

BORN *on the*
FIFTH *of* JULY

BORN *on the*
FIFTH *of* JULY
RECREATED IN VIETNAM

TIM LEE
with Bob Hamer

Foreword by
Oliver L. North



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Ally Michelle Hooten

*To ALLY, now your light burns brightly from heaven.
We miss you dearly and cannot wait to see you again
in the presence of the One who called you home to Him!
May these pages inspire and encourage everyone
who reads them, just as you continue to encourage all of us.*

*Your loving grandfather, your admirer,
and your loudest front-row fan!*

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And the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him and help meet for him.” (Genesis 2:18)

Thank you, Jesus, for coming into the life of a ten-year-old boy and for never leaving me nor forsaking me.

Thank you to God, my Heavenly Father, for your never-ending love.

FOREWORD

This is the story of an American Hero. Full disclosure, Tim Lee is a close friend. He and I are U.S. Marines. I would follow him into hell itself. If you know or admire a warrior, an American Hero, a First Responder, a leader, a parent, or an American who loves this country, ***Born on the Fifth of July*** was written for you.

There is a brotherhood among warriors. They share a common bond forged in the crucible of war. This book is about camaraderie wrought in privation, thirst, fear, loneliness, exhaustion, pain and terror.

The very best warriors I know have overcome these horrors with undaunted courage, tenacity, fellowship, faith, endurance and steadfast loyalty to a cause and each other. They know the true meaning of perseverance...

In days gone by, those who shared these virtues were called “heroes.” Now, we use that word to describe an athlete who sets a new record; a player who catches a game-winning pass; even a fictional character wearing a spandex suit and a cape.

If truth still matters, the classical definition of a hero is a person who puts him or herself at risk for the benefit of another. Tim Lee is such a hero and I am blessed to have him as a friend.

Tim is a fellow United States Marine and a trusted friend of nearly three decades. We have traveled our country and the Holy Land together. I know him to be a gifted ally and a fellow Soldier in the battle for the soul of America. He gave two good legs, and very

nearly his life, for the nation we love. Despite his injuries, I want Tim Lee with me in my next gunfight.

When we appear together, I like to tell our audience, “I would follow Sergeant Tim Lee through hell itself in my bare feet because he would bring us out the other side unscathed.” Since Tim is a humble hero with a sense of humor, he adds, “Yeah, but the devil can’t burn my feet. I don’t have ‘em anymore.”

Having fought – and very nearly died – for America, Tim is a credible and tireless advocate for our nation’s heritage as “One Nation Under God.” U.S. Senators, Congressmen, Governors, Mayors and legislators across our land feel his influence. Famous athletes and public figures admire him. On the hallowed ground of the Marine Recruit Depot at Parris Island, Tim Lee is a legendary hero.

Born on the Fifth of July is the story of a remarkable man – a servant leader, a role model – the kind of person who never asks more of others than he demands of himself. My friend Tim Lee was and is a standout athlete; a valiant warrior and Marine; a loyal and loving husband and father, and a courageous patriot-defender of this nation’s most cherished rights.

Born On the Fifth of July is all about devotion to duty, determination, perseverance and faith. If this book doesn’t inspire you, seek immediate medical attention because your heart may have stopped.

LtCol Oliver L. North

USMC, Ret.

Host of “War Stories” on FOX News

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The four gospels tell the story of Christ's life on earth from four different perspectives. That's why there isn't total agreement in their recollections. A few details seem to vary. As I reflect on my life, my recollection differs from some of those who were with me. We aren't wrong. We just saw the events from a different perspective. Also, memories, especially mine, fade over time. Maybe I got a few of the facts wrong as to some of the events you are about to read. It's not my intent to deceive anyone. I just hope that as you join me on the journey of my life, you will appreciate the emotional and spiritual truth I want to convey.

CHAPTER 1

THE NEXT STEP

I was twenty, half-a-world away from home, and my next step would be the last step I would ever take on two legs. I've heard it said that in God's army, His best soldiers have been wounded. Within seconds, I'd be earning a Purple Heart and learning what it would be like to serve God without legs.

I was only weeks from rotating out of this third world nightmare and heading back to the States. It had been months since I had been with family and hometown friends. Months away from TV, Mom's cooking, fast food, and fast cars. If I could hang on for fourteen days, I'd be on that "freedom bird" to America; but I took the next step and my world changed forever.

If this were a movie, I'd paint the day as gray and foreboding, cold and threatening, an ominous warning that evil was about to darken the world of those it touched. Heavy music would be playing in the background, alerting all to what lay ahead. But it was a beautiful day! The sun shone brightly, soft white clouds graced an azure blue sky, contrasting with the lush green countryside—the perfect photo op for *National Geographic*. It might have been an idyllic setting had it not been a war zone. And in this movie, hard rock from the late sixties would be the sound track. Only this wasn't Hollywood. This was real. This was my life and my next move was going to be a game changer.

Cautiously and methodically, inch by inch, foot by foot, I was walking through knee-high elephant grass down an abandoned dirt road. Known as “Pioneer Road,” it was about as wide as an alley back home and probably initially built by the French decades earlier. The crumbling remains of a Buddhist temple could be seen just ahead. Our mission was to clear the area and rebuild this path leading somewhere or maybe leading nowhere. I never even knew where the trail was headed, probably a distant village, but my job wasn’t to question orders. My job was to do the work, protect my men, and bring all of us home safely.

A mosquito kept pestering me, flying around my face, alternately buzzing in both ears, but I was focusing on the road ahead and the areas immediately to my left and right. You could never relax. Complacency was the enemy. Things changed in an instant. It was called “situational awareness” and I was on high alert, always ready for the unexpected. One misstep, one missed cue, and all of us could be killed.

The day was hot. Months ago, I had walked off the plane and the heat hit me like a blast furnace. I never quite got used to it. The sun baked everything, including any metal resting without shade. When I’d take a break on patrol and rest my rifle on a rock exposing it to the sun for even a few minutes, I’d need a cloth to pick it up. It didn’t take long for the muted black weapon to absorb the extreme warmth of the sun’s rays.

And the sweat! Oh, the sweat, dripping down my face, soaking through my clothes. The perspiration was the result of both humidity and nerves: humidity worse than a hot August day back in my hometown of McLeansboro, Illinois; nerves, because this wasn’t a summer afternoon hike in Middle America. This was a minesweeping mission in the Quang Nam province of South Vietnam. Although the days all ran together, it was Monday, March 8, 1971, a little after 1:30 in the afternoon: a day I’ll never forget.

At New York City's Madison Square Garden, Smokin' Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali, both undefeated heavyweight champions, were only hours away from squaring off in the ring for what was billed as boxing's "Battle of the Century." Little did I know, I was about to square off in the biggest battle of my life. This one would be billed as United States Marine Corps Corporal Tim Lee's "Battle for Life."

Soon I'd be hearing: "*Knoxville Charlie...Knoxville Charlie, JJ, we need two medevacs: one primary and one emergency, over.*"

Soon I'd be seeing Lee Gore's black face, wet with tears, as he prayed, "Oh God, don't let this boy die! Let him live to serve You!"

How did I get here? How did I get from being a six foot, 187-pound, record-setting high school athlete and college basketball player, forged in steel, to one more Vietnam casualty?