



# Autopsy of War: A Personal History

*John A. Parrish M.D.*

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## **Autopsy of War: A Personal History** John A. Parrish M.D.

On the outside, John Parrish is a highly successful doctor, having risen to the top of his field as department head at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital. Inside, however, he was so tortured by the memories of his tour of duty as a marine battlefield doctor in Vietnam that he was unable to live a normal life. In *Autopsy of War*, the author delivers an unflinching narrative chronicling his four-decade battle with the unseen enemy in his own mind as he struggled with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Parrish examines his Southern Baptist childhood and the profound influence of his father, a fire and brimstone preacher turned Navy chaplain, while offering a candid assessment of the "God and Country" ethos that leads young men to rush wide-eyed into war. He describes the unimaginable carnage and acts of cruelty he witnessed in Vietnam, experiences that shattered his world view leaving him to retreat from his family upon his return stateside. Living virtually homeless at times, he visited veteran shelters and relived the horrors of war in a series of harrowing flashbacks as he dealt with suicidal thoughts. The author writes honestly and probingly of his episodes of infidelity and battles with sex addiction. Readers follow his steady journey toward recovery and his professional contributions in the field of medicine and technology, as well as a joint program with the Boston Red Sox and Massachusetts General Hospital to aid returning veterans. Perhaps most poignantly, Parrish speaks of his quest to discover the identity of one particular soldier in Vietnam he could not save—and whose memory has haunted him ever since.

*Autopsy of War* is a soul searching memoir that is both an intensely personal narrative and a universally relevant trip through the world of war and recovery.

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