



# Branching Out: How I went from Green Beret to Marine Corps Officer

*John Dahl*

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In my high school cafeteria, my classmates and I talked endlessly about the ongoing Vietnam War which was broadcast into our living rooms each evening. I graduated in 1966 and after a brief stint in college, I dropped out and joined the Army: first becoming a paratrooper and then completing my grueling training as a Green Beret. I arrived in Vietnam at the height of the war, serving first in South Vietnam and later running reconnaissance missions in the jungles of Laos as a member of Special Operations. My experiences there witnessing the heroism of my fellow Green Berets would change my life forever. I returned home in 1970 to finish college on the G.I. Bill but upon graduating, I found few job prospects. Newly married, I was determined to provide for wife so I returned to the military, going through Marine Corps Officer Candidate School (OCS). As an officer, I witnessed the bitter rivalry between the Army and the Marine Corps as well as the decline that the American military faced after Vietnam. Through it all, I tried to be a leader and serve my country once again but I would face a whole new set of challenges in this branch of service... This is the story of my time in two branches of the United States Armed Forces both during and after one of America's most devastating wars.

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