexander was the "second highest decorated helicopter pilot of the Vietnam era." That would come as a big surprise to the nine helicopter pilots who were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. If you like lightweight, highly fictionalized accounts of the Vietnam War, then read this book. However, it makes a mockery of the sacrifices made by members of A Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry and Company H, 75th Rangers. How do I know? I flew with Alexander throughout his entire tour and I have firsthand knowledge of the missions he describes so poorly and inaccurately. I wish I could give it zero stars but the format doesn't allow it.

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