

THE AMAZING  
ADVENTURES OF  
CAPTAIN EMBERS &  
CHIEF ZOGLEMAN  
WHOP! WHOP! WHOP!

KEN EMBERS



The Amazing Adventures of Capt. Embers and Chief Zogleman

# The Amazing Adventures of Captain Embers and Chief Zogleman; Whop, Whop, Whop

Helicopter pilots, 61<sup>st</sup> Assault Helicopter Co., LZ  
English, Bong Son, Vietnam, 1968-69



Checking the “Jesus nut”, pre-flight inspection

Ken Embers  
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## DEDICATION

**Dedicated to the fine young men who served  
with the 61<sup>st</sup> Assault Helicopter Co., LZ  
English, Bong Son, Vietnam.**

**\*Cover Photo: The “Jesus nut” secures the main rotor blade to the  
helicopter. It attaches the main rotor blade to the transmission mast.**

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## Chapter 1. Night Extraction

Captain Embers strapped himself into the cockpit of a UH-1C helicopter gunship. Here we go again, another night mission in support of the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade LRRP's, the Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol team out in the An Lao valley. He cranked up the engine by flipping the battery switch on, main fuel switch on; check cyclic and pedals free play, roll throttle on the collective to detent mode, punch starter button, check N1 power to 40%, roll throttle full on and watched the rotor blades start to turn and listened to the whine of the jet turbine engine as it revved up to speed. All the instruments in the green, co-pilot, crew chief, door gunner all set. It was night in Vietnam, very dark, no lights in the countryside, no moonlight, no reference points to orient oneself. Couldn't even see the 2,000-foot mountains several miles west of LZ English nor the South China sea several kilometers to the east. Here we go, pull pitch by slightly raising the collective in your left hand, get light on the skids, push the cyclic in your right hand slightly forward, maintain direction with the foot pedals, slide out of the revetment, do a bouncing, skid-scraping, take-off run, hit translational lift where the whirling rotor blades achieve a flying wing-like status, and *we're airborne into the cool night air.*

Despite the danger and because of the adventure, Capt. Embers attempted to reassure himself by thinking, *"I'll be glad I did this when I get back to the States".*

The LRRP's were surrounded of course. The 6-man team had sprung an ambush on some night marauding V.C. and although they had killed some of the enemy, the V.C. survivors had radioed for help and were in hot pursuit of the American soldiers. One Lucky Star slick or troop ship had been assigned to pick up the team. Two Starblazer gunships were to cover the retrieval of the LRRP's. The LRRP team had called Lucky Ops, the operations office of the 61<sup>st</sup> Assault Helicopter Company, only minutes ago.

"We need to be picked up at these coordinates" the LRRP team radio man whispered.

"Why are you whispering?" said Lieutenant Briggs, Ops officer. "*We're surrounded*", was the reply.

"OK, we'll be there in 10 minutes. Hold on, we're on the way."

"I wish these guys would spring ambushes on nice, bright, clear days, pre-plan the LZ location and give us a couple hours to prepare", thought Cpt. Embers, sardonically. LRRPs were specially trained Rangers who performed reconnaissance and disruptive attack missions against the enemy VC and NVA soldiers. *The VC, Viet Cong, were the military arm of the National Liberation Front aligned with the NVA, North Vietnamese Army soldiers, who wanted to unify North and South Vietnam under a communist government.*

The Lucky Star slick located the LRRP's using the map coordinates and homing in on them using FM radio. The LRRP team guided the helicopter in by



saying, "Hey we hear your rotor blades and you're just to the east of us, come a little closer heading 270. OK, you're right over us, can you see the red tracer rounds going out?" And with no lights on the aircraft, no ground guide or lights on the ground, the Huey set down in a small clearing, having clipped a couple of palm tree fronds with its rotor blade while hovering into the extremely confined area. Green tracer fire followed the LRRPs as they plunged onto the UH-1D Huey. The Starblazer gunships fired back with mini-guns, 4,000 rounds per minute, and a couple of 2.75 in rockets to discourage the V.C. from further pursuit. The door gunner and crew chief fired back at the source of the green tracer rounds with their M-60 machine guns. "Let's go," yelled the crew chief, "we're up, all aboard!"

Chief Warrant Officer Zogleman calmly but firmly pulled pitch with the collective, came to a hover, pushed forward on the cyclic to nose over the aircraft and move forward, somehow found a clear lane to gain airspeed, achieve translational lift, and leapt into the sky. Well, those old D models didn't exactly leap into the sky with a full load and guns a-blazing, but the Chief being the consummate pilot that he was, avoiding trees, rocks, bushes, vines, anthills, and enemy fire, nursed it into the air and returned safely to LZ English. *Another successful mission accomplished.*

How did all this happen anyway? What led up to these circumstances and what were we, these two young men, and their many companions doing, 10,000 miles from home, in Vietnam?