

Service for the Dead



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Robert A. Anderson's first Vietnam War novel, *Cooks and Bakers*, was described as "a tough-minded report from hell." With the publication of *Service for the Dead*, Anderson, a former Marine lieutenant who served at Hue during the Tet Offensive, demonstrates once again that he is a compelling narrator of men at war. On his way home from Vietnam after

having been wounded, and newly immersed in a civilian reality that seems trivial, marine Pfc. Mike Allison tries to make sense of his Vietnam nightmare. In the back seat of his parents car he drifts in and out of memories of the war: the terror of random death; endless patrols; the booby-trapped landscape; seemingly friendly Vietnamese who harbor Viet Cong; memories...dreams ...nightmares.

Mike and the men in his platoon make dream and reality interchangeable as the only way to make sense of the senseless, cryptic war. In a desperate attempt to control what is beyond their control, they create alternate realities of everything around them. Their company headquarters becomes the Fort, the no-man s land they patrol--and die in--Frontierland, their two sharp-shooting adversaries Zorro and the Cisco Kid--and the war itself a movie in which they are actors.

But Mike and his platoon mates also create alternate realities of themselves. Longo, their fire team leader, gives each of them a nickname that mirrors in a cockeyed way their true selves: Pogo, the court jester,

speaks wisdom foolishly; Candid Camera,
the voyeur, delights in photographing every-
thing, including the dead; the Professor,

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