

The
Colonels

BROTHERHOOD
OF
WAR
BOOK
IV

BY W.E.B. GRIFFIN



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HONOR BOUND

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The Colonels

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When available, a caparisoned stallion, with boots reversed in stirrups, to be led in the procession, is authorized for military funerals of officers and noncommissioned officers assigned to Armor or Armored Cavalry, or for officers and noncommissioned officers formerly assigned to Cavalry.

A ground crew—two sergeants in fatigues and field jackets—was pulling camouflage netting off Big Bad Bird II when the three-quarter-ton truck rolled up to the small clearing in the pine forest and discharged its passenger.

The passenger was a tall, handsome, mustachioed major wearing pinks and greens, a uniform which, in three days, he would no longer be authorized to wear. The uniform was superbly tailored. It had, in fact, come from the London tailors which had outfitted General George Smith Patton, Jr. There had been a joke (paraphrasing J. P. Morgan's comment about his yacht) that if you had to ask what uniforms from Hartwell & Hay cost, you couldn't afford one.

The major's green tunic was heavy with ribbons and devices testifying to his service, the ribbons ranging downward in importance from the Distinguished Service Cross, the nation's second highest award for valor, to the red-and-white ribbon of the Enlisted Man's Good Conduct Medal. There was an Expert Combat Infantry Badge with a star signifying a second award. There was a set of Senior Army Aviator's wings. There was a four-inch-wide ribbon around his neck, holding a three-inch gold medal awarded by the Greek government.

The major was carrying a small, folded, somewhat frayed guidon in his hands.

A chief warrant officer, a gray-haired, florid-faced, middle-aged man in an Ike jacket, jumped to the ground from the cabin of Big Bad Bird II. His eyes went up when he saw how the major was dressed. He walked to him. He did not salute.

"My," he said, "don't you look splendid."

"I thought I told you to stay out of this, Dutch," the major said.

"If this one went in, that would really be the end of it," the chief warrant officer replied.

"That wasn't your fault, Dutch," the major said.

“So you said.”

The camouflage netting was now clear of Big Bad Bird II. One of the sergeants, a stocky master sergeant in his early thirties, dragged it to the side. The other, also a master sergeant, but younger and leaner, walked up to the major and the chief warrant officer. His eyes ran over the major’s tunic, but he said nothing.

“I had an unpleasant thought on the way out here,” the major said. “Is there any gas in that thing?”

“Shit,” the sergeant said, as if that thought had occurred to him for the first time. He trotted to Big Bad Bird II, climbed up the fuselage, and leaned in the cockpit window.

Big Bad Bird II was a Sikorsky H-19 helicopter, a twelve-passenger, single-rotor aircraft. The H-19 was the first really successful transport helicopter (it had been used in the waning days of the Korean War) and was now about obsolete. It had been replaced by the Sikorsky H-34, which was larger and more powerful, although with roughly the same lines. The H-19 was now used only for training.

Big Bad Bird II was an unusual H-19. For one thing, it had been painted black rather than olive drab. For another, on each landing strut there had been mounted a rocket-firing mechanism. It was the only armed helicopter in the U.S. Army. There had been another, but it had blown up a few days earlier: hence Big Bad Bird II. On the fuselage was a skillfully done cartoon of Woody Woodpecker, leering as he threw beer bottles.

The master sergeant standing on the fuselage steps withdrew his head from the cockpit.

“You’ve got about forty-five minutes fuel, Major,” he called down.

“That’ll be enough,” the major replied.

He walked to the helicopter and looked up at the rotor head, moved to the rear, checked the blades on the tail rotor, and then walked to the front again. By then the sergeant had the engine compartment open, and the major examined the engine.

“What I need now is a set of cans,” the major said. “And a roll of masking tape.”

The master sergeant nodded and walked to his truck. The major climbed into the pilot’s seat and disconnected the helmet he had found on the seat. He looked down at the ground, saw the sergeant, and tossed the helmet to him. The sergeant caught it, laid it on the ground, and then climbed halfway up the fuselage to hand him a set of headphones and a roll of gray masking tape.

“What are you going to do with the tape?” the sergeant asked.

“Stick this in the copilot’s window,” the major said. He shook the guidon open. It was a small yellow flag, yellow for Armor, onto which the numerals “73” had been stitched. Below them was a hand-lettered legend, in grease pencil: T/F LOWELL.

The major had commanded Task Force Lowell of the 73rd Heavy Tank Battalion (Reinforced) during the Korean War. Of all his military souvenirs, this meant the most to him.

The sergeant nodded and ripped off strips of tape. The major leaned across the copilot’s seat and taped the guidon over the window. Then he put the earphones on his head and flipped the Master switch and the radio buss. He listened to the traffic between the ground controller and the aircraft participating in the funeral ceremony. He listened for five minutes, and then he looked down from the cockpit again.

The two sergeants and the chief warrant were standing by a fire extinguisher mounted on what looked like oversize bicycle wheels. None of them were looking at him. The major whistled to catch their attention. Then he made a “wind it up” gesture with his index finger.

One of the master sergeants took the black fire extinguisher nozzle and pointed it at the engine compartment.

The major primed the engine, adjusted the throttle and the richness, and lifted up on the Engine Start toggle switch. The starter whined, and the machine shook as the 700-horsepower Curtiss-Wright radial engine labored. Then it caught, and the three blades overhead began to turn. The major watched the dials, making minor adjustments, until the engine smoothed out and the needles moved into the green.

Then he looked out the window by his side at the three men on the ground. He winked, put his hands on the controls, and advanced the throttle by twisting it. Simultaneously he raised the control itself. Big Bad Bird II shuddered and then went light on the wheels. First one wheel left the ground, then another, and then the machine was in ground effect hover. When he was two feet off the ground, he lowered the nose and moved across the small clearing, gaining speed. As he came to the trees at the end of the field, he pulled it up to fifty or sixty feet, and then made a 180 degree turn.

He was able to see the men on the ground. They were doing something very unusual for two master sergeants and a warrant officer. For their hands were raised in formal salutes. The major, touched, moved the joystick between his legs, and the helicopter swung from side to side.

He flew the treetops to Parade Ground No. 2, as low as he dared, popping up every once in a while for a quick look. The funeral cortege was still making its way from the chapel on the main post. The head of the snake, the tank with the casket on it, as well as the family, the other mourners, and the brass, were already in the bleachers at the parade ground; but the tail of the snake was still moving.

He would wait until everyone was in place.

He saw the T34s, Russian tanks, still wearing red stars, parked at the end of the parade ground. They were now American tanks, of course, used by a special unit at Fort Riley to provide realism for maneuvers. But nevertheless, it was still surprising to see them lined up for a funeral ceremony.

There were five T34s. They had been ordered to Fort Rucker in a high-level public relations ploy against the air force. The air force, which according to the Key West Agreement of 1948, had a monopoly on all aerial weapons systems and armed aircraft, had been reluctant to develop an antitank helicopter. In fact, it had announced that such a device was impractical.

So in violation of the Key West Agreement the army had developed its own rocket-armed helicopter—the Big Bad Bird—and had planned to shoot up the Russian T34s before television cameras. Once that had happened, the air force would be forced to accept a fait accompli, and the army would be able to proceed with the development of the weapons system.

The plan hadn't quite worked: during a dry run before the demonstration, one of the rockets had misfired, setting off a chain of accidents that destroyed the Big Bad Bird and the young pilot flying it. What was left of the pilot was in the casket now on the back of the M48 Patton tank.

The army ploy had crashed with the Big Bad Bird. The crash had been filmed by the television networks, and now all the brass could do was to salvage what they could by staging a large funeral for the pilot. Once they had been caught doing something forbidden by the Key West Agreement, they could not repeat the violation by putting rockets on another helicopter—or at least so the brass understood.

The brass, the major thought, were wrong again.

“Unidentified helicopter operating in the vicinity of Parade Ground No. 2, you are ordered to immediately leave the area.”

That was the traffic controller at the parade ground. He didn't want anything to interfere with the flight of the aircraft that would pass over the casket in final tribute.

The major lifted Big Bad Bird II high enough to get another look at the parade ground. The tail of the snake had arrived.

Instead of dropping back out of sight, he pulled up, rising vertically until he was almost out of power. When he felt the copter start to slip into a stall, he dropped its nose and made a full speed pass over the parade ground, so low that he had to pull up to get over the tank with the flag-draped casket.

The traffic controller's voice came again. He seemed annoyed that his orders were

being ignored.

Big Bad Bird II flashed over the Russian T34s at the end of the parade ground. The major looked carefully at them as he turned. Then he flew back down the parade ground, turned again, and came to a hover directly over the tank with the casket.

He looked down and saw two of the official pallbearers jump onto the tank so that the rotor blast wouldn't blow the colors covering the casket away.

Then he looked at the T34s again. And squeezed the trigger on the joystick.

There was a dull rumbling noise and Big Bad Bird II shuddered as twenty-seven 3.5 inch rockets fired from the device on the left landing strut, and then twenty-seven 3.5s came off the right strut.

For fifteen seconds a train of rockets swept across the line of Russian T34s. When it was over, the five tanks were nothing but piles of warped and ruptured metal. Then the fuel from their tanks caught fire, and thick pillars of dense smoke rose into the sky.

The air force, the major thought, would no longer be able to claim that rocket-armed helicopters could not kill tanks.

And that, he thought, was really a much more fitting tribute to the late First Lieutenant Edward C. Greer, Armor, who had been flying the Big Bad Bird when it went in than a caparisoned stallion with reversed boots in the stirrups.

He flew through the dense diesel smoke, then turned the helicopter toward Laird Army Airfield. As he approached the Aviation Board parking ramp, he was not really surprised to see a military police sedan coming to meet him with its red warning lights flashing.

By the time he had shut the H-19 down, there were two military police cars parked by him. He reached across the copilot's seat and tore the Task Force Lowell guidon from the window. He tore the masking tape from the guidon and folded the guidon again. Then he put on his cap and climbed down from Big Bad Bird II's cockpit.

Two of the MPs were officers, both second lieutenants.

They were both obviously excited and not quite sure of themselves. One of them, the major thought, looked on the verge of drawing his pistol.

One of them finally saluted. The major returned it.

"Sir, are you Major C. W. Lowell?" he asked.

Major Lowell raised his hands in a gesture of surrender.

"The charge, I gather, is Grand Theft, Helicopter?" he asked.

I

(One)

Plantation No. 3

Société Générale de Produits Alimentation de l'Indochine Phu

Hot, South Vietnam

25 December 1958

Paul Hanrahan, a trim, pleasant-faced, balding Irish-American, was wearing what he thought of as his civilian class “A” whites: white shirt, white tie, white linen suit, and white shoes. These made him feel very much like a frog colonial—and also a bit overdressed for a 10,000 mile journey. By the time he got to Tokyo—much less to Hawaii or San Francisco—the suit, shirt, shoes, and tie would no longer be white, and he would look like an unsuccessful traveling salesman with a drinking problem.

On the other hand, he thought, as he sipped the too-bitter coffee, where he was going he wouldn't dare appear in public in these clothes, so he might as well wear them while he could.

Paul T. (Red) Hanrahan was a lieutenant colonel in the regular army of the United States. Until 2359 hours the previous day, until the last minute of Christmas Eve, he had been Chief, Signal Branch, United States Army Military Advisory Group, Vietnam. As of the first minute of Christmas Day, he had been relieved of duty and ordered to proceed to Fort Bragg, N.C., for duty with the U.S. Army Special Warfare School.

Earlier, as soon as they had heard the faint tinkle of his alarm clock, two houseboys had come into the bedroom with orange juice, coffee, and croissants. Breakfast proper was served on the east patio of the rambling, white-frame building where Hanrahan and his family were staying as the guests of the Janniers. Here, among other offerings in silver serving dishes on a long table covered with crisp white

linen, were laid *oeufs sur le plat avec jambon*.

His French hosts, Paul Hanrahan thought somewhat ungraciously, were determined to do their best. If the American barbarians couldn't face a new day without an enormous breakfast which included ham and eggs, then these would be provided to them.

If Paul Hanrahan had had his way, he and his family would not have been the guests of the Janniers at all. A final couple of weeks in Vietnam spent in a suite at the Caravelle Hotel was by no means like two weeks in the Black Hole of Calcutta. Christmas at the Caravelle would have been just fine.

But Patricia Hanrahan had met Christine Jannier at the Cathedral not long after she and the children had arrived in Saigon. Christine soon took Patricia under her wing; and became something like an older sister. Since the Janniers had been in Indochina for generations, they had dozens of contacts which Christine had been willing to use in Patricia's behalf. She'd gotten the Hanrahan kids—Paul, Jr., Kevin, and Rosemary—into the best of the “French” schools, without any of the trouble Hanrahan had been told to expect by his people in the American Embassy. Then Henri Jannier had arranged for the installation of a “local” telephone (as opposed to the Embassy line, which connected to the local system through the Embassy switchboard) overnight—after the Embassy people had told him he could expect it to take four months or longer.

Patricia was no fool, and it had not been necessary for Paul to tell her that there was more than one motive in the Janniers' friendship. He was a lousy light bird in the American army, and Jannier was the general manager of a French company which owned tens of thousands of hectares of rice paddies, vast plantations of rubber trees, and fleets of trucks and river boats. He didn't think his Irish charm was the reason they had been so nice.

At first he thought the Janniers wanted information from him. He gave them a little, after he was sure it had already been compromised. He'd also discussed them with Sandy Felter when Felter had passed through Saigon last January. Felter had been one of his junior officers on the Albanian border in Greece more than ten years earlier and had subsequently become a highly placed intelligence officer. Felter had heard out Paul's suspicions, and then, with that steel trap logic that had caused him to rise so far so fast, outlined the possible explanations.

First, possibly, the Janniers simply liked the Hanrahans. Second, it was equally possible that Jannier was a French intelligence officer. Or for that matter a Frenchman serving as eyes for the communist Vietminh. But what was most likely, according to Felter, was that Jannier was simply doing favors so that Hanrahan would be in his debt.

The next day, Felter had come up with still more. Overnight, somehow, Felter had checked the Janniers out. And it had turned out that Christine Jannier was General

Jean-Philippe Dommer's daughter. Dommer had been one of the more ruthless fighters against the Vietminh, and was passionately hated by them.

"You say that Christine Jannier stays with you when she's in Saigon?" Felter had asked.

"Yes. All the time."

"If I were Henri Jannier, and I could arrange to have my wife stay in an 'American' house in Saigon and ride around in an American Pontiac, and all it cost me was a few favors, I'd think I'd made quite a bargain," Felter said.

"You think that Patricia's in danger?" Hanrahan had asked, alarmed.

"Not yet," Felter had replied, matter of factly. "The Vietminh seem to be leaning backward not to create an incident involving Americans."

And so there had been no way for Paul Hanrahan to say no when Patricia told him that the Janniers "insisted" they join them for Christmas on their plantation, ninety miles from Saigon.

Two things at the plantation had surprised Hanrahan. The first was the Janniers' son. Hanrahan had understood he was supposed to have been in France; nevertheless he was waiting when the Hanrahans had climbed out of the two Citroën sedans the Janniers had sent to fetch them and their luggage.

The son was named Jean-Philippe, after his Grandfather Dommer, and like his grandfather, he was a soldier. Until recently he'd served as a parachutist in Algeria; and he had been wounded there.

Hanrahan liked Jannier from the moment he met him. He was that rare breed of parachutist, whose parachutist's credentials, like Hanrahan's, were impeccable, but who also understood that the parachute was an inefficient—and maybe absurd—means of getting a soldier into position.

Jannier, a tall and muscular, dark-haired and dark-eyed young man of twenty-six, was a graduate of L'Ecole Polytechnique in Paris. Now that he was recovered from his wounds, and apparently hadn't been tainted by the treason some other French parachutists had been involved in, he was being sent to America, to Fort Rucker, Alabama, where he would undergo training as a helicopter pilot. After becoming a pilot, he would then serve as one of the French Army liaison officers to the Aviation Center. It was, Hanrahan understood, the sort of assignment given to very bright young officers for whom a rank-heavy career is prophesied.

Before traveling on to the States, Jean-Philippe had come to Vietnam to see his parents; and by a marvelous coincidence (which was about as coincidental, Hanrahan thought, as Christmas Day following Christmas Eve), he was on the very same flight

to America as the Hanrahan's.

The favors owed were being called in. Certainly a dear friend of the family, who happened to be a West Pointer, and who happened to meet the son under the family roof at Christmastime, would simply not abandon the son in America. He could arrange introductions, that sort of thing.

He was being used, Hanrahan understood, but he couldn't be angry. If he was smart enough, he told himself, and further removed than a generation from his own lace-curtain Irish neighborhood, he would do the same for his own kids. And Christ, he did owe the Janniers. There was no question about that.

The second thing Paul Hanrahan had been surprised to find at the plantation was a turkey. It was the entrée for Christmas Eve supper. The only way Jannier could have gotten a turkey, Hanrahan realized, was to have it shipped frozen by air from Hawaii. It was an incredible gesture, and if he could pay it back in some small way by fixing up Captain Jean-Philippe Jannier at Fort Rucker, he'd certainly give it a hell of a try.

In fact, it all couldn't be easier, he thought. Colonel Bob Bellmon was at Fort Rucker, running Aviation Combat Developments. Bellmon was sort of a stuffy sonofabitch, but he was the man to take care of young Jannier. Like Jannier, his family had been officers for generations. More important, both Bellmon and his wife spoke French. Barbara Bellmon was not only a really nice woman but the daughter of Major General Peterson K. "Porky" Waterford, who had led the famed 40th "Hell's Circus" Armored Division in War II.

The Bellmons were Establishment, and they would be delighted to take care of the son of their French counterparts.

(Two)

As Paul was closing his attaché case, Patricia came out of the bathroom, looking crisp and desirable. She was red-haired and fair-skinned, but without the washed-out look Paul disliked in so many redheaded women. He had been enormously relieved when Patricia had kept her figure after the children. Even after three kids she was still very sexy and trim.

Patricia Hanrahan scowled at her husband.

"Do you really think you need that?" she asked, gesturing in the general direction of his pistol.

He picked up the Colt .45 from where he'd placed it next to the attaché case, and slipped it into a skeleton holster in the small of his back.

"We're not at Bragg yet," he said. "And you..."

“Never need a pistol until you need one badly,” his wife finished his stock answer.

“That’s right, honey,” he said.

She shook her head in resignation—and disgust.

The houseboys wordlessly asked permission to take the luggage. Paul went to them and tried to give them money, which they politely but firmly refused. He gave up and gestured for them to take the luggage.

The Jannier family was gathered on the wide, red-tiled walkway that ran from the house to the curving drive. The Janniers were not going to go into Saigon with them. It was a ninety-mile drive each way over rough two-lane macadam roads.

The two Citroën sedans that had brought the Hanrahans from Saigon were in the drive. There were two Vietnamese drivers to a car, which was known as “sharing the rice bowl.” Thus four men (in this case, four extraordinarily large men), doing the work of two, were “busy” tying luggage with great care to chrome racks on the roofs.

In addition, two houseboys were on the walkway, each with a tray of champagne glasses.

The departure turned out to be quite emotional when everyone realized that, excepting for the son, they were probably seeing one another for the last time. The chances of the Hanrahans returning to Vietnam, at least if Paul Hanrahan had anything to do with it, ranged from zero to highly unlikely.

Paul was not surprised when Christine Jannier kissed him, but he was surprised and touched when Henri wrapped his arms around him in an affectionate hug, and then actually kissed him. There was nothing whatever sexual in it, obviously, but it was a strange and disturbing feeling to feel a man’s whiskers grating on his own.

They finished their champagne and got in the cars. Then, with waves and tootings of the horn and shouts of “Bon voyage!” and “Bon chance!” and “Au revoir!” the two cars, their tires grating on the macadam, drove away from the house.

Paul, Jr., and Kevin rode in the first car with Jean-Philippe Jannier, while the Hanrahan women went with Paul in the second. Their protracted departure for home now seemed just about over, Paul thought thankfully. All that remained was a “cocktail” at the Hotel Caravelle in Saigon. That would give them a chance to exchange a final word with a few friends as well as with the first secretary of the Embassy, the ambassador having sent his regrets, and make a quick visit to the facilities (the ones at the airfield left more than a little to be desired). Then they would be off to the VIP lounge and the Air France Constellation to Tokyo.

Hanrahan had been in Vietnam for more than three years, since the spring of 1955, when he had been one of the first American “advisors” sent there following the French

defeat at Dien Bien Phu. He was glad to be getting out. It was his judgment that it had been a mistake to send Americans here in the first place. What he had seen of Vietnam since he had come had convinced him that what he had witnessed in Greece was not going to happen here, that this was a lost cause.

In Greece, the communists had been defeated. In part, this had been possible because Harry Truman had quietly ordered the army to send a group of officers and enlisted men to train and equip the Greek Army. This enabled them to protect their border with Albania and suppress Soviet-directed native communists.

Paul Hanrahan had first parachuted into Greece during World War II while on detached service to the OSS. Later, during the struggle with the communists, he had stayed on in Greece as an advisor. It had been touch and go for a while, especially at first, but then things had been turned around. American supplies had helped, of course, and so had the expertise of people like Hanrahan, whose extraordinary skill in counter-guerrilla activities was based on his own experience as a guerrilla. But what had kept the Soviet Union from taking over Greece had been a mind-set: the Greeks hated the communists not only for the ordinary reasons, but for religious reasons. They believed that the communists were the Antichrist, and they were willing to die for those convictions.

Hanrahan had rarely found such *pure* anticommunism in Vietnam. There was a little (among some of the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, for example), but it was not widespread. Aware that he had become cynical, Hanrahan divided most of the South Vietnamese into two groups: those who really didn't give a damn who ran the country, and those who wanted to run it for their own benefit. Most of the anticommunists were in the second group. They were *not* anticommunist because they hated, as Hanrahan did, what communism really meant. And because of that, Hanrahan was convinced that the red flag, sooner or later, would fly over all of Vietnam.

But he was a soldier. He went where he was ordered to go and did the best job he could when he got there. That nobility of purpose, however, did not stop him from recognizing fault where he saw it. And it was his judgment that it was a mistake to send the army to Vietnam. In addition, the army itself was making the same mistake it had made in Greece. They were sending the same low caliber of officers to Vietnam that they had sent to Greece. When he was cynical (and he seemed to be cynical more and more of the time), he often thought that USAMAG (Greece) had been successful despite its officer corps, not because of it.

When a levy for personnel was issued, the best officers were given commands—of a platoon to a regiment—and the ones who weren't quite good enough for a command or for a staff position were the ones who could be “spared” to go to USAMAG (Vietnam). And even the good officers who were sent over were the wrong kind. They could probably command an American battalion or regiment and fight a conventional war. But the war here was unconventional. Fighting it required skills that