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# By Honor Bound: Two Navy SEALs, The Medal Of Honor, And A Story Of Extraordinary Courage



TWO NAVY SEALs, THE MEDAL OF HONOR,  
AND A STORY OF EXTRAORDINARY COURAGE

## BY HONOR BOUND

TOM NORRIS AND MIKE THORNTON  
WITH DICK COUCH AND A FOREWORD BY BOB KERREY, MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT



## Synopsis

In April of 1972, SEAL Lieutenant Tom Norris risked his life in an unprecedented ground rescue of two American airmen who were shot down behind enemy lines in North Vietnam, a feat for which he would be awarded the Medal of Honor - an award that represents the pinnacle of heroism and courage. Just six months later, Norris was sent on a dangerous special reconnaissance mission that would take his team deep into enemy territory. On that mission they engaged a vastly superior force. In the running gun battle that ensued, Lieutenant Norris was severely wounded; a bullet entered his left eye and exited the left side of his head. SEAL Petty Officer Mike Thornton, under heavy fire, fought his way back onto a North Vietnamese beach to rescue his officer. This was the first time Tom and Mike had been on a combat mission together. Mike's act of courage and loyalty marks the only time in modern history that the Medal of Honor has been awarded in a combat action where one recipient received the medal for saving the life of another. *By Honor Bound* is the story of Tom Norris and Mike Thornton, two living American heroes who grew up very differently, entered military service and the Navy SEAL teams for vastly different reasons, and were thrown together for a single combat mission - a mission that would define their lives from that day forward.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 8 hours and 18 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Macmillan Audio

Audible.com Release Date: May 17, 2016

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B01EGCAUN4

Best Sellers Rank: #9 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Military > Vietnam War #27 in Books > History > Military > United States > Vietnam War #38 in Books > History > Military > Intelligence & Espionage

## Customer Reviews

I am almost speechless after reading this book. In the interest of full disclosure let me make clear I am a retired Special Agent of the FBI. I only mention that because after recovering from his horrific head wound Tommy Norris went on to become a Special Agent of the FBI. The fact we carried the

same little gold badge around in our pocket is the only similarity between Tommy and the rest of us little boys and girls who served our country in that job. Him and Mike Thornton are giants among men. They are on the same level as Superman. Don't believe me, just read this book. Until recently I have been somewhat depressed as to what the political process is bringing this country in who will be the next commander in chief (no capitalization on purpose) either dumb or dumber. I am not sure which one is which. A clueless buffoon and draft dodger who had the audacity to mock John McCain, or a vile ill tempered lying crook who has shown nothing but disdain for our military her entire life. After reading this book I now realize it does not matter. As long as we have men like Tommy Norris and Mike Thornton walking among us. Drinking the same water and breathing the same air as the rest of us. Rising to the occasion when necessary and doing what has to be done. As long as we have men like that in this country we will be just fine. Thank you men. Thank you for your service and dedication to this country and your fellow comrades. Wow!

Who is a hero? What are the requirements for a hero? Who is a warrior? Who is a brother? Who would you entrust your life to? Do you want to know the answers to these questions? If you want to find honest, fully complete examples of the answers then read this book to see into the face of two actual, real hero? This is a book I am proud to recommend!

The Vietnam Veterans of America originally published this review in [vvabooks.wordpress.com](http://vvabooks.wordpress.com) If you get your hands on a copy of *By Honor Bound*, start reading on the first page "Part 1: Bat 21." Bypass the blurbs on the book's jacket as well as the Forward, Preface, Introduction, and Epigraph. The book's subtitle "Two Navy SEALs, The Medal of Honor, and a Story of Extraordinary Courage" provides all the background you need. Dick Couch tells the story of Tom Norris and Mike Thornton so completely and seamlessly that, if you are the least bit militarily inclined, he will instantly capture your full attention. His narration unreels with mounting suspense. I was continually dazzled by the selfless dedication of Norris and Thornton, recipients of the Medal of Honor for carrying out rescue and reconnaissance missions behind North Vietnamese Army lines near the Cam Lo bridge and inside the Demilitarized Zone in 1972. Couch took me into the SEAL world and I simply could not stop reading. In one sitting, I finished the book's first one hundred seventy pages, which describe Norris and Thornton's greatest heroic efforts. The magnitude of their dilemmas and feats left me teary-eyed and speechless, incapable of reading the best passages aloud to my wife. Their operational principle was "Hope for the best but plan for the worst." They encountered the worst of the worst. I refuse to say more about their war because I might lessen the impact for you of

the surprise, awe, and admiration produced by their actions. It is better for you to hear the facts from Couch. Yes, other people have previously written about these men but never with so much depth and detail. Norris and Thornton told their stories to Couch, and he expanded them with interviews from eyewitnesses to the events and his own expertise as a SEAL combat veteran in Vietnam. He also flawlessly interwove history lessons relevant to their heroic actions. By Honor Bound is his twenty-second book related to military activities, eleven nonfiction and eleven fiction. The last part of the book describes the post-Vietnam lives of Thornton and Norris, which include Navy and Federal Bureau of Investigation adventures as fascinating as their earlier experiences. These accounts also present eyewitness testimony. In a final tribute to Norris and Thornton, Couch says, "Not only were they incredibly heroic during these events, but they were almost superhuman— even by Navy SEAL metrics." If you read the book, I predict that you will agree with him. Lt. Col. Henry Zeybel, USAF (Retired)

The 571st MI Detachment relayed intelligence to the SEALs, via the NILO in Da Nang, during the Easter Offensive of 1972, and I find it interesting that there are no references given in this book at all. Also odd was the statement (p.9) that "Neither of us knew much about what was going on up north, but we knew a major battle in Quang Tri Province just south of the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone) was in progress." Odd because their meeting took place on 9 Apr 72, which, by that time, NVA activity was taking place in every corps area and not just in I Corps where the Easter Offensive began on 30 Mar 72. Virtually every day, the Stars and Stripes ran articles about the offensive, as well. The SA-2 was not a forerunner of the SA-11 (p.11), either "the SA-6 was the forerunner of the SA-11. The closest SAM system to the SA-2 (considered a strategic system) is the SA-10. The sometimes repeated nonsense about Hambleton having special knowledge making it imperative to rescue him doesn't wash. If he was so valuable a resource, he wouldn't have been sent to fly over Vietnam. There is little doubt that the VC and agents inside the South Vietnamese military and government knew where most U.S. intelligence units were in-country and could have attempted to kidnap personnel as they wished. The no-bomb zone was automatically imposed by the Air Force, too. The 27km circle over Hambleton was immediately applied without the knowledge of what exactly was occurring in the ground. The Army and Marines of both countries were not at all happy as the NVA tanks, APCs and infantry made their southward trek, almost risk free. Aircraft that should have been used to kill the enemy were diverted elsewhere and enemy forces had to be addressed on another day. I enjoyed reading the book.

I almost feel I know them. As a vet myself, and in service at the very end of Vietnam and was not in country, I was a WRAMC and have seen what war can. The guys who serve in war and their deserve all of our respect. I feel honored to meet these hero's through this book. Very good read.

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