



# At Hell's Gate: A Soldier's Journey

*Claude Anshin Thomas*

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## **At Hell's Gate: A Soldier's Journey** Claude Anshin Thomas

In this raw and moving memoir, Claude Thomas tells the dramatic story of his service in Vietnam, his subsequent emotional collapse, and how he was ultimately able to find healing and peace. Thomas went to Vietnam at the age of eighteen, where he served as a crew chief on assault helicopters. By the end of his tour, he had been awarded numerous medals, including the Purple Heart. He had also killed many people, witnessed horrifying cruelty, and narrowly escaped death on a number of occasions.

When Thomas returned home he found that he continued to live in a state of war. He was overwhelmed by feelings of guilt, fear, anger, and despair, all of which were intensified by the rejection he experienced as a Vietnam veteran. For years, Thomas struggled with post-traumatic stress, drug and alcohol addiction, isolation, and even homelessness.

A turning point came when he attended a meditation retreat for Vietnam veterans led by the renowned Zen monk Thich Nhat Hanh. Here he encountered the Buddhist teachings on meditation and mindfulness, which helped him to stop running from his past and instead confront the pain of his war experiences directly and compassionately. Thomas was eventually ordained as a Zen monk and teacher, and he began making pilgrimages to promote peace and nonviolence in war-scarred places around the world including Bosnia, Auschwitz, Afghanistan, Vietnam, and the Middle East.

*At Hell's Gate* is Thomas's dramatic coming-of-age story and a spiritual travelogue from the horrors of combat to discovering a spiritual approach to healing violence and ending war from the inside out. In simple and direct language, Thomas shares timeless teachings on healing emotional suffering and offers us practical guidance in using mindfulness and compassion to transform our lives.

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