

# ONE HUNDRED STINGERS

A NOVEL OF THE  
AIR WAR OVER THE  
HO CHI MINH TRAIL



'One Hundred Stingers' by Peter Adams Young.

## Novel probes a covert war

Long Beach author served in the Vietnam War

Every summer for many years, I'd vow to read "War and Peace," cover to cover. And every summer I'd fail — never more than a hundred pages into the 1,400-page-plus tome. This year, I didn't even bother to pick up Tolstoy's masterpiece, but I have succeeded in reading "One Hundred Stingers," an 814-page novel that centers on the United States' covert air campaign that took place over Laos during the Vietnam War.



Peter Adams Young

will not acknowledge its fliers' activities there, even if they are shot down.

While they're still digesting this unsettling news, the aviators are provided with final instructions before departing on their first combat mission. The rules:

1. Never fly below 3,500 feet;
2. Never undertake multiple runs at a bombing target;
3. Never engage in a duel with an enemy flak site.

But Davis, working with Lt. Cmdr. Glenn "Smokey" Stover, soon learns that rules are meant to be broken.

The duo flies dozens of missions aboard their A-6 Intruder, a powerful and nimble aircraft equipped with what is vaunted to be an extremely accurate weapons delivery system. Unfortunately, that Digital Integrated Attack Navigation Equipment, dubbed DIANE, turns out to be extremely finicky as well, and frequently leaves the fliers in the lurch — mid-mission.

So Davis and Stover become masters at improvisation, and often that means breaking the rules — which seems perfectly in keeping with the overall international convention-breaking campaign they've been ordered to engage in.

"One Hundred Stingers" does seem overly-long (although it should be noted that the font size is larger than average). Nonetheless, this is a surprisingly addictive read. It is chockablock with jargon (the author supplies a 10-page glossary to assist readers), and the characters in the book have attitudes about women and their wartime adversaries that reflect a time considerably different from now. But I'd wager that most readers will find themselves swept along by the high-stakes, action-packed narrative anyway.

*The Bookmonger* is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at [barbaralmcm@gmail.com](mailto:barbaralmcm@gmail.com).

### This week's book

'One Hundred Stingers' by Peter Adams Young  
Nestucca Spit Press — 814 pp — \$24.99

Long Beach Peninsula author Peter Adams Young is a former naval flight officer who flew close to 100 combat missions over Laos and North Vietnam as a bombardier and navigator. This debut work of fiction is suffused with authentic, hairy details concerning the nature of those secret missions to disrupt the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which was the major supply route that North Vietnamese forces used to overrun South Vietnam.

Young tells this story from multiple points of view, including idealistic young Communist fighters, Laotian villagers and senior American military commanders.

But the story focuses particularly on the experiences of Lt. j.g. J. Michael "Choo Choo" Davis, whom we first meet as he and his squadron depart the naval air station in Washington state's Puget Sound, where they've been training for deployment overseas.

It isn't until they arrive at their aircraft carrier, stationed off the coast of Vietnam, that the fliers learn they will be flying top-secret air interdiction strikes over Laos, which officially is a sovereign and neutral country. Consequently, the U.S.

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