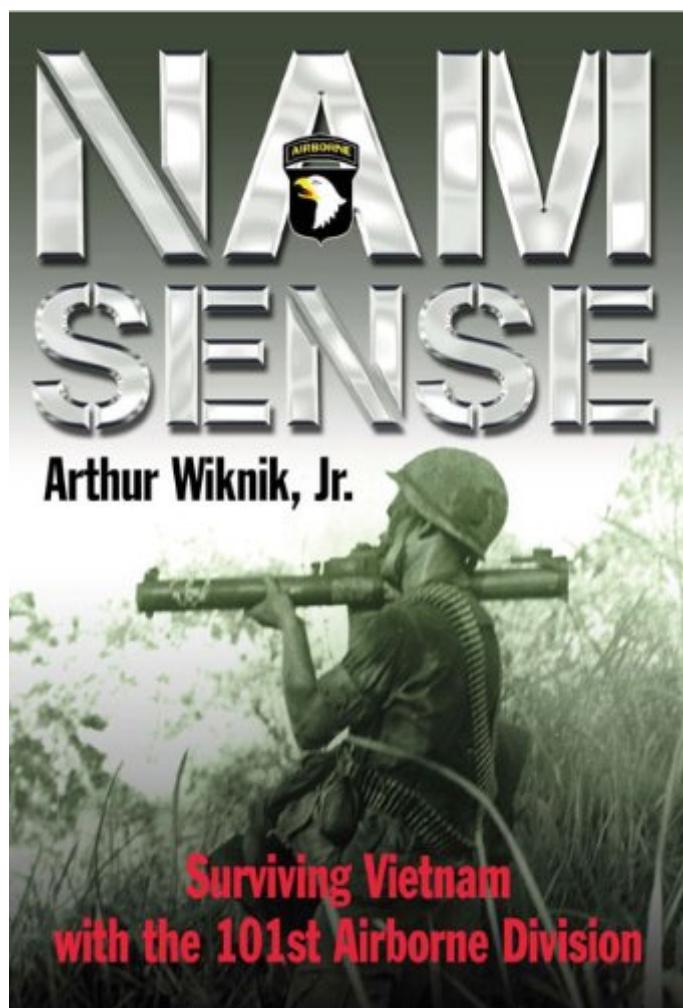


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Nam Sense: Surviving Vietnam With The 101st Airborne Division



Synopsis

Nam-Sense is the brilliantly written story of a combat squad leader in the 101st Airborne Division. Arthur Wiknik was a 19-year-old kid from New England when he was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1968. After completing various NCO training programs, he was promoted to sergeant "without ever setting foot in a combat zone" and sent to Vietnam in early 1969. Shortly after his arrival on the far side of the world, Wiknik was assigned to Camp Evans, a mixed-unit base camp near the northern village of Phong Dien, only thirty miles from Laos and North Vietnam. On his first jungle patrol, his squad killed a female Viet Cong who turned out to have been the local prostitute. It was the first dead person he had ever seen. Wiknik's account of life and death in Vietnam includes everything from heavy combat to faking insanity to get some R & R. He was the first man in his unit to reach the top of Hamburger Hill during one of the last offensives launched by U.S. forces, and later discovered a weapons cache that prevented an attack on his advance fire support base. Between the sporadic episodes of combat he mingled with the locals, tricked unwitting U.S. suppliers into providing his platoon with a year of hard to get food, defied a superior and was punished with a dangerous mission, and struggled with himself and his fellow soldiers as the anti-war movement began to affect his ability to wage victorious war. Nam-Sense offers a perfect blend of candor, sarcasm, and humor - and it spares nothing and no one in its attempt to accurately convey what really transpired for the combat soldier during this unpopular war. Nam-Sense is not about heroism or glory, mental breakdowns, haunting flashbacks, or wallowing in self-pity. The GIs Wiknik lived and fought with during his yearlong tour did not rape, murder, or burn villages, were not strung out on drugs, and did not enjoy killing. They were there to do their duty as they were trained, support their comrades - and get home alive. "The soldiers I knew," explains the author, "demonstrated courage, principle, kindness, and friendship, all the elements found in other wars Americans have proudly fought in." Wiknik has produced a gripping and complete record of life and death in Vietnam, and he has done so with a style and flair few others will ever achieve. Nam Sense received Honorable Mention in the 2010 Military Writers Society of America

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Customer Reviews

I am SORRY I read this book. I was the same age as the author and lost several classmates either in body or mind during Vietnam. This is about Wiknik...not the war. I cannot believe the things he did and told about it. My husband was in the Navy during this time and he meets once a week to encourage vets that still experience the war everyday. I usually pass these Vietnam books to others, but never this one. It would be insulting to vets, their families and those who supported vets and shed tears and lifted prayers for them. Their lives as young men taken from them while this book talks about prostitution, drinking, drugs, faking illness or sanity, and his bleeding penis. I finally wanted to read about this war and have enjoyed several personal stories of a year in Vietnam. Hamburger Hill was seen through quite different eyes than this man. I thank him for his service but not for making money with this book. If he is just being honest then I hope he had good intentions. To me it appears he is thinking he was funny. Not!!!!

The author is a liar, cheat, and slacker. He readily admits all of this within the first few chapters. I almost quit reading several times, but trudged through to the bitter end. The writing is lack-luster and the dialogue stilted. No one speaks the way people speak in this book, especially not to their military superiors. I question if the author really WAS a grunt. I wouldn't be surprised if he were a REMF. He managed to go on three R&Rs while in Vietnam. How many other grunts managed that? Actually, we hear more about his R&Rs than his time in the jungle. He apparently was in one major battle shortly after arriving in-country. After that his unit/squad/whatever, never has another

encounter with the enemy. Don't get me wrong, I admire our service members. I'm retired military myself. What I don't admire are people taking advantage of the system or other people. That's what you'll find here. Let's just say that this author left a really bad taste in my mouth.

Great read. Couldn't put it down. By way of disclosure I am a Vietnam Vet who served Sept 68-69 with an artillery battery in III Corps around Saigon. I am amazed at how Arthur is able to recount his experiences and how it resonates with what I was able to observe while serving. I used to watch the "grunts" rotate in and out of the Fire Support Bases we fired from and felt for these guys. This is a must read for anyone who wants a slice of history from a primary source, unvarnished and straight up. As a draftee I can relate to the cultural differences between the citizen soldier and the "Lifer". The life change from the experience and the public rejection were real. This book captures the great divide. To this day, I still feel a unique bond with those who served and a deep separation from the "protected who will never know". This book puts it all in context.

Arthur Wiknik's story touched upon many of the memories I have about my own tour as a grunt in Vietnam. I do recall that after Basic Training and AIT, many of us sought out additional training in order to delay our deployment to Vietnam; Arthur coins it best, "...maybe the war will be over after all this training and I won't have to go." Many of us draftees signed up for Leadership Preparation Course, NCO (Shake 'n Bake) training, and jump school to shorten the potential time left in the military. However, the war hadn't ended and our destiny was fulfilled. Nam Sense takes the reader through many adventures during Arthur's year long tour with the 101st Airborne. Hamburger Hill, A Shau Valley, Firebase Riptide, et al, were very dangerous places, grunts counted on the seasoned veterans to get them through patrols; most were only Spec 4's and PFC's, but they knew their stuff. When Cherry Officers arrived, not all were like Arthur's leader, who insisted on leading them all to glory to make a name for himself and catapult his career. Nam Sense or "Intuition" saved many lives during the war - so did common sense. When officers chose to ignore this wisdom, troops suffered the consequences, some were killed. In his story, Arthur continues to be punished because of his continued criticism of the new Lieutenant, who does not want to pay attention to "Nam Sense" and instead pushes his men for his individual glory. Fragging is also touched upon and it is easy to see why somebody would want to kill their superior. During my tour, I had similar experiences with Cherry Second Lieutenants; one was seriously wounded after a month and the other "saw the light" after a few days and became more of a team member. However, most officers I served with respected the grunts and listened to their opinions. As a Cherry NCO arriving in Vietnam, Arthur

knew better than to push his rank and worked hard to be accepted by his fellow soldiers. Part of his strategy was to get businesses in the U.S. to send samples of most anything edible sent to Vietnam to share with his men. They also learned to respect him because of his views and persistence in standing up for the men. Arthur does have a knack for "ghosting", which he explains in the book. The time quickly adds up and reduces the amount of time he had to spend in the bush on patrol. Mr. Wiknik does have a sense of humor and I found myself laughing out loud on many occasions. *Nam Sense* is worth reading and offers the reader an opportunity to witness the insane things that occur in war. John Podlaski, author *Cherries - A Vietnam War Novel*

Another war memoir that is a good read but that could have been much better with a professional editor. Fifth grade grammar and punctuation mistakes distract from the story. Plurals don't need apostrophes, and case and spelling matter. There is something about authors who have successfully navigated war but who don't realize that writing ain't for amateurs. There are loads of unemployed English majors who'd love to do a quick edit of a manuscript. Hire one, for Pete's sake.

This is an interesting book from the perspective of one soldier wanting to do his duty and survive the war. The condition of the book is fine.

Don't read this book. This draftee still has my respect but he spent all his time ghosting or on R&R. That's what I get after reading this book. He demeans the 101st Airborne that went before him. I was unable to determine whether or not he was really Airborne. Probably just airmobile. The read really left a bad taste

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