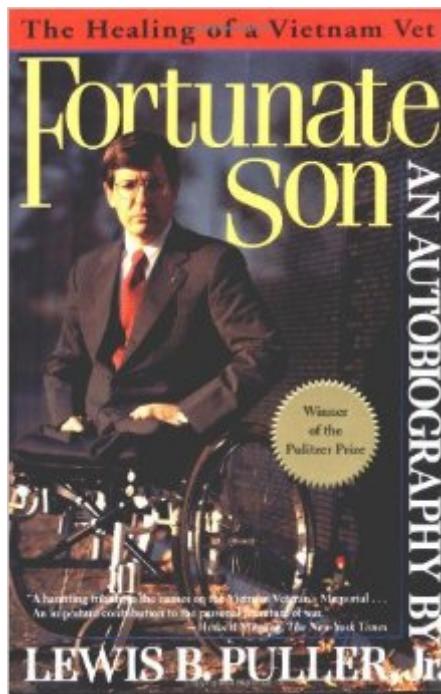


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# Fortunate Son: The Healing Of A Vietnam Vet



## **Synopsis**

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, Lewis B. Puller, Jr.'s memoir is a moving story of a man born into a proud military legacy who struggles to rebuild his world after the Vietnam War has shattered his body and his ideals. Raised in the shadow of his father, Marine General Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller, a hero of five wars, young Lewis went to Southeast Asia at the height of the Vietnam War and served with distinction as an officer in his father's beloved Corps. But when he tripped a booby-trapped howitzer round, triggering an explosion that would cost him his legs, his career as a soldier ended, and the battle to reclaim his life began.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This gut-wrenching book is five stories. Each is fascinating... The first is that of a young man growing up in the shadow of his famous father, Marine Corps General "Chesty" Puller, "the most decorated man in Marine Corps history." The second is that of a young marine corps lieutenant leading a 40-man platoon in combat, trying (sometimes unsuccessfully) to keep everyone alive. He was doing what he thought was right. His tour ends in disaster; he is med-evacuated out with horrific injuries. The third story is his hospitalization -- missing legs, missing fingers, he fights through a pain-ridden recovery. The fourth tale is his humiliating 1978 defeat in a Congressional race against Republican Paul Trible. The final story is Lewis Puller's battle against alcoholism. "Fortunate Son" was published in 1991, and won the Pulitzer Prize for Biography in 1992. But in the alcohol war, this book just marked the eye of the storm. Shortly after it was honored with the prize, Lewis Puller

relapsed into alcoholism; he and his wife separated. And on May 11, 1994, Lewis B. Puller, Jr., picked up a gun and killed himself. ---- Sometimes (to boomers) the Vietnam era and its aftermath now seem dreamlike; Puller's book is an icy hook, pulling us into the river of times past. It was VERY real! Throughout this book, the thought keeps recurring, this was a man who trusted too much, too many, too often, and was destroyed. He was indeed a tragic figure. There are many lessons to be learned from his life... but I suspect every reader will take different ones from this work...

The only time I ever met Puller was on October 3, 1991, at the Pentagon where he had been working as a staff attorney. I was shocked when I first saw him. He appeared dimunitive in his wheelchair as compared to the book jacket photo. We ate lunch at the cafeteria and he autographed his book for me. It is one of my most-treasured signed copies. I had picked up "Fortunate Son" in the summer of 1991 after I returned from the Gulf War. I remember lying on the hot sand in Laguna Beach, California, and being blown away by the brutally honest and wrenching narrative. Puller took me back to Camp Pendleton where he grew up as the only son of the most decorated Marine ever--Chesty Puller. From there, I learned of his tumultuous, alcohol-soaked college years at William & Mary during the 1960s, culminating in his entry into Marine OCS where he received no special treatment. Sadly, just after three months-in-country, Puller stepped on a land mine while retreating with his platoon from a VC ambush. He returned home, raised a family, carried on a marriage, became a lawyer but was still burdened with alcohol. He unsuccessfully ran for Congress as a Democrat, losing to a man who dodged Vietnam but he temporarily beat the booze. After his book came out and became a major success, Puller and I occasionally spoke via phone. Sadly, his marriage faltered and he succumbed to the bottle again. I last spoke to him via phone in 1994, just a week before he committed suicide. Puller and Robert Olen Butler remain to be the only Vietnam veterans to win the Pulitzer Prize, the latter for fiction. He will always be on my mind when I think of the American veterans who fought and died for my freedom. Moreover, he was the first person to encourage me to write my story which was finally published in 2005. I wanted to write about meeting Puller but never received a reply from his ex wife who is an elected official in Virginia. Semper fi Marine!

I just read this book for the second time. The spread between the first and second reading is nearly a decade. The first time I read this book I became emotional. Now that I have read it again, with added maturity...I fully appreciate its greatness. Lewis B. Puller, Jr. is the patriotic son of a beloved

Marine Corps legend. "Fortunate Son," is the story of how the author follows his father's footsteps...joining the Marines and going to war. What follows is a chilling portrait of the Vietnam war. It is also a fabulous window of understanding of how many Vietnam veterans turned against the war. The author's narrative of his childhood and his relationship with his famous military father is outstanding. Moreover, the tale of his combat wound and his subsequent survival along with other American casualties of the war while in military hospitals in the States is comprehensive and objective. Puller does an enormous service for the nation. He honestly delivers one of the most powerful...as well as painful first hand testimonies of the longest war in the history of the United States of America. This book will endure the test of time.

From the time Lewis was born there was only one option open for him. Son of the famous "Chesty" Puller, the Marine's Marine, Lewis Jr. was destined to become a Marine. In Fortunate Son, Lewis Jr. tells his story, about a different Marine in a different war--Viet Nam. But, the book is not just about Viet Nam. It is about a much greater conflict. The conflict between the light side of the soul and the dark side that is in everyone of us. Lewis Jr. determined to follow in his father's footsteps bravely goes to Viet Nam where an enemy mine destroys his future along with his body. He details the personal struggle it is to cope with such a devastating event. He talks candidly about the lowest points in his life, his depression, his alcoholism, his thoughts of suicide (which will ultimately claim his life). The narrative that Lewis Puller Jr. weaves is gripping. No writer of fiction could match the story of the son of a war hero finding a much different homecoming from war, from a struggle on the battlefield to one of a war against oneself, tragically ultimately lost. Good night, Chesty and Lewis Jr., wherever you are....Semper Fi.

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