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The Crouching Beast: A United States Army Lieutenant's Account of the Battle for Hamburger Hill, May 1969

Frank Boccia

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As a first lieutenant in Bravo Company of the Third Battalion, 187th Infantry, Frank Boccia led a platoon in two intense battles in the Vietnamese mountains in April and May 1969: Dong Ngai and the grinding, 11-day battle of Dong Ap Bia--the Mountain of the Crouching Beast, in Vietnamese, or Hamburger Hill as it is popularly known. The Rakkasans, the 3/187th, are the most highly decorated unit in the history of the United States Army, and two of those decorations were awarded for these two battles. This vivid account of the author's first seven months in Vietnam gives special attention to the events at Dong Ap Bia, following the -hard-hit 3/187th hour by hour through its repeated assaults on the mountain, against an unseen enemy in an ideal defensive position. It also corrects several errors that have persisted in histories and official reports of the battle.
Beyond describing his own experiences and reactions, the author writes, "I want to convey the real face of war, both its mindless carnage and its nobility of spirit. Above all, I want to convey what happened to both the casual reader and the military historian and make them aware of the extraordinary spirit of the men of First Platoon, Bravo Company. They were ordinary men doing extraordinary things."

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