Air America in Laos: The Memoirs of Air America Flight Mechanics

by Stephen I. Nichols

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Air America and the War in Laos, 1959-1974 by J. Michael NEW, Memoirs of Men of Invention and Air America and the War in Laos, 1959-1974 by J. Michael NEW.

Recollections differ on how long the Vinh tap worked—perhaps one to two years. Some pilots and mechanics report that it worked for only a few months, while others believe it lasted for several years. Air America needed Mechanics to pull the loaches out of the airplanes, swing the rotor blades, and fill them with cargo. The pilots, mechanics, and staff personnel moved to CAT Inc. Civil Air Transport became the second-largest employer of ex-Air America pilots and mechanics. Partial remains were recovered several years after the war in Laos ended.


Air America, an airline run by the CIA in the 1960s, provided many unique and interesting experiences for pilots and mechanics. They flew in a variety of situations, from air-to-ground combat missions to transport of personnel and supplies. The pilots and mechanics in this book share their experiences of flying in Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam.

This book is a memoir of 50 years flying helicopters in a variety of situations. Included are the experiences of Ben Van Etten as a flight captain with Air America, Inc. in Thailand, and the unpublicized war in Laos. Gaining Flying Experience Prior to Joining Air America.