



Distant War: Recollections of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia

Written by Marc Phillip Yablonka

Review by Alex Davis



Distant War: Recollections of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia is a collection of personal stories written by Marc Yablonka, about the many faces and experiences of the Vietnam War. Far from just another piece of the avalanche of literature written about Vietnam, *Distant War* is an assortment of memoirs and interesting experiences collected by the author, throughout his time as a war reporter and journalist. Though not a book about the war per se, *Distant War* is about the people of the Vietnam War, the things that they experienced and witnessed, and the jobs that they did.

The stories of *Distant War* are not your typical campfire war stories — injected with humour to dull them down — nor are they the gruesome combat stories found in other memoirs. *Distant War* is about the personalities and people of the Vietnam War, carefully stitched together to form a picture of the war that is easily understandable. The stories found within are sometimes very emotional and personal, such as the story of Kim Phuc, subject of the famous “Napalm Girl” photo, credited with helping bring about the end of the war. They are stories that reveal the passions of their characters, such as the stories of American draft-dodgers who fled to Canada, and the Canadians who passed the opposite way, to volunteer for service with U.S Army and go to Vietnam.

Though the book can be serious and riveting, the stories can be funny as well. Such as the story of U.S Army Doctor Eugene Fishman, who had been in Vietnam two months when his helicopter was forced to auto-rotate to the ground after a bullet took out its rotor. In strong language, the doctor explains just how terrified he had been to be in a crashing helicopter. *Distant War* is compiled of many different stories, some even which have connections to the present day. In chapter four, *indomitable spirit of the Hanoi Hilton*, Marc Yablonka briefly tells the story of Senator John McCain who became a POW on October 23, 1967 when his Skyhawk bomber was shot down.

Many of the stories in *Distant War* are directly connected to the author, Marc Yablonka, in myriad ways. Chapter 22 *So Long Bob* contains an obituary written by the author for Bob Hope, the famous comedian who toured most of Americans wars in the 20th century and who was declared the first and only honorary veteran of the U.S. armed forces. As well, many of the pictures in *Distant War* were taken by Marc Yablonka himself, who met many of the authors of *Distant War*'s many stories, during his time as a war report and journalist.

Distant War is one of those rare war memoir collections that remains relevant and interesting, despite being crowded by other books of a similar topic. A book for Vietnam scholars and young war historians alike, *Distant War* captures the emotional, personal side of the Vietnam War.

Distant War: Recollections of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia by Marc Phillip Yablonka. Published by Navigator Books in 2011, includes 229 pages, b/w images, index. ISBN: 978-0-9834168-0-7. soft cover: \$10