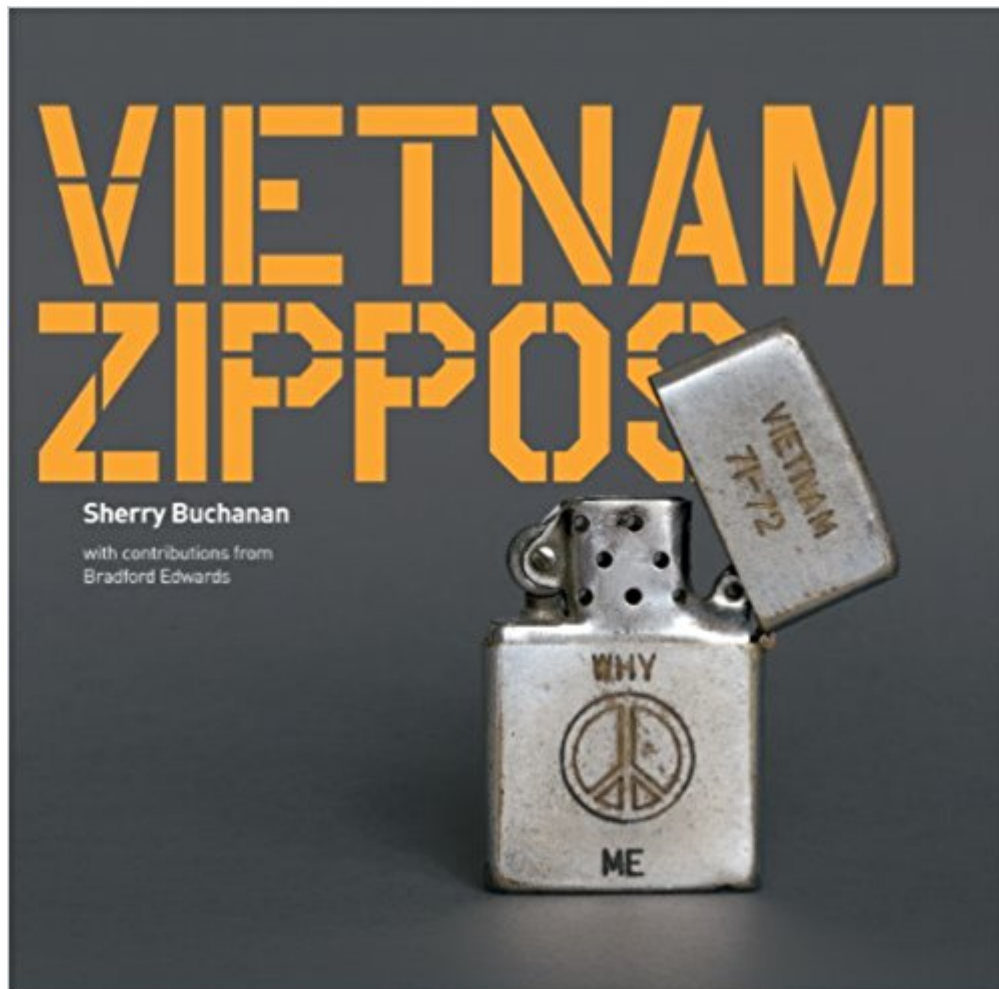




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Vietnam Zippos: American Soldiers' Engravings And Stories (1965-1973)



Synopsis

We are the unwilling, led by the unqualified, doing the unnecessary for the ungrateful – from an engraving on a Vietnam-era Zippo lighter. In 1965, journalist Morley Safer followed the United States Marines on a search and destroy mission into Cam Ne. When the Marines he accompanied reached the village, they ordered the civilians there to evacuate their homes – grass huts whose thatched roofs they set ablaze with Zippo lighters. Safer's report on the event soon aired on CBS and was among the first to paint a harrowing portrait of the War in Vietnam. LBJ responded to the segment furiously, accusing Safer of having "shot on the American flag." For the first time since World War II, American boys in uniform had been portrayed as murderers instead of liberators. Our perception of the war – and the Zippo lighter – would never be the same. But as this stunning book attests, the Zippo was far more than an instrument of death and destruction. For the American soldiers who wielded them, they were a vital form of social protest as well. Vietnam Zippos showcases the engravings made by U.S. soldiers on their lighters during the height of the conflict, from 1965 to 1973. In a real-life version of the psychedelic war portrayed in Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, Sherry Buchanan tells the fascinating story of how the humble Zippo became a talisman and companion for American GIs during their tours of duty. Through a dazzling array of images, we see how Zippo lighters were used during the war, and we discover how they served as a canvas for both personal and political expression during the Age of Aquarius, engraved with etchings of peace signs and marijuana leaves and slogans steeped in all the rock lyrics, sound bites, combat slang, and antiwar mottos of the time. Death from Above. Napalm Sticks to Kids. I Love You Mom, From a Lonely Paratrooper. The engravings gathered in this copiously illustrated volume are at once searing, caustic, and moving, running the full emotional spectrum with both sardonic reflections – "I Love the Fucking Army and the Army Loves Fucking Me" – and poignant maxims – "When the Power of Love Overcomes the Love of Power, the World Will Know Peace." Part pop art and part military artifact, they collectively capture the large moods of the sixties and the darkest days of Vietnam – all through the world of the tiny Zippo.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"For American soldiers in Vietnam, the Zippo lighter was an essential talisman; its chrome casing was also a convenient canvas on which fighters expressed their anger and frustration. In Vietnam Zippos these unique artifacts tell the story of a war gone sour. Lyndon Johnson's observation that "ultimate victory will depend upon the hearts and minds of the people" inspired the gleeful savagery of "Give me your hearts and minds or I will wreck your fucking huts"; another soldier rephrases Psalm 23 with "Yea though I walk through the valley of the jungle of death, I will fear no evil, for I am the vilest son of a bitch in the jungle." Later as enthusiasm for the war ebbed, lighters feature such deep thoughts as "When the power of love is as strong as the love of power, then there will be peace." Truer words were never engraved." (Playboy) "Zippo is as distinctly American as apple pie, the Stars & Stripes and the girl next door. . . . Whether carried as a talisman or as simply a convenient, easily-concealable object upon which to privately rage against the machine, these Vietnam Zippos represent a previously untapped source for studying the new military history of those who fought our most divisive war. . . . This book is highly recommended." "Armchair General (Armchair General)" "Lavishly illustrated. . . . A subgenre of battlefield art that has probably never been collected as thoroughly or presented as elegantly as in 'Vietnam Zippos'. . . . [The lighters] tell hundreds of stories . . . and each one makes the book worth reading." (Army Times) "During the Vietnam War, the Zippo lighter was an indispensable part of a GI's uniform. . . . At a time when American men and women are again fighting an unpopular war in a faraway land, it is fitting to remember the philosophers of that war who passionately reflected on their circumstances in this humble yet personal medium." (San Francisco Chronicle) "Sobering . . . Using Zippos from the collection of artist Bradford Edwards, Buchanan shows the personal histories of some of the millions who served [in Vietnam]. This unique approach is by turns funny, pornographic, informative and heartbreaking." (Minneapolis Star-Tribune) "[Vietnam Zippos] documents what the author, Sherry Buchanan, calls 'amulets and talismans bringing the keeper invulnerability, good luck and protection against evil.' Sadly, these personalized mementos also

served as last testaments for many who were killed in action. . . . This book, well designed and photographed by Misha Anikst, offers a rare personal dimension. The mottoes on these lighters, like "When I die I will go to heaven because I spent my time in hell," provide candid insight into what these soldiers thought of the war." (Steven Heller New York Times Book Review)"The engravings on lighters featured in this copiously illustrated volume are at once searing, caustic, sentimental, humorous, but always moving, running the full emotional spectrum with both sardonic reflections and poignant maxims. Part pop art and part military artifact, they collectively capture the mood of the sixties and the darkest days of Vietnam." (Pennsylvania Heritage)"A fascinating and specialized military cultural history that is a unique and recommended contribution to the growing library of Vietnam War histories." (Midwest Book Review)

Sherry Buchanan is a publisher, editor, and author. Before she created Asia Ink, she worked for the Wall Street Journal and The International Herald Tribune in Brussels, Paris, London, and Hong Kong.

My husband is in the Army, and has always been fascinated by the Vietnam zippers, so much so that he's even had a couple of replicas made! This book was a PERFECT gift for him. It is very well laid out, beautiful photographs, and lots of information that he and I never knew.

great for revisiting your past.

At first impression Vietnam Zippers is a graphic delight. The photography is compelling and the narration is elegantly placed. But once the reader delves into the material, the meaning and angst behind all those engraved lighters, the horrors and confusion of those at war are unavoidable. Vietnam Zippers adds to the many stories of the Vietnam War by graphically preserving and interpreting a unique class of artifacts. Well done!

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