



An American Knight: The Life of Colonel John W. Ripley, USMC

Norman J. Fulkerson

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This first cradle-to-grave biography of Colonel John W. Ripley provides readers with the complete story about a great man who is considered by Marines, such as General Carl Mundy, former Commandant of the Marine Corps, to be on the same level as legends Chesty Puller and Dan Daly.

Colonel Ripley is most commonly known for his heroics in Vietnam during the Easter Offensive of 1972, where Colonel Gerald Turley ordered him to hold and die, in the face of over 30,000 North Vietnamese and 200 enemy tanks. John Ripley proceeded to blow the Dong Ha bridge, preventing the enemy from crossing. He unhesitatingly obeyed and earned the nation's second highest honor, the Navy Cross.

As stunning as the Dong Ha story is, there was much more to Colonel John Ripley. *An American Knight: The Life of Colonel John W. Ripley, USMC* narrates his early life and the influences which shaped his personality.

In youth, he was a rambunctious Huckleberry Finn who spent his days getting into all kinds of mischief in Radford, Virginia. The stories from this time period, so well narrated in *An American Knight*, will leave the reader with at least a smile, if not a laugh.

After his mischievous Huckleberry Finn days in Radford, he learned to discipline his wild side and, in spite of his intellectual weaknesses, went on to graduate from the Naval Academy. The strength of will with which he accomplished this task was later applied on the battlefield, where he earned the status of legend during his first tour in Vietnam as a 28-year-old Captain.

Readers will also get to know about John Ripley, the father, but more importantly the chaste husband. When he was approached by people wanting to make a movie about his life he agreed as long as his character was not portrayed as having a romantic relationship in Vietnam. I have never been, he said, nor will I ever be unfaithful to my wife.

The final chapters narrate the struggle Colonel Ripley endured with a bad liver. He would finally undergo two liver transplants, the last one of which was defined as the most dramatic in history.

If a young officer or Marine ever asks what is the meaning of *Semper Fidelis* Colonel Ripley once told a friend, tell them my story.

This is his story!

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