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The Warriors: Reflections of a Fighter Pilot, Test Pilot, and Veteran of the Air Wars over Vietnam

Bob Ross

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In his gripping narrative, Bob Ross gives real meaning to the expression, "living in the fast lane on the cutting edge of catastrophe." From his early days of fighter pilot training, to his experiences as a test pilot, and finally to his two combat tours in Vietnam he blithely ignores the extreme dangers inherent in this type of flying with the tongue-in-cheek observation that, "we chosen few were invincible."

This fascinating story follows Ross's progress from a young civil engineer entering the Air Force in 1952, to his training as a fighter pilot, and to his subsequent decision to make the last great leap up the competitive ladder and apply for test pilot training. Here we meet a striking group of men, some like Chuck Yeager and Bud Anerson who are living legends in aviation. We also get a bird's eye view of the exciting, productive, and extremely interesting life of a test pilot.

However, it is in Vietnam where we see the fruition of !

all Ross's experience and training. He served in Vietnam from 1967 to 1968 as a fighter pilot with the 12th Tactical Fighter Wing and from 1971 to 1972 with the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing as Chief of Combat Operations and later as Commander of the 4th Tactical Fighter Squadron. Between the two tours he completed 438 combat missions. Despite the grim realities of war, the loss of friends and comrades, and being shot down twice towards the end of his second combat tour, Ross remembers his two years in Vietnam as the most rewarding and productive in a long and adventurous career. He is immindently successful in his stated purpose in writing this journal: "I wanted to relate the gritty, often heroic, and sometimes outrageously funny adventures of the really good men I flew with in combat. Their story is long overdue." Indeed it is!

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