

# **“No War is Good”**

Being Canadian by birth and moving to the US in 1973, I spent most of the Vietnam War period safe in Canada. This war, however, was a huge topic of concern among many of us. There were large protest gatherings especially at university campuses and American consulate locations, with a certain number of counterprotestors who thought that Canada should help the US fight communism in Viet. The biggest visible impact was the very large number of draft dodgers and deserters who tried, and by-and-large succeeded (I believe), to emigrate into Canada-----a far easier thing to do then versus now. My own brother-in-law was in training to be a medic with the Green Berets. When he deserted and fled to Canada, (long story short) he married my sister, with the warm approval of the rest of my family, and recently retired from a successful career as a civil servant in British Columbia province.

Speaking of my family, my long-dead father was a chaplain with the Canadian Navy. During the Viet War he was mainly based in Halifax, Nova Scotia, home to the bulk of the naval fleet. He became a very-well-informed debater on the Viet War, arguing against this war, on local CBC TV programs. He incurred the wrath of many of his fellow naval officers who tended to be pro-US in their views, and I think this contributed to his eventual removal from the ranks of the navy.

For a while I too lived in Halifax and helped welcome and receive Americans fleeing the war-----and by the way, a good many of these were not young men under threat of the draft or already inducted into the US military. They were people who just felt they couldn't live in the US any longer on account of The War. Anyway, at that time any foreigner who arrived on Canadian soil and applied for Landed Immigrant status- and this could happen at any border crossing post large or small- could ask to be interviewed and examined then and there. If successful, the applicant could walk away with immigrant status granted and could not be arbitrarily deported. An exception to this applied to visiting foreign naval ships. If a sailor from such a visiting ship jumped ashore intending to desert, the long-standing protocol was that, if found and arrested by local

military police, this sailor could be simply returned to his ship to face whatever punishment was in store for him. No chance here to apply for immigrant status. But this protocol was only in force while the visiting ship was still present in port. Once this ship had departed, the sailor-in-question could emerge and seek immigrant status as described above. Therefore, there was a local network of residents who undertook to hide such a deserting sailor until his ship had departed and he could safely come out into the open. The trick here was to let sailors know that there was such local support, without compromising to the wrong people the locations and persons involved.

My own particular contribution to the Greater Resistance was to join 5 other young people in a 6-day water-only fast held over the Christmas-New Year week in 1966 in Canada's capital city of Ottawa. Along with supporters, we took shifts standing in vigil out in the cold (I'll say!!!) in front of the US embassy. Our chief point was to express concern about the sufferings of civilians in all parts of Viet Nam. We organized this with involvement of the Canadian Friends' Service Committee.

Otherwise, I was present at many of the protest rallies mentioned above. You may guess for yourself which side I was on.

— *Andrew, Pine Bush*