

The bridge at dong ha

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The book *The Bridge at Dong Ha* written by John Miller is a narrative description of the story of how a bridge on Cua Viet river separating north and South Vietnam was destroyed by a brave American marine captain named Ripley in 1972 in US Vietnam war. The destruction delayed the movement of Vietnamese forces from the north to the south by three long years. The book narrates this adventurous event in a gripping and wonderful language. The presentation and the language of the book have made it very attractive to the readers.

The Bridge at Dong Ha 3 *The Bridge at Dong Ha* by John Miller The book *The Bridge at Dong Ha* written by John Miller is the story of a genuine marine war hero of America's war history. It also displays the dedication to duty of a person. The backdrop of the story is US Vietnamese war. There was a strong heavy bridge built by the US army several years back on the Cua Viet River in Vietnam. The bridge used to separate North Vietnam from South Vietnam.

America was loosing out in the US Vietnam war and a large army of Vietnamese forces were approaching from the north to take over the south. The book *The Bridge at Dong Ha* has described how an officer from US marine forces named Captain Ripley destroyed this bridge with tremendous courage and aggression on Easter Sunday, 1972. It is to be noted that the destruction of this bridge that delayed the advancement of the Vietnamese army towards the south for three long years.

The book has given the detailed description of his courage and it is really fascinating to go through the book. The book is an excellent narration of the events of how a single man, with his tremendous courage and dedication towards his nation destroyed the bridge and stopped the aggression of the

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enemy force comprising of 30, 000 soldiers and 200 tanks. All these are available in the website <http://www.amazon.com/Bridge-Dong-Ha-Bluejacket-Books/dp/155750587X>. Every action of the event has been described in detail in the book. To quote from the website <http://www.amazon.com/Bridge-Dong-Ha-Bluejacket-Books/dp/155750587X>, “ Capt Ripley climbs over barbed wire fences, swings across the under girding of the bridge, and fights this battle from street to foxhole around the little The Bridge at Dong Ha 4 town of Dong Ha (just a few miles from the DMZ). The writing is wonderful and gripping, putting you face-to-face with the action as it unfolds hour by hour. ” While describing the heroism of Captain Ripley, the author has stated how he hand walked on the beams under the bridge, holding detonators with his teeth and brought back the burning fuses back to shore.

He did all the risky jobs by himself and saved the life of his fellow soldiers from sure death. This heroic act earned him a Navy Cross in 1962. All these have been stated in the website <http://www.amazon.com/Bridge-Dong-Ha-Bluejacket-Books/dp/155750587X> The toughest part of the entire operation is that when Captain Ripley was in the process of detonating the bridge, continuous light machines firing was going on from the northern side of the bridge from the Vietnamese troops. Under such heavy firing, Captain Ripley completed the entire operation, risking his whole life and safeguarding the life of his other comrades.

All these have been mentioned in the above mentioned website. The description not only shows his courage, but also displays his level of intelligence as he took the decision of destroying the bridge against the

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command from his superior officers. To quote from the above mentioned website, <http://www.amazon.com/Bridge-Dong-Ha-Bluejacket-Books/dp/155750587X>, “ Ripley's gallant effort was especially courageous since he was acting against a command suggestion to hold the bridge for a counterattack that could not have been mounted, and South Vietnamese troops were in disarray and fleeing to the South all around the

The Bridge at Dong Ha 5 Vietnamese unit he advised. Miller's narration of this small action tends more toward the sensational than the historical. ” Though some people say that the book opened in a relatively slow note, but actually the stage was being set for a drama and all the main characters involved were introduced one by one. They include ARVN Major Le Ba Birth; his bodyguard Three Finger Jack, US Army major Jim Smock; and Birth's advisor, Ripley – the hero of the event and also the book.

It has been mentioned in the above named website that Ripley was a product of American marine, Airborne, Ranger and Seal training with some added polish from British Royal Marine. The emotional side of Captain Ripley has also been nicely described by the author in the book. There was a time when he charged into the middle of a mortar fire to save the life of a little young girl. The humanity side is also displayed while narrating the events related to the behavior of the radioman, the commander of South Vietnam unit and the commander's bodyguard.

Dedication of Vietnamese men towards their nation has also been described in the book. This seemed to be a very balanced approach. Another part that needs appreciation is that the author John Miller interviewed in detail Captain <https://assignbuster.com/the-bridge-at-dong-ha/>

Ripley about the entire event while penning down the history. It has been stated in the above mentioned website that many minor incidents of the operation has been so vividly described that many civilians may not understand or feel the reason behind those actions, but only marine people can feel and judge them.

Due to these factors, the reading of the book is not only fascinating, but I feel it can be described more of an adventure history type. It seemed as if an historical The Bridge at Dong Ha 6 event is presented and written in the language of adventure. This factor has made the reading of the book attractive to the readers. This can be understood from the comments by a reader in one of the reviews posted in the website [http://www. amazon. com/Bridge-Dong-Ha-Bluejacket-Books/dp/155750587X](http://www.amazon.com/Bridge-Dong-Ha-Bluejacket-Books/dp/155750587X).

To quote from that review, “ It is difficult for a reader to appreciate this without almost an engineering drawing of the undersides of the bridge. I would have loved to see drawings showing the design of the bridge, with little arrows and annotations, 'pulled xx pounds of explosives across this girder'”. Frankly speaking, I do not consider the above quote from the reader a criticism of the book. I feel that the reader has become so involved with the drama that he is expecting a Stallone or Jacky Chan type of Hollywood thriller while reading the book.

The writing of the book is so thrilling and gripping. It seemed that he is watching a movie version of the book. A diagrammatic presentation of the event would satisfy that expectation. But obviously that is not done. I have never seen any thriller novel, where the story has been described in the form of a diagram. I really appreciate the initiative taken by the author in penning <https://assignbuster.com/the-bridge-at-dong-ha/>

down the heroic act of Captain Ripley so that the message of his heroism can be known by the future generations. Only a narrative description would have made reading of the book quite boring and history type.

His blending of adventure and history has really made the book attractive for reading to the masses. In all the reviews, I found that readers have openly stated that they like the dramatic presentation of this 186 pages book a lot. It seemed that the author really understands the pulse of the readers. The Bridge at Dong Ha 7 Reference List 1) Customer reviews on November 10 2002, December 27 1999, August 12 2006 and also Editorial reviews: Retrieved 12th March, 2009 from