

# “Leadership”

My war began in Baltimore. I was graduating from the Army Intelligence School when my orders were changed from Atlanta, Georgia and domestic security to the Defense language Institute to study Vietnamese. I spent eight months learning the language before being assigned to the 4th Infantry Division near Pleiku to run intelligence agents. I arrived in country as the Paris Peace Talks began, May 12, 1968. My Captain welcomed me saying "We put in for one of you." I asked what that meant and he responded "an intelligence agent who could speak Vietnamese. I was stunned, thinking that the war was ending and they did not have agents able to communicate with the Vietnamese. Then he told me not to expect anything I wrote to accurately make it back to Washington DC, that they were "cooking the books" in Saigon. That statement made me a potential witness in the latter CBS-Westmoreland 60 Minutes libel trial. Former CIA agent Sam Adams, the 60 Minutes source, had recruited me to testify but the case was settled out of court.

My work in Vietnam was first related to base security and then to work in Pleiku City and with the CIA in The Phoenix Program, the secret assassination initiative. I exposed that program at the Overseas press Club in April 1970.

When Bobby Kennedy was killed on June 6, 1968, a month after I arrived in Pleiku, I wrote to my brother, a high school teacher, expressing my opinion about the war, its stupidity and the corruption and the need to resist it nonviolently through the electoral process. This letter was later published in the book, *Dear America, Letters Home from Vietnam* and used in the HBO movie by the same name, for which we won an Emmy.

In June 1969, I was assigned to do intelligence work in Washington DC and began protesting the war while I was still in the military and also was assigned to monitoring major peace demonstrations.

The day after I was discharged I joined the peace movement, helped expose military spying on the peace movement and became an organizer for Vietnam Veterans Against the War. My Vietnam War continued through the peace movement, exposing war crimes, developing one of the first PTSD programs for the VA, serving as Deputy Director of the NYS Division of Veterans Affairs; was an advisor to the federal court on the Agent Orange Class Action case and eventually returning to Vietnam in 1991 for the UNIDO, United Nations Industrial Development Organization's Investors forum, meetings with government leaders and a Buddhist pilgrimage. I later led humanitarian, business and environmental delegation to Vietnam. I have had three photography exhibits at the NYS Vietnam Memorial related to my times in Vietnam. The first was *Vietnam Lives in My Soul*. The second was *On the Road to Dien Bien Phu*. The third was a joint exhibit with my daughter Zoëann, now a visual

journalist with the Washington Post, called Vietnam A Country Not a War which we then published as a book, Vietnam Our Father Daughter Journey.

I continue to speak and write about how the Vietnam War has shaped my generation, on the needs of veterans and about American engagement in the world.

—Ed, Ballston Spa