

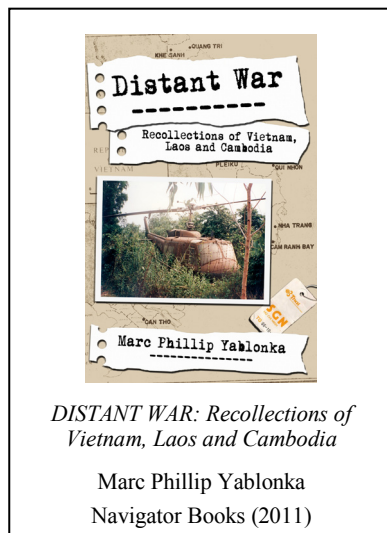
May I recommend...

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by Charles Shea LeMone

<http://www.roanoke.com/living/books/bookreviews/1902691-12/may-i-recommend.html>

In Marc Phillip Yablonka's "*Distant War: Recollections of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia*," the military journalist captures numerous historical perspectives impossible to find anywhere else. By interviewing military veterans, renowned journalists, photographers, doctors, humanitarians and a host of others who survived the deadly conflicts in Southeast Asia, a complex picture of controversial events takes shape in a profound way.



Each of the book's 31 chapters is jam-packed with firsthand accounts, heroic deeds, as well as haunting memories that creep into the book in the early pages of the prologue and throughout. Anyone old enough to remember the Vietnam era will recall an iconic photograph first published by Associated Press: a young woman, Phan Thi Kim Phuc, scalded by napalm running away from the blast. Many years later, Yablonka's interviews with the woman and the Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Nick Ut, who took the photo, helped me understand how journalists and photographers changed America's opinion about the "war" enough to eventually cause Congress to stop funding the "conflict" and withdraw our forces.

One chapter focuses on retired U.S. Army Special Forces Maj. Jim Morris and his efforts to relocate the Montagnards, allied members of a mountain tribe. Although the CIA and the American Embassy in Saigon had promised them safe passage, following the pullout of our forces in April 1975, in reality they faced genocide at the hands of their lifelong enemies to the north.

The significance of these recollections do not end there, as you will surely discover by reading "*Distant War*." Whether you agreed with our military intervention in Vietnam or opposed it, revelations abound from many of the men and women who risked their lives for a cause our government, at one time, deemed crucial : blocking the spread of Communism.
