



## **Childress, Richard T.: Files, 1981-1988**

### **Finding Aid Type**

White House Staff and Office File Collections

### **Subtitle/Office**

National Security Council

### **Specialization Heading**

Political Affairs Directorate, 1981-1982, Defense Policy Directorate, 1982-1983, Political Military Affairs Directorate, 1983-1986, and Asian Affairs Directorate, Director, 1986-1988.

# WAR COMES TO LONG AN

## BACK STORY TO THE WRITING OF A MILITARY CLASSIC<sup>1</sup>

by Jeffrey Race

Now being reprinted in an updated and expanded edition, *War Comes to Long An* was first published in 1972<sup>2</sup> and was the book I longed to buy in 1965 as the most junior lieutenant in Vietnam—but could nowhere find. Thereby hangs this tale of my adventures then in Vietnam and since elsewhere—a tale with implications for the creative process in academic writing, for the study of institutional change and of the learning disabilities of military institutions, and for priorities in public policy-making in America and elsewhere.

Birthing *War Comes to Long An* changed my life. I had no inkling when I began the project with trepidation in mid-1967 at the age of 24—using

my own funds to satisfy my private curiosity—how it would change both my life and the lives of so many

taining or amusing; a few may find it helpful or even stimulating. You are my real target.

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“A lot of people are alive today,” confided Dick Childress to me one day in 1984, “who would be dead if you had not written that book.” He said he had circulated extracts to colleagues on the White House staff planning *something* (he didn’t say what) *somewhere* (I guessed Latin America from headlines at the time). Reading my words led some influential officials to rethink the wisdom of a debated course of action still unknown to me. These pages tell how that happened.

Several questions arose over the years to me and to others about the book’s creation and the consequences of its appearance. With partial knowledge now of these

