

# CAT LO

*A Memoir of Invincible Youth*



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**VIRG ERWIN**

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## *Cat Lo, a memoir of invincible youth*

*Cat Lo* is a story of young men who volunteer for Swift Boats in Vietnam and about war's indelible lesson for those who survive: life is too precious to waste.

Thirty-six years after Vietnam, Virg Erwin sits with a disfigured marine convalescing from Iraq and asks, "Do you want to talk about it?" It is a question no one has ever asked Erwin. "It was hard to know who were civilians—who were bad guys," the marine says as he describes being caught in a violent ambush.

For Erwin, the marine's story resurrects memories of sailors patrolling narrow rivers and canals, their naïve sense of invincibility shattered by Viet Cong patiently waiting in bunkers with rockets. *Cat Lo* is about conflict of compassion for the South Vietnamese who are caught in the middle of war without option of neutrality, and confusion by the question: Who is the enemy and who is not?

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Virgil Erwin enlisted in the Naval Reserve in 1963, received his Bachelors Degree from Western State College in Colorado and commissioned an ensign in 1966 after graduating from the Naval Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island. He served his first two years of active duty aboard a destroyer, the USS Berry (DD 858).

After his tour in Vietnam as skipper of Patrol Craft Fast 67, Erwin joined Dow Corning, but interrupted his career to sail to the South Pacific. With his wife Pam as first mate and their yearling Christopher as crew, they sailed for eighteen months, a ten-thousand mile round trip. Erwin retired after thirty-six years of corporate life as Vice President of Sales at Entegris Corp.

Erwin is a Board Member of the Swift Boat Sailors Association, the *Vietnam Unit Memorial Monument* Fund and the Admiral Hoffmann Foundation, which provides financial aid to wounded men and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

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Erwin was chairman of the 2007 Swift Boat Reunion held in San Diego, attended by 500 men and women including Congressman Bilbray, Four Star Admiral Gehman, Vice Admiral Rectanus and Rear Admiral Hoffmann.

Erwin resides in San Diego with his wife Jacqueline and their two Siberian Huskies. Cruising World, Pacific Skipper and Latitude 38 published his stories of sailing to the South Pacific.

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Larry Wasikowski,  
Thank you for your incredible  
website. Your Swift Boat  
Directory was invaluable to  
me while writing this book.  
And thank you for your service!  
Virgil Erwin

Virgil Erwin

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