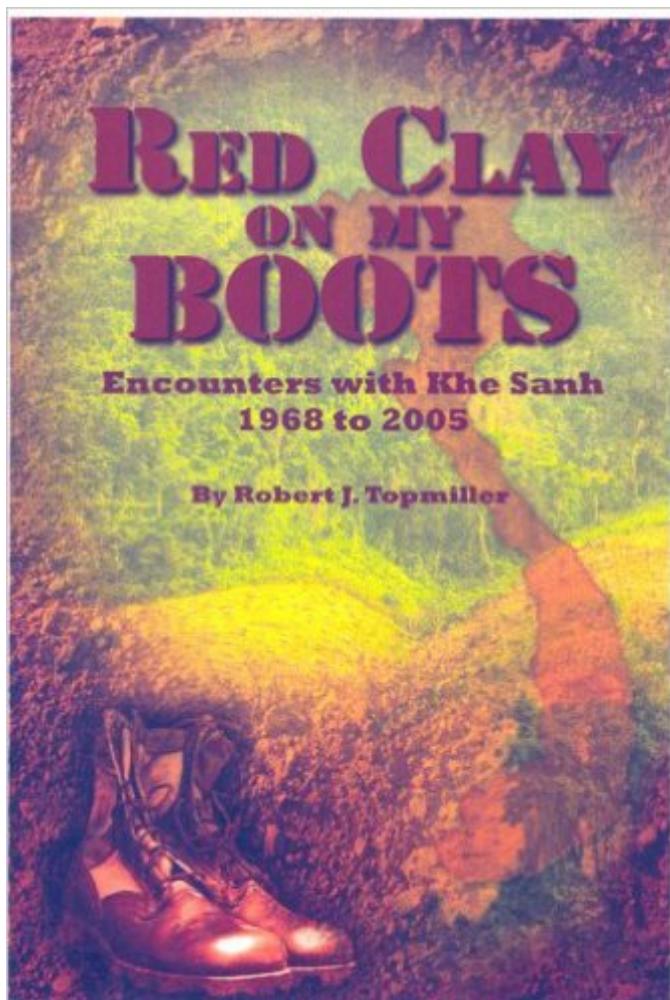


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# Red Clay On My Boots: Encounters With Khe Sanh, 1968 To 2005



## **Synopsis**

Broken hearts, ruined minds, wrecked families, and shattered lives are all realities of the Vietnam War. Real people suffered because of the fighting, death, and tragedies that occurred at the battle of Khe Sanh. This is a story of a Vietnam corpsman immersed in the bloodiest, most confusing, and controversial battle of the Vietnam War. As the war ends, the author tries to re-build his life but finds his mind and heart are still on the battlefield in Vietnam. How did this happen? Why did I survive? When will the nightmares end? Was it all for nothing? He has been fighting his own internal war for the last forty years. This is his story.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Boy oh boy, this book will get you going. Before you know it you will have drawn your battle lines, and as surely as the Vietnam War divided this country in the 60's and 70's, readers of this book will divide themselves again. Generally, I hate and fear books like this, because I don't have the time or patience for soap boxes. I just want to read the story without the crapola, the present without the shiny wrapping paper. To be straight up, I don't like pushy people, REALLY, REALLY don't like them and Mr. Toppmiller will push every available button you have. I received this book on recommendation by author Mike Archer, a man I truly admire- which is a good thing too, because otherwise I would have done with this book what I have done with others- that I thought were similar- give it the boot. Now after having read it of course, I am glad I did not make that mistake. What I found when I read this book was a complexity that I could not have foreseen. I have read many with bigger words and more mumbo jumbo designed to make me think the author is an

authority. But I do not think I have ever read one with as much in my face pure gut and heart thinly veiled in political opinion. The author gets in your face and pretty much stays there the entire time, but when you think of it, that is not unlike the history of the Vietnam War itself. I would also like to add that unlike many authors of books written about the Vietnam War, this man is not writing form information he gleaned from national archives, DOD documents, second hand information and opinion not based in fact. He lived it. He survived it and whether he believes it or not, he triumphed inspite of it.

The late Robert Topmiller, former Marine Corpsman and Professor at Eastern Kentucky University, published "Red Clay On My Boots" in 2007. Ostensibly about his experience as a medical corpsman during the defense and siege of Khe Sanh, Topmiller wound up conveying a multitude of opinions, reflecting on a variety of subjects, and his finished project is a gem about what happened at Khe Sanh as well as American involvement in Viet Nam. Khe Sanh was a U.S. Marine outpost in the north westernmost part of South Vietnam during this war. With an airstrip built initially in 1962, fighting began there in April of 1967, which became known as the "Hill fights". The Hill Fights: The First Battle of Khe SanhThese individual battles eventually developed during the 1968 "Tet Offensive" into the "Battle of Khe Sanh". General William Westmoreland and his commanders hoped that General Vo Nguyen Giap leading his North Vietnamese Army would attempt to duplicate his famous victory that occurred at the "Battle of Dien Bien Phu", in May, 1954. The Last Valley: Dien Bien Phu and the French Defeat in Vietnam However, the battle at Khe Sanh ended as a military failure for the NVA, with the American defense of this base representing one of the largest enemy sieges of the war drawing heavy international and domestic attention. Highlighting the futility of this battle, and drawing comparisons to the fiasco at "Ripcord", on July 5, 1968 Khe Sanh was abandoned.

Few people are more intimately acquainted with the horrors of war than Navy corpsmen serving with U.S. Marine units in combat. Upon that terrible and grisly stage, corpsmen carry out their duties, and become heroes to Marines, by risking their lives to help others; bandaging wounds, easing pain, comforting the dying and lamenting (sometimes forever) the loss of those they could not save. In 1968, at age 19, Bob Topmiller found himself in just such a situation, amidst of the longest and bloodiest battle of the Vietnam War -- at a place called Khe Sanh. Surrounded by as many as 30,000 of North Vietnam's best troops supported by artillery, tanks, anti-aircraft guns and rocket units, 6,000 Americans successfully held the majority of their positions despite fierce ground attacks

and endless artillery bombardment. Young Bob Topmiller was among a handful of corpsmen that, at great peril to their own lives, forayed out each day under intense enemy fire to assist some of the nearly 3,000 Marines who would eventually be killed or wounded during the three-month long battle. In *Red Clay on My Boots: Encounters with Khe Sanh 1968-2005*, now Professor Bob Topmiller combines chilling personal recollections, with his expertise as a distinguished scholar of Vietnamese history, to create a unique and powerful account of the Vietnam War -- and the disturbing human toll it continues to exact. Topmiller's courage during that fierce and bloody battle would later serve him well in his tireless quest for reconciliation; eventually leading him from the brink of despair to rediscover a level of compassion he thought lost forever amid the carnage and ubiquitous red clay of Khe Sanh.

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