



A Dragon Lives Forever: War and Rice in Vietnam's Mekong Delta

Thomas R. Hargrove

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The U.S. was pulling troops out of Vietnam in June 1969 when First Lieutenant Thomas Hargrove reported as an advisor to the South Vietnamese Army in Chuong Thien, one of the most backwater and dangerous provinces in the Mekong Delta. He was an Infantry officer, but also a West Texas cotton farmer with advanced degrees in agricultural science. Hargrove was soon teaching Vietnamese farmers to grow a miracle rice from the Philippines that tripled production. But as an Army lieutenant, he routinely had to call B-52 strikes on the same farmers who planted those rice seeds. War and peace. Working with both was hellish. The pacification program was meant to win hearts and minds. But blood mingled freely with those vital organs in Chuong Thien. Two decades later Hargrove returned twice to the former Chuong Thien province. His hosts were former Viet Cong who had known - but did not kill - Hargrove because he brought the new rice seeds. Hargrove writes of a different kind of war that few Americans knew-- of how it led to a career in the Green Revolution-- of being drawn back to those terrible rivers and swamps where it all began.

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