



INTRODUCTION

The 1960s was a very difficult time to be a soldier in America. There was an explosion of woman's rights. Women burned their bras trying not to conform. Men let their hair grow long. They tossed away all their fine clothes and wore blue jeans and tie-dyed T-shirts. There was the music revolution of the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Motown, and other recording music groups that greatly influenced everyone. Church groups called the music evil and satanic. Long hairs were called freaks.

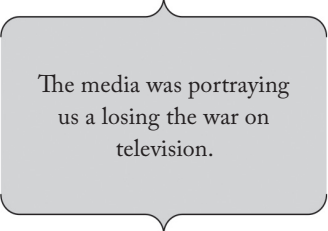
There was the hippie movement, Haight-Ashbury District, San Francisco dreamers and dropouts, and also Berkeley student war protesters. There was the influence of LSD, marijuana, love-ins, and free-love music concerts.

During those times, many of the youth were revolting against the image of the American father and family figure. And there was mistrust of our government over the assassinations of JFK, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King Jr. There were civil rights riots in the streets of Alabama to Los Angeles. And there was the Vietnam War.

Our young men were dying on foreign soil ten thousand miles away in a small Asian country. This was the first war to be publicly displayed on television. There was the American draft, which was hard to escape unless you went to college or fled to Canada. Men burned their draft cards in public display near the capitol in Washington DC. America seemed to be coming apart at the seams.

All of these influences caused many of us to be confused over the direction of our lives, so many sought the music or the drug culture to influence their behavior. Dr. Timothy Leary led a group of students to “turn on, tune in, drop out” and seek love by in living a hippie lifestyle of peace, love, and tranquility. It was a difficult time not to be influenced by the hippie movement and drugs.

During the time of 1966–1975, the Vietnam War became an American eyesore to everyone. Our soldiers were being killed in battle, and the media was portraying us as losing the war on television. This was not true. Our military had won every single battle, and we were winning the respect and appreciation of the Vietnamese people.



The media was portraying
us as losing the war on
television.

The Vietnam War was an unrecognized war, and it was called a conflict. President Johnson continued to send more and more troops to Vietnam to end the war swiftly, but no one knew that the North Vietnamese communists would *never* surrender.

War protesters broke out all over the country in an effort to stop the deaths of our young men fighting in battle. Every single day, there were countless rallies on college campuses all over America demanding a stop to the fighting.

When our soldiers returned home from war, they were met at the airports by war protesters shouting, “Baby killers” and “losers.” All of our soldiers were rejected and mistreated by the American public, including our government leaders and the Veterans Affairs. Many of us had issues with being wounded, Agent Orange contamination, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Yet, the VA would not help us. Many Vietnam veterans were turned away and shunned. Many veterans never returned to get help, even to this day.

For many of us who served, it was a time not to be associated with serving in the military. It was not honorable to serve.

When we returned home, we were told by the army at the airport *not* to wear our uniforms because of the insults and abuse of the American public and students.

And yet it was a time that we soldiers needed to talk about our issues and get help for our ailments and wounds. We tried to use the VA for services and were told there was no money to help us. So we turned away from receiving help. It caused many of us to pour another dose of anger into our heart and attitudes.

So when I returned home, I thought I would receive respect and honor for serving. Instead I found disdain and rejection. So like most all Vietnam veterans, I became silent, internalized my anger, and wanted nothing to do with my service. I wanted to forget I had served in the military for my country and tried to find other means to cope with my anger. I tried to fit in with society, but it wasn't real. The war had changed me deeply, and I didn't even know it. So I blocked out all the pain—or so I thought. During the next fourteen years after my service, I became addicted to drugs, alcohol, and the American dream. I didn't start out to become addicted, and I didn't know that the alcohol fueled my PTSD and my other issues. Like a flame, it changed my personality and left me feeling helpless.

Many Vietnam veterans turned to drugs and alcohol in order to cope with their disappointments, I was one of them. Still many others committed suicide or escaped into a world of denial.

In 1975, I watched on TV as America destroyed our military airplanes and helicopters and abandoned a people who wanted freedom. I will *never* forget that day, and I will never forget what I saw on the local news channel. It was a total disgrace to watch us leave Vietnam. I remember thinking that maybe everyone was correct about Vietnam. It felt like my duty had meant nothing.

When I returned home from Vietnam, I had felt proud. I was proud to help a nation that wanted freedom. While I was serving, it had felt like a worthy cause. We had won the praise of the

Vietnamese people. We had earned their respect, and they had wanted America's help.

Then, in 1975, President Nixon pulled the plug on our military, and we left Vietnam without notice. We ditched our airplanes, helicopters, and equipment in one week. It was disgusting to watch the American military destroy hundreds of millions of wasted dollars. I watched all this on TV as we left Vietnam. Like a scared child running from an angry dog, we left suddenly.

Over the years, our military leaders and politicians warned President Nixon about the North Vietnamese, who should not be trusted with the peace agreement, but he would not listen. He wanted to win the upcoming election and wanted the support of the public. Withdrawing the troops from Vietnam might help him win the next election, so he did it abruptly.

I wrote this book to set the record straight about the Vietnam War, with the hopes that you, the reader, may understand the truth. Remember, "the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32, NIV).