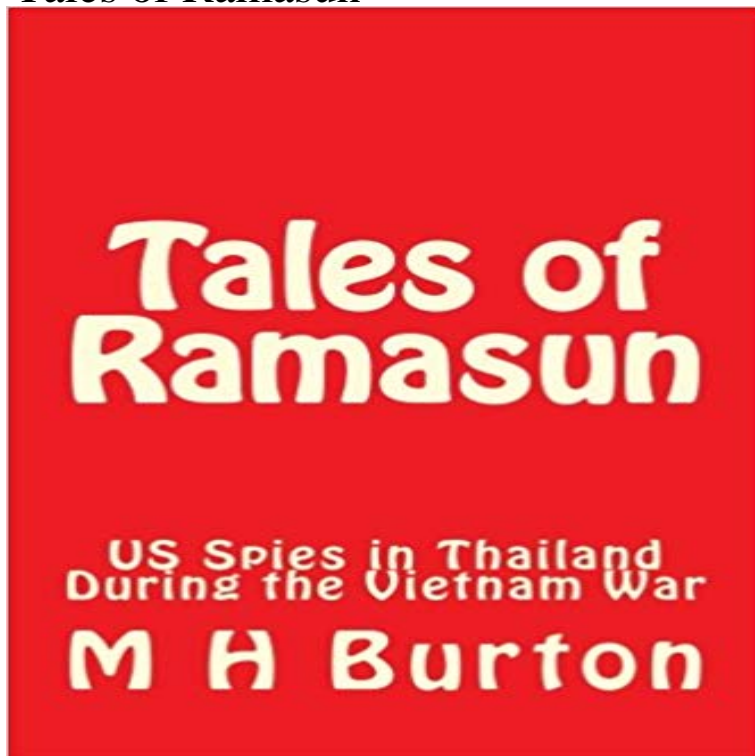


Tales of Ramasun



Tales of Ramasun is a different kind of Vietnam War story. The kind of war story you may not have heard before. The story of the secret war, the war behind the curtain, the war whose soldiers were sworn to silence. Now is the time to tell it, before all of the old spooks and spies who participated in it are gone. It is not a blood and guts war story. There were no Rambos at Ramasun. Its a story of brains not brawn. Smart young men full of youthful energy let loose in a strange land and put to a strange task, with a goodly number of smartasses and jokers in the pack to make things more interesting. Even their jargon was weird. They were lingies (translator/interpreters) and ditty-boppers (radio operators), who hung out at OPS (operations) and checked their skeds (read raw radio traffic) for hot skinny (important information). They went into battle equipped with typewriters and radio sets and tape machines and the most powerful state of the art communications interception gear of the time. Young GIs, most of them dragged unwillingly fresh from high school or college campuses to fight a Top Secret shadow puppet war in Thailand, a country they had barely heard of. It was the Thailand of the 1960s, not the modern, popular tourist destination of today, and it was the poorest, most remote, most backward section of that country where they ended up. The Northeast, Isaan (ee-sahn), 300 miles from Bangkok at a place called Ramasun Station. No tourists went there then, few do now, exactly in the middle of nowhere. Ramasun, named for the Thai thunder god, was the home of something called the 7th Radio Research Field Station, or 7th RRFS to military types who are fond of acronyms. Radio Research was just a cover for what was done there, a vague title meant to confuse. The 7ths mission was spying, electronic eavesdropping, on everyone in Southeast Asia...friend, foe and

neutral. That's what it did for 10 years from 1966 to 1976 and it did it well. Now it's gone, long gone, and there is hardly a trace of it left, not even so much as a brass plaque to mark its existence, and any Thai under the age of 50 who you ask will tell you that it never existed and that your contention that there were once over 40,000 US GIs in Thailand is nonsense.

But it did exist and a surprisingly large number of people passed through its gates during its lifetime. They were a wild, wacky, raunchy, rambunctious bunch. Too smart to be proper by the book soldiers. Never was a military unit short of the M*A*S*H 4077th less military than the 7th. When eavesdropping is your game and espionage is your mindset you don't give a damn about spit-shined boots and crisp salutes, and the only authority you respect is earned by those who demonstrate their ability at the tradecraft of spying, rank is irrelevant. The troops of the 7th were a nightmare for stiff-necked military types, so sloppy on the parade ground that the brass had to borrow Thai Marines to salute the occasional dignitary that drifted Ramasun's way. Troublemakers the lot of them, but they did do one thing right. When it came to the mission you couldn't beat the 7th. They got the job done. They may not have looked good while they were doing it, but they got the job done. I was proud to have been one of this motley crew from 1968 to 1971. The nine stories in this book are based both on my own experiences and tales told me by others while I was there and during the many years since. I cannot say that they are all strictly true. Fact or fiction, I have tried to capture the essence of that long-gone time and place. The way it really was, with all the warts on. The spooks, the spies, the intrigue, the culture shock, the adventure, the romance (and sex) that were Ramasun.

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