



PHOTOS BY USMC COMBAT PHOTOGRAPHERS, RVN 1966

THE LONG WAR DEAD

AN EPIPHANY BY BRYAN ALEC FLOYD

Former Pentagon chief Robert McNamara has splashed ice water on the victory celebrations of World War II this 50th year since its end with his belated *mea culpa* about the Vietnam War. The emergence of the United States as the most powerful nation in history is jubilantly extolled this golden anniversary of warfare's most dramatic event, the nuclear holocaust of two Japanese cities. But the U.S. was almost immediately challenged by another rising superpower, Soviet Russia which had at enormous cost defeated the major Nazi army (May 8 is VE Day) and absorbed Eastern Europe into its empire. The upper layer Cold War that resulted precipitated hot wars in relatively obscure 3rd world regions. The Vietnam War was a sideshow that took over prime time by its duration and futility. The American government was willing to sacrifice a generation to the war. The American public was not, and ultimately prevailed though many thousands died in the interim.

The Vietnam War, which the U.S. lost after a decade of intense escalation, ended 20 years ago, April 30, 1975 (two centuries and 11 days after the American Revolution began). In commemoration of the millions whose lives were terminated, shattered or at least irreversibly altered because of the war, here are four pages of poetry from an unpublished manuscript whose author is unknown except by name. Mimeographed copies of the manuscript were discovered in a Portland (Ore.) veterans rehabilitation center by a Vietnam vet who managed to salvage a few copies; the rest had been used as scratch paper. All that seems to be known about Bryan Alec Floyd is that he was at the center in the mid 1970s. That he was a U.S. Marine and fought in Vietnam is apparent from his portraits of a USMC rifle platoon at the time of Tet 1968.

~MPMc

PVT. CURT MEADOWS, USMC

In the warp of military time,
his father got his son's last letter
after he had received
official word of his son's death.
His son's letter read:
"And there will be old memories
made alive and young
of the dying and the dead
the living have no right to forget."



PVT. IAN GODWIN, USMC

He stepped on a landmine,
falling up instead of down.
Afterward he lay still, listening
to his feet get up without him
and slowly walk away.
For this he was given a medal,
which he swallowed.
He was given crutches,
which he burned.
Flown Med-Evac to San Diego,
he was ordered to rehabilitate.
But he started to salute bedpans
and give orders to hypos,
and tell catheters to "Fire!"
He stood on his stumps,
yelling that he was going
to chase daisies up the hills
because winter had greened into spring,
that God had become rain and it was raining
the soft mud of Vietnam cool between his toes.

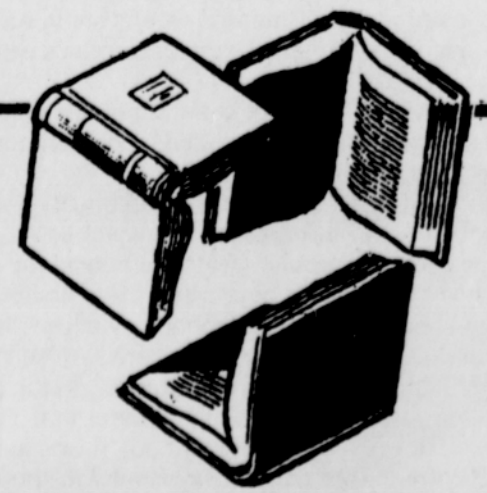
NOT
JUST
ANY
TOM
DICK
OR
HARRY



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POSTERS & PRINTS, SIGNS & DESIGNS, SCREENPRINTING

CPL. CHARLES CHUNGTU, USMC

This is what the war ended up being about:
we would find a VC village,
and if we could not capture it
or clear it of Cong,
we called for jets.
The jets would come in, low and terrible,
sweeping down, and screaming,
in their first pass over the village.
Then they would return, dropping their first bombs
that flattened the huts to rubble and debris
to dust and ashes.
And then the jets would come back once again,
in a last pass, this time to drop napalm
that burned the dust and ashes to just nothing.
Then the village
that was not a village anymore
was our village.



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