
TRENCH ART PAMPHLET SERIES
NONFICTION HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS

AMBUSH

III Corps
1970



BERT HOLETON

O:JA&L FIREFIGHT PRESS

Copyright © 2026 by BUTTONHOOK PRESS
An imprint of OPEN: *Journal of Arts & Letters* (O:JA&L)

All rights reserved on behalf of O:JA&L Art Incorporated, O:JA&L/BHP/HBP_{ca}/HBP_{ca},
and Bert Holeyton.

Publishing since 2017 as OPEN: *Journal of Arts & Letters* (O:JA&L) and its imprints Buttonhook Press,
HOT BUTTON PRESS *Contemporary Issues*, and HIGH BUTTON PRESS *Contemporary Art*,
OAI supports writers and artists worldwide.

OPEN: Journal of Arts & Letters
EXPERIENCE / REFLECT / CELEBRATE



FIREFIGHT PRESS:

Trench Art Series

Set in Garamond and GARAMOND ALLCAPS and formatted in CreateSpace.

Made available online and/or printed by license in the USA and elsewhere as a novelty and
commemorative document celebrating the publication of Bert Holeyton's PDF pamphlet.

This project was made possible, in part, through support from
Richard Stimac and his new book **BLOOD, WATER, AND STONE**
available now from Spartan Press.



Cover Image: *Post-Secondary Education: University of Injun Country* (AI-assisted digital image)
by O:JA&L staff creative. 2026. Public domain via Midjourney AI.

AMBUSH

Vietnam, III Core, near Cambodia, 1970

WE HAD BEEN WALKING through wet, humid jungle for several days when we heard the sounds approaching fast.

Recon's job was, without being discovered, to "snoop and poop" around a defined area of operation (AO). We identified the size and movements of VC units and located their weapons caches. I was Recon's first lieutenant, reporting to the battalion commander.

My Recon platoon was twenty-two soldiers. This was half the size of a normal 1st Cavalry platoon. Fewer troops gave a much smaller profile. I had one Staff Sergeant reporting to me, three Sergeants reporting to him, a few Corporals and the rest privates. As a small unit, the biggest danger we faced was running into a large VC unit without any backup.

The point man signaled for a halt and for everyone to get down. About a hundred meters away through the foliage came the muffled chatter from what sounded like a sizeable number of VC soldiers. This seemed reckless compared to the enemy's usual stealth in the jungle.

The Army trains officers to prioritize first the Mission and second the Men. Before becoming the Recon's leader, I had been in country for seven months as an advisor to the Vietnamese Rangers and a platoon leader for the 1st Cav. I had been in a dozen firefights by then, and the realities of the war had made me shift my priorities to, first, keep my Men alive, and second, complete the Mission.

When I got command of Recon, I saw the group was more a collection of scared individuals than a combat team. I had to quickly

change this orientation, or we would be in serious trouble if we ever hit the shit. More importantly, my men would go home in body bags.

First, I beefed up our firepower. I divided the platoon into three squads. Each squad had an M-60 machine gun, a couple of M-79 grenade launchers, and lots of extra ammunition. Now we had the equivalent firepower of a full 1st CAV platoon of forty soldiers with four squads. The M-60 two-man teams would need to be able to blunt an assault by a superior number of enemy, and then if necessary, cover the platoon for evasive tactics. Fire discipline was critical to hold off a larger force in a firefight. For the M-16s that most of us carried, I emphasized never putting the rifle on automatic—use semi-automatic and take single shots at what you are sure is an enemy target.

We then trained on moving through the jungle like the Vietnamese Rangers I had worked with in the Delta. That required moving in single file, slowly, quietly, watching every step. This also made it easier to avoid stepping on snakes, insect swarms, and booby traps. We moved so the sounds and smells of the enemy got to us before ours got to them. Like now, the approaching chatter and swishing of bushes.

An unknown number of bodies were coming straight at us. I radioed the Staff Sergeant to move two squads into a defensive position with each M-60 providing crossfire. If the enemy walked into that crossfire they would be cut down by four hundred rounds per minute of controlled bursts coming in at knee level. I moved the third squad to the rear, to cover anything unexpected.

We were all low to the ground and with as much cover as we could find. About the only thing to hide behind were small, one-foot diameter trees. By now the chatter was thirty meters away and still coming in fast. Everyone had their safeties off and were ready to open fire on my command. I wanted to wait until the enemy was very close, in the maximum kill zone.

At twenty meters, I was on the verge of giving the command when a dozen red-haired monkeys—the kind we called Rock Apes, almost the size of VC soldiers—took to the trees. With their long arms they raced high up in the jungle canopy in seconds, chittering and

vocalizing. They passed right overhead with a whoosh of branches almost like the down draft of a Huey. Then they just faded away behind us.

In combat it is rare that one is smiling after a tense firefight situation. The platoon's training and discipline prevented giving away our position, not to mention having to report to the battalion commander an engagement where we ambushed a troop of monkeys. Everyone, including the monkeys, got to live another day.

After a bit of time to decompress we resumed our Recon of the AO. Just another day in paradise.



ABOUT THE WRITER:

Robert (Bert) E. Holeton Jr. went through ROTC at the University of Washington where he graduated in 1967. He was posted to Vietnam in October of 1969. Bert joined MACV for the 1st four months then was with the 1st CAV for the rest of his one-year tour. He was a 1st Lieutenant in Infantry. Bert has been a business consultant for the last 40 years.

BUTTONHOOK PRESS PAMPHLET SERIES

2020

[Safe Spaces: A Pretty Lie](#)

Editorials on Issues of Poetic Practice by Rachel Custer

[Against Art as a Radical Subjectivity](#)

Editorials on Issues of Poetic Practice by Rachel Custer

[Songs on the Way to God: A Theory of Poetics](#)

Editorials on Issues of Poetic Practice by Rachel Custer

[The Artistic Power of Silence: On Letting Art Speak for Itself](#)

Editorials on Issues of Poetic Practice by Rachel Custer

[Special Edition: Experimental Discourse](#)

...are serious offenses, and...

A closet drama in two acts by Anthony Hamilton

[How to Love a Headstone](#)

Poetry by Sloane Asakura

[The Last of the Gallants](#)

Poetry by Atar Hadari

2021

[Salt](#)

Poetry by Amanda Leal

[Deer in Fog at Twilight Near Squalicum Lake Road](#)

Poetry by Richard Widerkehr

[Democracy has Lifted Up Its Voice](#)

Poetry by Mike Puican

[2YC Review: The Works](#)

Poetry and prose by members of the Two-Year College Caucus at AWP

[Promises](#)

Poetry by Ellis Elliott

[Home](#)

Poetry by Amanda Leal

[Study of Burkas](#)

A poem by Dana Sonnenschein

[The Open Window](#)

Flash vignettes by O.G. Rose

[Light in the Cathedral: Russian/English Poems](#)

Poetry in two languages by Andrey Gritsman

2022

[Poems for Families](#)

Poetry by Kirby Olson

Mogollon Rim

Poetry by Allisa Cherry

[Hanno](#)

Poetry by John-Michael Bloomquist

[Poem scrawled on a maize-sheaf for her \(last offering\)](#)

Poetry and art by Arturo Desimone

[The Curve of the Open Page](#)

A poem by Bruce Bond

Murder in the House: The "Nutshells" of Frances Glessner Lee

Poetry by Jessica Purdy

War and Riff

Haibun by Keith Polette

Family Photo of America

Poetry by Lynn Potts

Chester River Reverie

Poetry by Priscilla Long

Salton Sea

A short story by Mike Murray

The Fiddler

Poetry by Tim Hunt

[A Balloon Called *Young America*](#)

Poetry by Jennifer Clark

[High Fashion](#)

Featured Collaboration

Poetry by Adjei Agyei-Baah & Fine Art Photography by Jerome Berglund

2023

Rain Comes to the Central Valley

Poetry by Adrienne Pilon

DECIDUOUS

Poetry by Jean Kane

Potter's Valley Road

Poetry (Americana) by Richard Widerkehr

Old Barn or How Things Go On

Poetry by Penelope Schotte

Nothing To Be Sorry For

Poetry by Lynn Cohen

Small Lantern

Featured Haiga Collaborations

Haiku: Hassane Zemmouri and Photography: Megali Bretou & Bea Bauer

A Sport and a Pastime

Haiku (Americana) by Ron Scully

Night Train

Haiku by Jerome Gagnon

The Aquarian Foundation

Poetry (Americana) by Jeffrey Gray

Once There Was a Way

Poetry by Steve Myers

Local Habitations

Poetry by Edison Jennings

Occasions for Listening (Excerpts from a WIP)

Spencer Silverthorne

2024

Needful Things

Micropoems by Ronald J. Scully (Americana)

Designation

Poetry by Wendy Taylor Carlisle

California Summer

Poetry by Michael Lee Johnson

Once Is Enough

Formalist poems by Peter Austin (Americana)

Garden

Poems by Jianquing Zheng (Americana)

Let Me Say This Up Front

Poetry by David James (Americana)

GEMS

Poems by Larry D. Thomas

BESTIARY

Poems by Larry D. Thomas

2025

WEST Toward Squalicum Mountain

Poems by Richard Weiderkehr

[Mississippi River Delta: A Bestiary](#)

Poems by Larry D. Thomas

[A Week Late...](#)

Haibun & Tanka Prose by Carolyn Martin



BUTTONHOOK PRESS

AN IMPRINT OF OPEN: JOURNAL OF ARTS & LETTERS

HOT BUTTON PRESS *Contemporary Issues*

2023

Lamentations: Icons of War

Arab-Israeli Conflict image-as-poem collection by Tony Brinkley

[In Praise of Columbus](#)

Poetry by Kirby Olson

Perseus with the Head of Medusa

Editorials on Issues of Contemporary Aesthetics by Contributing Editor
Mick McGrath

[Democrats by Trippin'](#)

Editorials on Issues of Contemporary Aesthetics by Contributing Editor
Mick McGrath

[Let's Talk About Female Academics](#)

Editorials on Issues of Contemporary Aesthetics by Contributing Editor
Mick McGrath

[Diversophiles Everywhere!](#)

Editorials on Issues of Contemporary Aesthetics by Contributing Editor
Mike McGrath

The End of the "Black Victim" Narrative?

Editorials on Issues of Contemporary Aesthetics by Contributing Editor
Mick McGrath

2024

Woes Innumerosus (HOT BUTTON PRESS)
Based Fiction Mick McGrath (Americana)

2025

[The Future Is Mao!](#) (HOT BUTTON PRESS)
Short Fiction by Mick McGrath

[Musing the Crossroads](#)(HOT BUTTON PRESS)
Poems by Larry D. Thomas

[SUPERFLUOUS SUPER LOUIS](#) (HOT BUTTON PRESS)
Winner of the 2025 WEITZ PRIZE for Counter-Revolution Writing
Short Story by Perry Genovesi

Rule & Innovation (HOT BUTTON PRESS)
Short Fiction by Mick McGrath

OPEN: Journal of Arts & Letters
EXPERIENCE/REFLECT/CELEBRATE



HOT BUTTON PRESS:
Contemporary Controversies

AVAILABLE NOW FROM O:JA&L'S BUTTONHOOK PRESS

FLASH FICTION: *Alive in the Flicker* *A Portable Workshop*

PAMELYN CASTO

“Pamelyn Casto’s *Flash Fiction: Alive in the Flicker* is insightful, comprehensive, and brimming with inventive prompts and exercises to make your flash truly leap off the page.”

~ Dinty W. Moore

co-editor of the *Best of Brevity: Twenty Groundbreaking Years of Flash Nonfiction*

“Pamelyn Casto has been the most useful person in flash for years. This “portable workshop” proves it. *Flash Fiction: Alive in the Flicker* is an amazing flash compendium of everything for anyone who is interested the form. It’s also a writers’ workshop from prompts to where to send flashes. What’s not to like?”

~ Robert Shapard

co-editor of many Flash and Sudden Fiction anthologies, the latest are *Sudden Fiction Latina: Short Stories from the United States and Latin America* (2010) and *Flash Fiction International: Very Short Stories from Around the World* (2015)

“Pamelyn Casto’s valuable book *Flash Fiction: Alive in the Flicker* is an astonishing illumination—a total history of the form with essays, strategies and exercises; lessons, examples, how-to’s, markets, marketing, contests, anthologies, prompts, advice from pros, new directions (flash film!), reader psychology even—it is all here, with hundreds of internet links. There will never be a fuller single resource, with a good teacher’s encouraging tone about it, to boot. You can say flash fiction begins with Aesop; with Casto you can begin anew.

~Kent H. Dixon

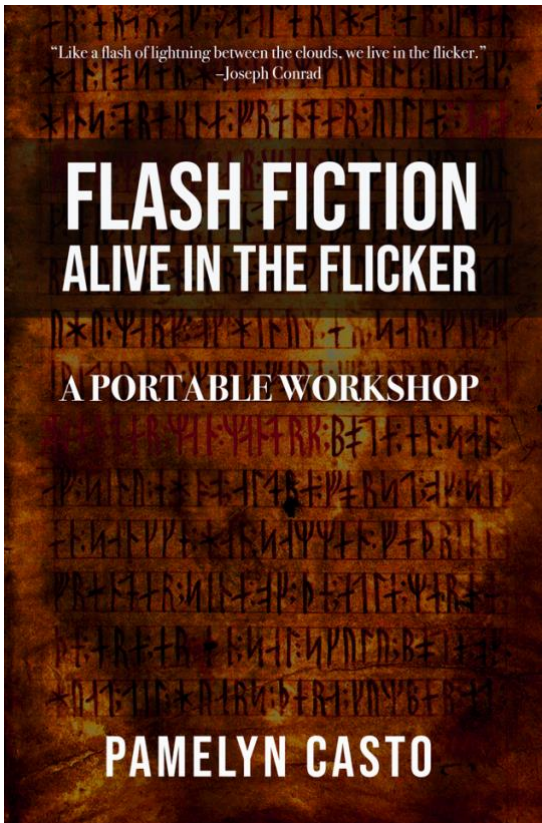
translator of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (2018) and co-editor of *Stone Wall Book of Short Fictions* (1976)

"Pamelyn Casto is a deep font of flash knowledge, and this portable workshop is a thorough, indispensable resource for writers and instructors who want to know more about what this thing called "flash" is, how to write it, and more important, how to read and understand it."

~ Tara Lynn Masih

editor of *The Rose Metal Press Field Guide to Writing Flash Fiction* (2009)
and founder of *The Best Small Fictions* (founded 2015)

Buttonhook Press titles on Amazon
available now



AMAZON REVIEWS

for Pamelyn Castos's *FLASH FICTION: Alive in the Flicker*

Daniel J. Nicholas

Reviewed in the United States on August 26, 2024

Verified Purchase

If I were to teach a class, this book would be required reading or a course outline for discussion. Bravo, Pamelyn! In addition, I look forward to your monthly blog to start up again.

David Lignell

Reviewed in the United States on November 23, 2022

Verified Purchase

Pamela Casto's new text, *Flash Fiction: Alive in the Flicker*, is a must have "portable workshop" workbook for anyone who desires to learn and practice the many forms of flash fiction.

W.R. Rodriguez

Reviewed in the United States on October 5, 2022

Verified Purchase

An authoritative overview of the genre, combined with practical advice on the writing process and an abundance of writing prompts.

Norman Jensen

Reviewed in the United States on April 2, 2024

Reading is great but hands-on prompts are even better.



Supporting artists and writers worldwide

O:JA&L'S 2025 PAMPHLET SERIES

\$4.95 (USA)

\$7.95 (Canada)

BERT HOLETON

TRENCH ART PAMPHLET SERIES
