1996

Forgotten sacrifices : American civilian women in the Vietnam War

Maryann L. Weber
San Jose State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses

Recommended Citation

Weber, Maryann L., "Forgotten sacrifices : American civilian women in the Vietnam War" (1996). *Master's Theses*. 1272.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.rjj2-hpbv>
https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/1272

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses and Graduate Research at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

**FORGOTTEN SACRIFICES:
AMERICAN CIVILIAN WOMEN IN THE VIETNAM WAR**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Maryann L. Weber

May 1996

UMI Number: 1379387

**Copyright 1996 by
Weber, Maryann L.**

All rights reserved.

**UMI Microform 1379387
Copyright 1996, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.**

**This microform edition is protected against unauthorized
copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

UMI
**300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103**

© 1996

Maryann L. Weber

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

Billie Barnes Jensen, Ph.D.

Larry Engelmann, Ph.D.

Richard Cramer, Ph.D.

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

FORGOTTEN SACRIFICES: AMERICAN CIVILIAN WOMEN IN THE VIETNAM WAR

by Maryann L. Weber

This thesis describes the many roles that American civilian women played in the Vietnam War. Some worked for the American Red Cross, the United Service Organization, and the Special Services, associating closely with the American servicemen. Others were teachers, nurses, social workers, and physical therapists who assisted the Vietnamese population during the war. Although no precise number exists, it is estimated that twenty thousand civilian women were in Vietnam during the war.

Research finds that although these women came to Vietnam with different objectives and worked with dramatically different sectors of the population there are also similarities between the two groups. A salient commonality between them is their ability to take care of others in the midst of a war. Fifty-six civilian women died in Vietnam.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. INTRODUCTION.	1
2. HISTORY OF AMERICAN WOMEN IN WAR.	5
3. HISTORY OF THE VIETNAM WAR.	10
4. CIVILIAN WOMEN AND THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE.	15
5. CIVILIAN WOMEN AND THE AMERICAN SOLDIER.	43
6. LIFE AFTER VIETNAM.	70
7. CONCLUSION.	83
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	89

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Vietnam War, which ended over twenty years ago, is still an emotional and volatile subject in the United States. It still intrigues scholars, haunts veterans, and terrifies policy makers. There have been countless books and articles written on the subject, but one area that has never been fully explored is the role that American civilian women played in Vietnam during the 1960s and the early 1970s. Unknown to many people is that close to thirty thousand American women were in Vietnam during the war. Of this number about eight thousand served in the military.¹ The remainder worked in civilian capacities, as either representatives of various organizations or as individuals.

When people conjure up images of war, rarely do they imagine women, although women have been in every war that the United States has fought. Even more unusual is an acknowledgment of the roles that civilian women have played in war. The erroneous assumption that only nurses or women in the military have been involved in war has led many to forget the sacrifices civilian women have made. Civilian women are truly the forgotten ones.

Perhaps the most remarkable fact about the approximately twenty thousand civilian women who came to Vietnam during the war is that they were all volunteers.

¹Keith Walker, *A Piece of My Heart* (Novato, Ca.: Presidio Press, 1985), 2.

They went to Vietnam because that is where they thought they would be needed most. They were not drafted like their male counterparts, and in a generation where women were fighting for their equality with men, some women felt that they should also do their part for their country. Some volunteered because they were looking for adventure or an opportunity to live in another country. For others, the pull toward Vietnam was not for patriotic reasons but for humanitarian ones. They felt a strong desire to help those less fortunate--to teach Western medicine and to help the Vietnamese learn to help themselves. Still others wanted to spread the teachings of Christianity and volunteered as missionaries. Their reasons for coming to Vietnam varied widely, but their commitment and dedication to their work was unwavering.

Civilian women played vital roles in Vietnam during the war. Basically they were caregivers who served in one of two groups. First they were peace keepers in the form of missionaries, teachers, civilian nurses, and doctors. They had close relationships with the Vietnamese, who trusted them. In many cases these women were pacifists who distrusted the American military presence in the country. The second group of women consisted of those who went to Vietnam to support the American servicemen. They offered programs, service clubs, and shows to the U.S. troops in order to distract them from the stress and brutality of the war. Although they knew some Vietnamese people, they generally had very little interaction with them.

Most of the American women who went to Vietnam as volunteers performed work that is traditionally accepted as women's work; they worked in one way or another

as nurturers and caregivers. They cared for U.S. soldiers or they cared for the Vietnamese. All worked extremely long hours, at least sixteen hours a day, with usually just one day off a week. The majority of the women were young and single, many were in their twenties having just finished college, and thus had little practical experience. In addition to the stress and strain involved in taking care of others, these women had the added burden of working in a war zone where their own personal safety was also a factor.

In a war like Vietnam, danger was all around. There were no front lines, therefore the enemy was everywhere, and at times unrecognizable because of their ability to infiltrate into the South Vietnamese population. There were no safe areas. This became all too clear after the Tet Offensive of 1968 when the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army attacked major South Vietnamese cities, where thousands of Americans and other foreigners resided. Agencies that sent women over to Vietnam falsely promised to ensure their safety and security. After all they were women; they should be protected from the dangers of war. These promises turned out to be hollow words for most women, especially for the fifty-six civilian women and the eight military women who lost their lives in Vietnam. Some documentation does exist concerning the deaths of the eight female military personnel who died. However, little documentation exists for civilian women.² It is as if they never existed.

²Doreen Spelts, "Nurses Who Served--And Did Not Return," *American Journal of Nursing* 86 (September 1986): 1037.

This is not a glorified tale of war. War, committed by either men or women, results in the terrible death and destruction of people and culture. Furthermore, let it be understood, that war engaged by women should no more be celebrated or cherished than war in general, however honorable their participation in it might be. The fact remains that war has happened and, unfortunately it will continue to happen; therefore, as long the stereotype persists that only men know war, and that only men can experience what war is like, women's experiences will fade as they have in past generations. It is now too late to get first hand accounts of the participation women have had in war historically. It is already becoming too late for the women veterans of World War II; the stories of thousands of brave and dedicated women will be lost forever. However, it is not too late for those who were in Vietnam. If we fail to recognize their sacrifices and experiences, we will lose a part of our history that we will never be able to recapture.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY OF AMERICAN WOMEN IN WAR

Before examining the role civilian women played in Vietnam, it is necessary to understand what roles American women have played in past wars. The Vietnam War was certainly not the first war in which American women played an active role. Since the inception of the country, American women have played crucial roles in all military conflicts. Because men are generally the policy makers who plan the war as well as the authors who write about war, women's place in wars has been neglected. Thus, the belief that women are incapable of defending their country has been perpetuated throughout history; "women and their political, social, and economic roles have been and still are victim of the traditional historian's silence, making our understanding of the history of America, in fact, an understanding of the history of American men."¹ On the contrary, American women have had very active roles starting with the American Revolution. One example is the story of Deborah Samson, who dressed up like a man to fight the British. She fought undetected alongside men until she suffered a war related injury and her sex was revealed. Another group of women in the American Revolution were nicknamed Molly Pitchers because they served as water carriers for the artillery units. These women were instrumental in assisting the artillery units because after each cannon was fired it

¹Judith Breault, *The World of Emily Howland* (Milbrae: La Femures, 1976), viii.

had to be swabbed with water before it could be reloaded. While these are very dramatic examples of what women did during the Revolutionary War, there are a multitude of other examples of women who did less spectacular jobs, but jobs which were very crucial to the war effort. In a war like the Revolution, which was fought on American soil, women provided vital services to the army. They cooked meals, washed and mended clothes, and even served as nurses to the soldiers. In any war, soldiers must have food, clothes, first aid, and other essential services. Women have always been there to perform these services as well as enter into areas which were, and in most cases still are considered a man's domain, as in the case of Deborah Samson. As one woman commented on her part of the war, "I have don as much to carrey on the warr as maney that sett now at the healm of government."² Work that is done traditionally by women in our society is historically and continually undervalued; this becomes especially apparent in times of war.

Women's patriotism and sense of duty continued with the Civil War, where women from both the North and the South served as scouts, spies, saboteurs, and again disguised themselves as men to participate in actual fighting.³ During the Civil War, Clara Barton, who later formed the American Red Cross, was greatly respected and appreciated for her work in helping the soldiers and families of missing and dead soldiers,

²June Willenz, *Women's Veterans: America's Forgotten Heroines* (New York: Continuum Publishing Co, 1983), 12.

³Ibid.

during and after the war. During the war, she organized a more efficient way of distributing food and medical supplies to the troops, and she spent time nursing the wounded. At the end of the war she organized a way to locate prisoners, missing men, and identify the dead buried in unmarked graves. It was also during the Civil War that nursing became a profession. Approximately seven thousand women served as nurses for the Union and Confederate forces.⁴ This was all done in a civilian capacity because the U.S. Army did not establish an auxiliary nursing corps until 1901.

During the first and second World Wars, women served as nurses, secretaries, administrators, messengers, aides, telephone operators, pilots, interpreters, and in a host of other roles as well. They suffered from some of the same dangers of war as the soldiers: shelling, gassing, diseases, unsanitary living conditions, bombings, and other horrors connected with war. They were witnesses to the heavy losses and brutality of both wars. Sometimes they were victims themselves, for instance, in World War I, three hundred nurses died from diseases, were wounded, or were prisoners of war.⁵

World War II had by far the largest number of women holding various positions within each branch of the military and in civilian service. In regards to civilian service, American women worked for a variety of organizations. One of those organizations was the American Red Cross, which played a significant role during the second World War. It established over eighteen hundred recreational facilities in various countries around the

⁴Ibid., 13.

⁵Ibid., 15.

world in places like China, Iran, India, Japan, Egypt, New Guinea, and Europe. The volunteers worked in hospitals, recreation centers, and mobile clubs. In recreation clubs they provided food, drinks, games, music, and dancing. Volunteers packed thousands of food and medical parcels for prisoners of war, and aided thousands of military men and women. Twenty-nine American Red Cross women died in service during World War II. Other organizations that civilian women worked for were the Office of War Information, Office of Strategic Services, and the United Service Organization just to mention a few.⁶

It is also important to note that women's participation in war is not limited to the United States in any degree. In actuality, women in other countries, for example the Soviet Union, Vietnam, China, and Israel, have had much more experience in war than U.S. women, and have crossed over into areas that were traditionally defined as men's arena. During the Vietnam War, for instance, Vietnamese women were active participants in most areas of conflict. Due to the guerrilla nature of the war, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese women served important roles because of their ability to go undetected by American forces. Many worked in the markets, carried ammunition, ran food to the soldiers, planted booby traps, served as intelligence agents, and even fought the enemy.⁷ Vietnamese women also served as nurses where, like their male comrades, they carried rifles, shovels, and a sixty pound knapsack containing clothes and food.

⁶Olga Gruhzt-Hoyt, *They Also Served: American Women in World War II* (New York: Carol Publishing Co., 1995), 220.

⁷Chris Noel with Bill Treadwell, *Matter of Survival: The 'War' Jane Never Saw* (Boston: Branden Publishing Co., 1987), 159.

They suffered extreme hardships and endured many sacrifices for several years to support their cause.⁸

⁸Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), 455.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORY OF THE VIETNAM WAR

The United States' involvement in Vietnam dates back to 1950 when Americans began providing economic assistance and military advisors to the French who were, at the time, fighting their own war with the Vietnamese Communists from 1946 to 1954. In the following years, the United States soon replaced the role of the French in Vietnam. The United States was alarmed at the prospect that South Vietnam could fall to the Communists. If Vietnam fell, the U.S. feared that the whole area of Southeast Asia would topple also. By the 1960s, Vietnam had become a major focal point in the containment of Communism, and a major priority in the foreign policy of the U.S.

The American commitment to South Vietnam intensified in August of 1964 in the Gulf of Tonkin, located off the coast of North Vietnam. Reportedly, there were two clashes in the gulf between U.S. destroyers and North Vietnamese gun boats. Because of these circumstances, President Lyndon Johnson asked Congress to pass a resolution that would allow him to send troops to Vietnam. While not an official declaration of war it was what one government official called the "functional equivalent of a declaration of war."¹ In fact, it gave the president the "right to take all necessary measures to repel attacks against U.S. forces and to prevent further aggression as well as determine when

¹Karnow, *Vietnam*, 362.

peace and security in the area had been attained."² This event has been marked as the springboard for increased American military presence in Vietnam. It was during the Gulf of Tonkin incident that the first American prisoner of war was taken.

From this point on, the policy of the United States was to curb the infiltration of Communists to the South, thereby protecting the South Vietnamese government from the possibility of being overthrown by North Vietnam. Referred to as the Viet Cong (VC) by former prime minister Diem, the National Liberation Front (NLF) was a combination of Southern Communists and spies who had infiltrated from the North. Therefore, in March of 1965, President Johnson authorized the use of American ground troops in South Vietnam and entered into a new phase of the war, one that would eventually take the lives of approximately fifty-eight thousand Americans and one and a half million Vietnamese.³

The American soldiers' experiences in Vietnam varied greatly, depending on where they were stationed, when they were in country, and what their assignment entailed. The familiar image of the GI "humping the boonies," as portrayed by the countless movies about Vietnam, is not indicative of all men's experiences. Some encountered hit and run tactics by the VC, others clashed with North Vietnamese forces, and still others were in offices in Saigon and on large American bases like Cam Ranh Bay. One study in 1980, conducted by the Veterans Administration, reported that one in

²Ibid., 374.

³John Bowman, *The Vietnam War: An Almanac* (New York: World Almanac Publications, 1985), 358.

twenty American soldiers actually clashed with large North Vietnamese units or Viet Cong soldiers, ran into mines or booby traps, or were ambushed. However, in contrast, 74 percent of men claimed they had been on the receiving end of enemy mortars or rockets and 56 percent had seen Americans killed or wounded. These findings suggest that in the Vietnam War, one did not have to be engaged in battles or clashes with the enemy to be exposed to danger. In a war without front lines, few could find safety anywhere. Therefore, while infantrymen obviously faced great risks, those stationed in more secure areas like Saigon or Cam Ranh Bay could also be in danger. As the war dragged on with no progress being made, morale decreased among the troops.⁴

In January of 1968, the Communists launched a new phase of the war. They attacked over one hundred cities and towns in South Vietnam. As a result, U.S. military and government agents realized that areas they once considered safe were now very vulnerable. For months the Northern Communists and the Viet Cong had been secretly infiltrating into many of South Vietnam's cities, organizing their soldiers, devising a strategy, and locating and transporting ammunition and explosives. Unbeknownst to the South Vietnamese Army or the Americans, the enemy prepared to attack during Tet, the Vietnamese New Year. In Saigon alone they deployed approximately four thousand soldiers. With unprecedented fury and bravery they stormed pivotal areas such as the U.S. Embassy and radio station, both located in Saigon. Major battles dragged on in Hue and Khe Sanh.

⁴Karnow, *Vietnam*, 465.

Although the Tet Offensive was considered a military defeat for the Communists because they were unable to hold any of the major cities and towns they attacked, it was still considered a success because of the way it turned American public opinion against the war. At that time, 1968, many Americans were growing more and more disenchanted with the war because of increasing casualties, rising taxes, and feelings that the war would never end. The realization that the North Vietnamese and the VC could get inside the American Embassy and attack other South Vietnamese cities was astounding to Americans, who had been watching the war drag on for years on the evening news. The public became tired of the war, and while many did not explicitly oppose U.S. involvement, they wanted the U.S. to either win or get out. In essence, Tet was a psychological win for the North--a result the Communists were especially pleased about. The Tet Offensive became a major turning point of the war because after 1968, the United States would not be as much concerned with how they could win the war, but more with how they could withdraw from the country without tarnishing their reputation.

On 23 January 1973 the Paris Peace Agreements were signed. The terms of the peace agreement stated that the Saigon regime would have a period of time to try to resist the Communist insurgency. During this time the United States would maintain an embassy and limited number of military advisors in Saigon. In April of 1975, a little over two years after the withdrawal of U.S. forces, the Communists invaded Saigon. The United States' involvement in Vietnamese affairs truly ended with the fall of Saigon. The

realization that America was not invincible shocked a nation which many believed had now lost its first war. ⁵

⁵Ibid., 666.

CHAPTER FOUR

CIVILIAN WOMEN AND THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE

The first civilian women began arriving in Vietnam prior to the passage of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution of 1964. They went to aid the thousands of Vietnamese civilians who were sick, injured, or displaced as a result of years of war. Volunteers went to Vietnam to work as teachers, doctors, nurses, administrators, mechanics, child-welfare workers, material aid specialists, agriculturists, home economists, social workers, missionaries, and in other jobs.¹ The U.S. nongovernmental organizations that sent women to Vietnam varied greatly. Many were from religious or voluntary organizations. It is unknown, how many of the approximately twenty thousand American women in Vietnam worked in this area. Following are examples of a few of the agencies.

Project Concern International first arrived in Vietnam in 1963. The founder of the organization, Dr. James Turpin, opened a hospital and began a medical training program for the thousands of neglected war-torn people in the area who had no access to medical care. Project Concern sent doctors, nurses, and administrators to Vietnam. It established a thorough and successful training program for Vietnamese students who became Village Medical Assistants. After the students successfully completed the training program, they would return to their individual villages to diagnose and treat

¹Atlee Beechy and Winifred Beechy, *Vietnam: Who Cares?* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1968), 75.

about 90 percent of the illnesses to which the people of their village were most susceptible.² This program was about learning to help themselves, so they would not have to rely on foreign powers, like the United States for their future medical care. Project Concern had no religious or political affiliations, and therefore, operated solely on private donations.³

Another organization involved in Vietnam was the International Voluntary Service (IVS), a private organization that sent teachers, agricultural advisors, community social workers, and others to Vietnam to assist civilians.⁴ They worked under a contract with the Agency for International Development. Also, groups like the American Medical Association's Volunteer Physicians for the Vietnam Program, World Relief Commission, Tom Dooley Foundation, and the Minh Quy Hospital sent women to Vietnam during the war.

Several religious organizations sent women and men to Vietnam also. Some of them include: Christian and Missionary Alliance, Catholic World Relief, Seventh Day Adventists, the Mennonite Central Committee, Church World Service, and Lutheran World Relief. The last three combined in 1966 to form the Vietnam Christian Service.⁵

²James Turpin, *Vietnam Doctor: The Story of Project Concern* (New York: Signet Books, 1966), 132.

³Diane Trembly, *Petticoat Medic in Vietnam* (New York: Vantage Press, 1976), 51.

⁴Walker, *A Piece of My Heart*, 212.

⁵Beechy, *Vietnam: Who Cares?*, 142.

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a Quaker organization based in Philadelphia that also sent nurses, doctors, and administrators to Vietnam to help relieve the suffering. It had quite a substantial organization established in Vietnam during the war, and ran a very successful amputation clinic.

The United States Agency for International Development also sent women and men to Vietnam in order to "win the hearts and the minds of the Vietnamese people."⁶ USAID was established in 1961 as part of the Foreign Assistance Act and operated under the jurisdiction of the State Department. The goal was to manage economic and humanitarian assistance programs in foreign countries. In Vietnam, specifically, USAID sent staff as advisors in agriculture, labor relations, communications, health, police, and tax consultants.⁷ These are just a few of the agencies that went to Vietnam during the 1960s and early 1970s.

On the average, civilian women who worked for nongovernmental organizations and the USAID lived and worked closest with the Vietnamese civilian population. They lived off the local economy. They bought and ate their food from the local Vietnamese markets and they lived in apartments or houses in town. Often, they lived in places that had no electricity or water. Their work and location enabled them to have more contact

⁶Shelley Saywell, *Women in War: From World War II to El Salvador* (Markham, Ontario: Penguin Books, 1985), 230.

⁷Sharon Rice-Grant, "Does Anybody Care? About the Health Effects of Women Who Served in Vietnam" (Master's Thesis, California State University, Sacramento, 1986), 16.

with the Vietnamese population than any other Western women in Vietnam at that time. Most of these women were trained in the language and customs of the people. Many of the agencies provided extensive language classes that in some occasions lasted up to four hours a day for approximately the first three months in the country.⁸ "Speaking the language made all the difference," said one woman who worked with Vietnam Christian Service (VNCS).⁹ She was able to get around in Vietnam by herself because she knew the language and from a psychological perspective, because she spoke the language she was able to have closer relationships with the Vietnamese. Anne Hensley, an IVS worker who taught English classes said, "if I had not been able to speak Vietnamese, I would not of had the kind of rewarding relationships that I had."¹⁰

In addition to learning the language, their training sessions also introduced them to aspects of the culture and the country. Prior to their arrival in Vietnam, they were given informational packets about the country.¹¹ In many cases, their training courses were focused on learning the culture: "We actually planted rice in the mud paddies and experienced what it was like to work with a water buffalo, which was the Vietnamese farm equipment. It made me appreciate what was involved in farming in Vietnam."¹²

⁸Walker, *A Piece of My Heart*, 148.

⁹Judy Danielson to Maryann Weber, 9 September 1995, transcript in possession of author.

¹⁰Anne Hensley, interview by author, 5 December 1995, telephone, tape recording.

¹¹Danielson letter.

¹²Walker, *A Piece of My Heart*, 214.

One IVS worker recalled that her training preceding her arrival in Vietnam was indeed thorough. First she spent ten days in Washington, D.C., listening to lectures about culture shock, health, nutrition, language barriers, and other political concerns. Before arriving in Vietnam, they stopped in Tokyo and Hong Kong to get a feel of what Asia was like. Then, once she was in Vietnam, she spent six hours a day learning Vietnamese and practicing teaching.¹³

Their daily contact with the Vietnamese allowed the female volunteers access to a community that few Americans, men or women, knew much about. This accessibility was available because they lived near the Vietnamese and developed close relationships over a long period of time. For example, the Mennonite Central Committee sent volunteers to Vietnam for three year assignments.¹⁴ Sandra Collingwood, who worked for the IVS and later the Catholic Relief Service, lived with a Vietnamese family where she learned to use chopsticks, to eat Vietnamese food, while learning other aspects of the culture. The daughter in the family introduced Sandra to her friends and other members of the community.¹⁵ Another example was Carolyn Miller, who worked with the Christian and Missionary Alliance. She lived in the city of Ban Me Thuot in South

¹³Anne Hensley to Maryann Weber, 30 November 1995, transcript in possession of author.

¹⁴Marva Hasselblad with Dorothy Brandon, *Lucky-Lucky* (New York: M. Evans and Company, Inc., 1966), 186.

¹⁵Walker, *A Piece of My Heart*, 215.

Vietnam. She and her husband worked on developing a writing system for an ethnic minority living in Vietnam, called the Bru. Miller and her husband were missionaries and their main reason for developing this system was so that the Bru people could read the word of God. For fourteen years, they lived in different areas of South Vietnam, learning the Bru language, developing a writing system for it, preparing literacy material, and teaching the new writing system. They came to view the villagers as part of their family.¹⁶

They also understood and respected Vietnamese customs and traditions. For example, in Vietnamese culture, it is considered unwise to move people from their land because this is where their deceased ancestors' spirits remain. The U.S. and South Vietnamese military had a policy of relocating people in order to establish safe zones which disrupted many communities and families. The civilian women who worked and lived closely with the Vietnamese appreciated their desire to remain on their ancestral land and understood their resistance to relocation.¹⁷ However, the government saw no way to avoid these actions. Therefore, the Vietnamese continued to be relocated despite repeated protests by the villagers, which led to negative feelings toward both their own government and the U.S government.

¹⁶Carolyn Paine Miller, *Captured!* (New York: Christian Herald Books, 1977), 7, 9.

¹⁷Walker, *A Piece of My Heart*, 223.

Although civilian women often had close relationships with the Vietnamese, their relations with members of the United States military and government were sometimes tense. Almost any American living in Vietnam during the war had some degree of contact with the American military. The American presence in the country was high. Most civilian agencies used American military transportation to move around the country since other vehicles were considered unsafe. Ultimately, it was the military that was responsible for the safety of most U.S. citizens living in Vietnam.¹⁸

However, the relationship was strained. The military was there to fight a "war" and the civilian volunteers were there to help the Vietnamese overcome the difficulties of living in the middle of a war. "The U.S. military wanted us on their side, so there was always pressure to work on projects they thought worthy. We resisted and were not well thought of because of it."¹⁹ Their objectives were in conflict with each other. The ultimate irony was that the American military was injuring villagers who would later show up at hospitals to be helped by Americans.²⁰

Another problem that existed between the two sides was that many of the civilian women who worked for these various organizations were pacifists. Their pacifism caused a lot of tension between them and the military. For example, on occasion the military

¹⁸Carli Numi to Maryann Weber, 24 September 1995, transcript in possession of author.

¹⁹Hensley interview.

²⁰Patricia Walsh, *Forever Sad the Hearts* (New York: Avon Books, 1982), 26.

asked civilian men and women to serve as interpreters. In addition, the military requested that the volunteers release any information they knew about the village they worked in; however, "we did not feel this was an appropriate role," remarked an IVS worker.²¹ The volunteers, at times, had to remind the military that they were not on the same side. Just because they were Americans did not mean they had the same objectives; "we are not just another member of the team trying to win the war."²²

Many civilian volunteers were simply opposed to U.S. involvement in Vietnam for political reasons, and they began to experience a growing anti-American feeling as the war dragged on.²³ They did not subscribe to President Johnson's theory that Vietnam needed to be saved from the North. They instead saw the U.S. government involved in a war "against independence, in torture of prisoners, assassinations, carpet bombings and more."²⁴ The American presence, "was devastating the country and was not in any way doing anything to solve the civil war aspect."²⁵ One IVS worker believed that the most negative aspect about being in Vietnam was the negative role played by the American soldiers and other U.S. government officials in Vietnam.²⁶ "We were absolutely neutral

²¹Numi letter.

²²Beechy, *Vietnam: Who Cares?*, 77.

²³Ibid., 76.

²⁴Danielson letter.

²⁵Hensley interview.

²⁶Numi letter.

in regards to the political situation and vowed to treat anyone who came into our center as long as they were civilians," said a woman volunteer with the AFSC in Quang Ngai.

"The longer we were there, however, the more our sympathies were with the NLF [National Liberation Front] and, of course, with the innocent civilians. We came to hate what the United States was doing to this country."²⁷ Most went to Vietnam very naive having no idea of what the political situation was like and they left feeling the United States should not have been involved.

Some civilian women even had friends whom they suspected were Viet Cong. One incident that is particularly intriguing yet unnerving was an incident involving a group of IVS workers in My Tho. This group drove a bright red van, and through some unknown channels they were told not to change their means of transportation. This bright red van was easily recognized by the VC and, therefore, they would not attack it. During this time in My Tho, the IVS were not a perceived threat to the VC, possibly because they saw the work that was being done by the IVS volunteers as beneficial to their country.²⁸

Because they were witnesses to the horrendous acts of war, many volunteers became disenchanted with the role of the U.S. military and government in Vietnam. Those who worked in the hospitals saw many civilians come in with injuries from U.S. weapons and mines. Also, the death and permanent disability of many innocent children led many volunteers to criticize the role of the U.S. "During the four and a half years that

²⁷Walker, *A Piece of My Heart*, 230.

²⁸Hensley interview.

I was there, from 80 to 95 percent of the war-injured that came through our doors were injured by the U.S. or South Vietnamese troops."²⁹ They began to question the role of the U.S. military in Vietnam and the legitimacy of their power and position.

In many cases, the volunteers did not want to be associated with the military because it hurt their reputation with the Vietnamese. "We felt very strongly about separating ourselves from the U.S. military presence," said Linda Hiebert from the Mennonite Central Committee.³⁰ Since many of the villagers were suspicious toward the U.S. military, if they saw the volunteers associating with the military they would regard them with equal suspicion. Also, some American soldiers treated American women and their Vietnamese friends disrespectfully. They would yell rude and obnoxious comments to them. Many soldiers insinuated that the women were prostitutes, and this could harm relations these women had with the Vietnamese.

However, not all women were treated this way. Many had very close relationships with members of the U.S. military and government. American soldiers would donate their free time in the civilian hospitals and go out of their way to help civilian Vietnamese and Americans. For example, in a civilian hospital in Nha Trang, called Chan-Y-Vien, American soldiers raised money to help buy a new car for the staff.³¹

²⁹Walker, *A Piece of My Heart*, 230.

³⁰Kathryn Marshall, *In the Combat Zone: An Oral History of American Women in Vietnam: 1966-1975* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1987), 112.

³¹Hasselblad, *Lucky-Lucky*, 140.

Civilian women took great risks to assist the Vietnamese. Because of the unconventional way Vietnam was fought, no place was safe in this war torn country. These women lived in very dangerous situations. They traveled on unsecured roads in vehicles that were unreliable. Those women who worked in Saigon and those who worked in villages were both exposed to attacks by either side. Being in a war zone is an inherent danger; mines, bombs, and guns were everywhere. Mortars were continually going off. Judy Danielson, who worked for the VNCS from 1968-1970, recalled a dangerous situation:

I went to visit Da Lat in the highlands on the same weekend the Viet Cong attacked and took over three institutions in town. There was shooting, U.S. helicopters were raining bullets everywhere, and the town was closed down. We were under the beds, shoes on, ready to run or follow if someone knocked on the door.³²

Julie Forsythe, who worked for the AFSC in Quang Ngai from 1972-1975 became accustomed to the mortars. "There was always shelling at the airport. The small bridges were blown up all the time, and I got so used to our ammunition dump blowing up I learned to sleep right through it."³³ During the Diem coup in November of 1963, Ann Hensley was caught in the middle of two opposing forces in the street pointing guns at each other.³⁴

³²Danielson letter.

³³Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 82.

³⁴Hensley interview.

Diane Trembly, who worked with Project Concern and various other nongovernmental organizations in Vietnam, remembered a few occasions when women's rooms were broken into while they were sleeping. It was suspected that the culprits were VC but no evidence was ever found for verification. Fortunately, the women were able to escape unharmed but their possessions were stolen. Throughout her assignment at Project Concern, Trembly recalled several times when the hospital was attacked by the VC. There were many nights when she and her co-workers would have to get up in the middle of the night and head for the military compound down the road to seek protection from enemy fire. However, many nights they simply climbed under the bed. One unfortunate night in 1971, another female employee was killed when the hospital was attacked. She was asleep in her room about twenty five feet from Trembly's room when she was hit by an enemy rocket and died instantly. Even though Trembly realized that she easily could have been the victim instead of her friend; she did not regret her decision to go to Vietnam and enjoyed her work there.³⁵

If possible, women and other civilian personnel were assigned to areas that were considered, to some degree, to be safe. However, the Tet Offensive of 1968, launched by approximately eighty thousand NVA and VC troops changed that. Areas that were once considered safe were attacked by the Communists with great fury and determination.³⁶ The city of Hue is one poignant example of the attack by the Communists. The

³⁵Trembly, *Petticoat Medic in Vietnam*, 80, 103, 111.

³⁶Saywell, *Women in War*, 238.

Communists attacked the city early on the morning of January 31 and hoisted their red and yellow flag atop the Citadel, located in the center of town. June Saunders and six other Americans, one woman and five men, who all worked for the Vietnam Christian Service in Hue hid in June's house for eight and a half days while the NVA and the VC bombed and destroyed most of the city. During their confinement, they had sporadic electricity and no running water. They were constantly on guard because all around them, houses and buildings were being blown up and they could watch through the windows the VC and NVA troops running past their house. Regardless of their anti-American military feelings or their pacifist beliefs, when they saw the U.S. Marines marching into Hue after over a week of living in terror, they were overjoyed to see American troops.³⁷

Sandra Collingwood, who was in Vietnam from 1967 to 1969, by coincidence ended up in Saigon instead of going to her Vietnamese friends' house in Cho Long to celebrate Tet. Cho Long was surrounded by the VC and it is questionable what would have happened if she had decided to go with her friends. Had the VC found her there, there could have been serious trouble for both her and her friends. Luckily, she went to Saigon where, surprisingly, she was not injured while hiding in a red area, which was designated unsafe by the American military.³⁸

Betty Stahl, who worked with the USAID, remembered the Tet Offensive. She was in her apartment in Can Tho, "I tried to get out of my room, somebody shot at me and

³⁷Omar Eby, *House in Hue* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1968), 87.

³⁸Walker, *A Piece of My Heart*, 220.

hit the cement along the door right above my head." She dropped to the ground. The next time she tried to escape they shot again: "As soon as the door started opening they started shooting at me again. I couldn't get out of my apartment for three days."³⁹ The next three days were spent huddled in a corner writing letters to her family and wondering if she would make it out alive.

Another USAID nurse who worked through the Tet Offensive described her experience:

The VC infiltrated Phu Vinh and they were at the hospital when we were working there. The VC opened up on us as we pulled out in a jeep. I carried a gun for three days. The Colonel expected another attack so three nurses were sent to Can Tho to work at the Vietnamese hospital for three days, then volunteered to go to My Tho which was 25 percent destroyed. We were told there were 1500 wounded. . . . We were mortared in Phu Vinh 2-3 times a week but in My Tho the NVA had 160 calibre howitzers. . .and they were better shots.⁴⁰

From the limited information available it is known that of the fifty-six civilian women who died in the Vietnam War, nine belonged to these organizations. Lynn Allen, who worked for the USAID, was murdered by a U.S. soldier in Nha Trang in 1967. Carolyn Griswald, Ruth Thompson, and Ruth Wilting were all missionaries who were killed in a raid at a leprosarium in Ban Me Thuot during the 1968 Tet Offensive. Gloria Redlin worked for the Catholic Relief Services and was shot to death in Pleiku in 1969. In addition there were four women taken prisoner and never seen again. Evelyn

³⁹Saywell, *Women in War*, 239.

⁴⁰Linda Spoonster Schwartz, "Women and the Vietnam Experience," *Image: Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 19 (Winter 1987): 170.

Anderson and Beatrice Kosin were captured and burned to death in Laos in 1972. Both of their remains have been recovered and returned to their families in the U.S. Two women are still listed as MIA/POW but are presumed dead. Dr. Eleanor Vietti worked for the Alliance of Christian Churches and Missions in Ban Me Thout at a leprosarium she operated. Before Dr. Vietti was taken prisoner she was aware of the danger that existed in Ban Me Thout. "We know that Vietcong lookouts report back on every move we make. We have no idea why we should be under surveillance, but we make a special point of never violating our peaceful purpose in this area."⁴¹ Regardless of her neutral stance, she was taken prisoner by the VC along with two men on 30 May 1962, and was never directly heard from again. Betty Ann Olsen was a missionary who was captured during the raid on the same leprosarium in Ban Me Thuot during the 1968 Tet Offensive. She was reported to have died that same year and her body was buried somewhere along the Ho Chi Minh Trail by a fellow male prisoner. Her remains have never been recovered.⁴² And still there are others. Three POWs who were released and whose stories have been told are Marjorie Nelson, Sandy Johnson, and Carolyn Miller.

Due to thorough preparation and planning, the Communists had lists of names whom they were to arrest when they entered Hue during the Tet Offensive. These people included anyone linked to the South Vietnamese regime, uncooperative merchants,

⁴¹Hasselblad, *Lucky-Lucky*, 41.

⁴²"Women Who Died during the Vietnam War," Internet, Vietnam Veterans Home Page, 1995, 3.

intellectuals, clergymen, government officials, police, and any Americans or other foreigners. For the days that followed, approximately three thousand people were killed by the Communists in one of the worst blood baths the war ever produced.⁴³ On the list to be arrested was Sandy Johnson, an American IVS worker. At the time of the battle, Dr. Marjorie Nelson, a physician with the American Friends Service Committee, was visiting Sandy at her home in Hue. Once the Tet Offensive started, they spent the next day and two nights in the dining room under a table with sandbags piled around it to serve as protection from the enemy. At one time, a grenade was thrown at the front of the house: "There was a horrendous explosion and fragments of metal came through the shutters and embedded themselves in the opposite wall."⁴⁴ In the next few days, they were taken prisoners by the NVA and sent to a POW camp. Johnson and Nelson were then taken to the mountains west of Hue where they stayed for two months. They were in the same camp with American men who had been captured in the battle of Hue. They were allowed to eat meals with them and talk with them. However, they were housed in a separate part of the camp. When they were released, they were asked if they would promise to go back to the United States. Although Nelson promised to go home, she never promised she would not return. So after her brief trip home, she returned to finish up her two year assignment in Quang Ngai.⁴⁵ It is interesting to note that while Nelson

⁴³Karnow, *Vietnam*, 530.

⁴⁴Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 151.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 156.

and Johnson were taken prisoner in Hue, the VNCS group at Saunders' house were not touched. It is highly inconceivable that the enemy did not know that Saunders and her friends existed. After all they had lists with names of all foreigners who lived in the town and outside of Saunders' house were parked three American vehicles. Why some American women were spared, others taken prisoner, and still others killed, is unknown. The only possible explanation that can suffice is that some groups were more explicit in identifying themselves as neutral parties than others.

Carolyn Miller, another POW worked with the Christian and Missionary Alliance. She, her husband, her five year old daughter, and eleven other men and women were held prisoners for eight months in 1975 when the Communists invaded South Vietnam. As mentioned before, Miller and her family had lived in Vietnam for fourteen years spreading the word of God and developing a writing system for the Bru people so they could read the Bible. At the time of their capture the Millers had been living in the city of Ban Me Thout for five months. When they heard the explosions coming closer, they packed up some of their things and headed for the home of the only U.S. government representative in the area, Paul Struharik. His home was built with more reinforcements than theirs so they felt safer taking refuge there. They hid in his house for several days until the North Vietnamese took over the city and discovered their presence.

During their imprisonment, they were led to several different prison camps while the Communist authorities could verify their reasons for being in Vietnam, and also to ensure they were not working as intelligence specialists or spies for the CIA. Throughout

their imprisonment they were held in camps with Vietnamese citizens. The Communist guards did not call them prison camps but rather re-education camps where the Vietnamese prisoners were taught the theories and beliefs of the North Vietnamese Communists. The Vietnamese prisoners were forbidden to talk with Miller or other foreigners in the camp.

For the eight months that Miller and the others were held they were required to follow the routine of the prison camp, which meant getting up to the sound of the gong, building temporary housing, doing household chores under extremely primitive conditions, and often eating food that was less than appetizing. They were subjected to various diseases because of the lack of nutritional food, and the often harsh living conditions they were exposed to. One meal they had quite often was soup which consisted of water, grease, and salt, "these items proved to be the primary ingredients of our diets for the five weeks we remained at this location."⁴⁶ Several times during their imprisonment, members of the group became ill. Without proper medical attention and sufficient medicine and vitamins, their health was left to chance. When they asked the camp doctor for medicine, they were often told none was available.

Although they were treated decently, they were still prisoners which meant lack of freedom, "the striped uniforms and absence of my watch and wedding ring made me acutely aware of my prisoner status."⁴⁷ They could never be certain from one minute to

⁴⁶Miller, *Captured!*, 65.

⁴⁷Ibid., 68.

the next what their future would bring. One day Miller tells us "our meager food rations were cut back, and we were all disturbed and worried. It was like going up and down on an emotional yo-yo, never quite sure what the next day would bring."⁴⁸ The Millers were unable to contact their family or to check on the condition of their three older children who were attending school in the coastal city of Nha Trang, approximately ninety miles from where Carolyn and her husband were first taken prisoner.

In spite of the dangers that were continually presenting themselves, the civilian volunteer organizations made great strides in Vietnam. One of the most successful civilian projects was an amputee and rehabilitation center the American Friends Service Committee (known as Quaker Service in Vietnam) established in the summer of 1967 in the provincial capital of Quang Ngai. The AFSC believed in helping all sides of conflicts, therefore, the center was opened to all civilians regardless of their political views. It was designed to train Vietnamese to make artificial limbs for civilian amputees as well as provide physical therapy. "The need in Vietnam defies calculation," said Dorothy Weller, who worked at the center as a physical therapist.⁴⁹ During the war in South Vietnam there were not even a handful of trained physical therapists in the country. Two wards for eighty or more patients who primarily needed prosthetics were available at the center. From June 1967 to mid-September 1970, the center treated 1,935 patients.

⁴⁸Ibid., 118.

⁴⁹Gloria Emerson, "Rehabilitation Is Rare for Vietnam's Many Wounded Civilians," *New York Times*, 26 October 1970, 3.

Most of the patients were injured as a result of mines and booby traps. Of the eighty new patients the center saw in August of 1970, fifty-six were war victims. Of that number, 32 were injured by land mines or booby traps, 11 by gunshot, 8 by artillery, 3 by mortar fire, one by fire from a plane, and one by an aerial bomb. The need was indeed great, as Weller commented: "Every day that dawns sees newly wounded in this country. Those who survive are the amputees, the paralyzed, the deformed, who will continue to need care the rest of their lives."⁵⁰

Even though this center was sophisticated for Vietnam in terms of medical care, it lacked many things considered essential in U.S. military hospitals. There was no running water on the wards, and electricity was unpredictable at best. Surgery often had to be done without electricity and modern equipment. Although there has been much focus placed on women military personnel in Vietnam for the tremendous work they performed, civilian medical personnel worked just as hard with the disadvantage of working in hospitals that lacked decent equipment. "You had to practice a different kind of medicine than you'd learned in the States," said one female doctor who worked in the center when it first opened.⁵¹

In addition to physical therapy and prosthetics, the volunteers also recruited local nurses, held classes, supervised and certified local people, and wrote and translated textbooks into Vietnamese. They also established a burn center at Quang Ngai. When

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 150.

the American staff left in 1975, the Vietnamese staff was trained to run the center on their own. Many of the Vietnamese that the American staff trained were still working in the center in the 1980s. "From time to time we hear news of their continuing work--so we did accomplish our goals. We trained people who are still serving the people of Vietnam with the skills that they learned from us."⁵²

The AFSC in keeping with their commitment to aid all sides of a conflict, also sent supplies for open heart surgery to the North Vietnamese during the war. From 1969 through 1974, the AFSC sent supplies to the Viet-Duc Hospital in Hanoi and to the Red Cross of North Vietnam. They also sent \$50,000 worth of notebooks for the school children of North Vietnam. In 1968 and 1969, they sent medicine and a few years later in 1974 they sent agricultural equipment to the NLF.⁵³

It is also of special importance to mention that one of the first American women to return to Vietnam after the war to live among the Vietnamese was Lady Borton from the AFSC. She worked in the center during the war and then helped with the growing refugee problem that existed after the war. During the last few years, she has been back in Vietnam as Field Director for the agency. In recent years, the AFSC has provided emergency assistance, and assisted in cooperatives in health and rural communities in several provinces in Vietnam, as well as other projects.⁵⁴ Over the years, Lady Borton has

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³American Friends Service Committee, *Quaker Service Vietnam: 1994 Viet Nam Country Report*, Philadelphia: AFSC, 1994, 1.

⁵⁴Ibid., 2.

developed a pivotal relationship with the Vietnamese. Through her contacts, Borton was able to understand and communicate the difficulties of the war on the men and women who fought for both the National Liberation Front and the North Vietnam Army.

The center at Quang Ngai is just one example of many that show the dedication and hard work that these women demonstrated while in Vietnam. The VNCS is another example of this dedication. It was responsible for over ten different projects throughout South Vietnam. Through these programs the VNCS distributed surplus commodities to twenty-eight institutions, fed approximately seven thousand people, and supplied loaves of bread to 39,680 students in sixteen schools in the Saigon area. The VNCS staff is remembered fondly by their Vietnamese patients and students. Judy Danielson was one of the few Americans able to visit Vietnam in the 1980s. On her way back from Cambodia, she stopped off in Vietnam and visited the center where she once worked. "Down the lane came one of the old prosthetists who called me by my Vietnamese name and went to notify the physical therapy staff--some of my former students."⁵⁵

The Vietnamese were very grateful for the help the VNCS brought. As one Vietnamese who worked with the refugee problem said to the field director of the VNCS, "I've known some of your people for some years and I know they are responsible and they genuinely care for our people who have been caught in this terrible war. We desperately need your people now and in the larger-scale, longer-range resettlement program."⁵⁶

⁵⁵Danielson letter.

⁵⁶Beechy, *Vietnam: Who Cares?*, 80.

Another remarkable accomplishment is the establishment of Minh Quy Hospital in Kontum. This hospital came to be known as Pat Smith's Hospital after the female doctor who founded it. Dr. Smith came to Vietnam in 1959 and stayed for thirteen years providing medical care to the Vietnamese. The hospital had as many as two hundred patients, in addition to the approximately 150 which appeared daily for the clinic.⁵⁷ Even under extreme danger, Pat Smith and her staff continued to maintain the hospital. During the Tet Offensive, the hospital had to be evacuated because of the lack of security. One member of the staff, a German woman, was taken prisoner and not released until a year later. But at the first opportunity the staff returned. Dr. Smith, however, stayed the entire time despite requests by the military to evacuate because they could not ensure her safety. She did not evacuate her hospital until 1972, when all looked hopeless because the North Vietnamese Army had control of most of the city.⁵⁸

The USAID also did a tremendous amount of work in Vietnam, much of which is undocumented. One of their most productive projects was running hospitals. They brought nurses, doctors, and administrators to Vietnam to work in hospitals to assist the Vietnamese. The staff generally worked in institutions that were overcrowded, understaffed, and under-supplied. "My life had been reduced to doing my job and staying

⁵⁷Hilary Smith, "What Do Nurses Do in America?," *American Journal of Nursing* 76 (February 1976): 278.

⁵⁸Trembly, *Petticoat Medic in Vietnam*, 214, 218, 261.

alive, and I found the other things didn't really seem to be important anymore," remarked an USAID nurse.⁵⁹

They had no sheets for the beds and only thin mats thrown over rusted springs to serve as mattresses. Equipment was old and, therefore, often inefficient. The work was physically demanding because they were constantly moving patients on stretchers from the operating room to the recovery room and so forth. They saw patients who were suffering from various diseases that are generally obsolete in the United States, diseases such as, cholera, plague, small pox, and typhoid.

The USAID also helped war victims. The first nine days after the Tet Offensive, they had almost nine hundred cases and over half of those were war casualties. Their staff usually consisted of three to five doctors and fifteen to twenty nurses. Although technically they were there only to supervise the Vietnamese staff, the majority of their time was spent nursing rather than training or teaching.⁶⁰ A USAID nurse described what her work was like after the Tet Offensive:

When we arrived, no one had been to the hospital in six days, so there were dead and wounded all together. The OR was for head, chest and abdominal wounds so we amputated legs in a roped off area of the sidewalk. I took out shrapnel, removed sheets of skin and fingers and toes.⁶¹

⁵⁹Walsh, *Forever Sad the Hearts*, 161, 366.

⁶⁰Patricia Walsh, *The Other Angels*, produced and directed by Patricia Walsh, 56 min., 1995, videocassette.

⁶¹Schwartz, "Women and the Vietnam Experience," 170.

The irony of their work in Vietnam was that while the American military was injuring and killing thousands of Vietnamese civilians who happened to be in the way, agencies like USAID were providing medical care to them. They even helped the VC and North Vietnamese because it was often impossible to know who was and who was not the enemy.

Project Concern was another program supported mainly by American personnel that greatly benefited the civilian population of Vietnam. This medical facility was first opened in a remote village near the city of Da Lat in South Vietnam. Most of the civilians that Project Concern helped in this area were Montagnards, not Vietnamese. The Montagnards lived in the area prior to the Vietnamese. Their physical features resemble Polynesian ancestry rather than Vietnamese or Chinese ancestry. When the Vietnamese came, they retreated to the mountains where they were given the name "Montagnard" which is the French word for mountaineer. They consist of many tribes and speak some twenty different languages. There has been a long standing feud between the Montagnards and the Vietnamese, which resulted in bad treatment for the Montagnards.⁶² Therefore, when the founder of Project Concern saw their villages he commented:

Here was a need far beyond any I had ever before seen, a need for kindness and sympathy and friendship and love as well as for medical treatment. Right in the midst of a war-torn nation on which were focused the eyes of the whole world, a forgotten people were living in the Dark Ages, sick, starving, neglected. Few cared about them,

⁶²Trembly, *Petticoat Medic in Vietnam*, 38.

and only a handful had time to do anything for them. They were born and lived and died in the same primitive atmosphere their ancestors had.⁶³

Indeed agencies like Project Concern were greatly needed. In 1965 the Vietnamese Ministry of Health conducted a survey and concluded that because of the large number of doctors being drafted into the army there remained only one doctor per fifty thousand people.⁶⁴

Incredibly, some volunteers who worked for Project Concern had to raise their own money for transportation to Vietnam. Bertha Sanchez, an American nurse who came to assist Project Concern for the summer of 1964, had to collect trading stamps in order to save money to make the trip to Vietnam. Once they were working for the organization, their pay was only \$150 a month.⁶⁵

Civilian nurses in Vietnam rarely stuck to just nursing. Their duties were endless. Because of the great need and urgency they often worked as doctors, dentists, lab technicians, or whatever else the situation called for. Although in many cases they were not trained or licensed to perform these jobs in the States, they were given on the job training in Vietnam because whatever they could learn would make things easier for the doctors and others who were in short supply in Vietnam.⁶⁶ For example, nurses noticed

⁶³Turpin, *Vietnam Doctor*, 98.

⁶⁴Trembly, *Petticoat Medic in Vietnam*, 14.

⁶⁵Turpin, *Vietnam Doctor*, 118, 140.

⁶⁶Hasselblad, *Lucky-Lucky*, 88.

that members of the local staff, who often possessed no formal training or education, were performing procedures that they themselves had never done in the States. Therefore, in Vietnam during the war, people worked according to their ability not according to their written credentials.⁶⁷

A United Nations study in the early 1960s, reported that about 49 percent of the population of South Vietnam was sixteen years of age and under. Therefore, the atrocities and killing that were happening in the country as a result of the war were being done largely to the young. The need for teachers, social workers, child-welfare agencies, orphanages, nurses, and doctors--all of the roles that civilian women encompassed, were of vital importance to the children and the future of the country.⁶⁸

In many ways, these women served as unofficial diplomats of the United States. They represented the good that America stood for at a time when many Vietnamese saw very little good in the American government or military. For instance, one volunteer noted, "we gave emergency, temporary relief to the twelve families whose homes were destroyed or badly damaged by VC terrorist bombings."⁶⁹ Actions like these led the Vietnamese to look favorably upon the United States. The civilian volunteers often lived in the villages or nearby, understood the language, respected the culture, developed lasting friendships, and helped the community in various ways. The contact they had

⁶⁷Smith, "What Do Nurses Do in America," 280.

⁶⁸Beechy, *Vietnam: Who Cares?*, 102.

⁶⁹Ibid., 83.

with the peasants was a valuable tool. "I hated Americans but now I see that you are different, that you are in Vietnam for a different cause," said one peasant referring to the VNCS.⁷⁰ They were in stark contrast with the stereotypical loud and obnoxious GI. Their relationships with the peasants were more influential than all the bombs America had at her disposal. "I was one of only a few Caucasians. But I was welcomed as warmly as if I were one of their own people," said a nurse who worked with the Mennonite Central Committee.⁷¹ "They know us only as soldiers. It's time someone came to help them, not just fight for them," said a major in the United States military to the founder of Project Concern.⁷²

These civilian women were the rare Americans that the Vietnamese peasants could trust. They trusted them with their children, and allowed them access to their homes and communities. If the U.S. was trying to win the hearts and minds of the people, as is needed in a war of this nature, then these women were surely the most influential people.

⁷⁰Eby, *House in Hue*, 53.

⁷¹Hasselblad, *Lucky-Lucky*, 57.

⁷²Turpin, *Vietnam Doctor*, 99.

CHAPTER FIVE

CIVILIAN WOMEN AND THE AMERICAN SOLDIER

A second group of American women went to Vietnam to provide morale support and recreational services to the thousands of American servicemen. Once again, it is impossible to estimate how many of the twenty thousand women belonged to this group because of the inability of various organizations to maintain and secure adequate records on female personnel. This group of women came to be seen as sisters, girlfriends, wives, and mothers by the soldiers who longed for a reminder of home. They worked hard to give the American servicemen a comfortable place to relax, a warm and cheerful smile, and an attitude of genuine care and concern. These women felt like they lived in a glass bowl while they were in Vietnam. The men "knew every movement we made--nothing we did escaped them."¹ They were such a rare sight that, when spotted, they were never left alone. They worked and lived with thousands of men who often had not talked with an American woman in months. The volunteers usually lived on a military base, and therefore it was not unusual for a handful of women to live on a compound with 2,500 men.² Their personal and private lives were on display for all to see. Of all the civilian women, they were most closely associated with the American military. They understood

¹Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 177.

²Walker, *A Piece of My Heart*, 36.

what it was like for the U.S. soldiers in Vietnam. They belonged to one of three organizations: the American Red Cross (ARC), the United Service Organization (USO), and the Army Special Services.

By far, the most popular image of civilian women who served in Vietnam is that of a Donut Dollie--those American Red Cross workers who served warm Kool-Aid and led silly participation games with the soldiers in the fields. However, that was by no means the extent of the ARC program in Vietnam.

The American Red Cross was originally established in 1882 by Clara Barton, and since then has provided service and aid to civilian and military personnel in times of crisis or war. The ARC was sent to Vietnam by Congress in 1962 to assist the increasing number of American military in the country.³ General William Westmoreland, the military commander at the time, requested the service of the ARC workers. He considered them of great importance to the morale of the men.⁴ Of the twelve hundred women who worked for the ARC in Vietnam throughout the war, 627 were part of the Supplemental Recreation Activities Overseas (SRAO) Program, or better known as the Donut Dollies. In addition to the Donut Dollies, there were also women in the ARC who worked in Service to Military Hospitals and Service to Military Installations. In the peak

³American Red Cross, "Background on Eleven Year Red Cross Mission to U.S. Troops in Vietnam," Press Release, Washington D.C. (May 1973): 1.

⁴American Red Cross, *Annual Report*, 1966, 3.

year, 1968, there were 480 ARC staff who assisted an average of 25,500 men each month in the clubs, and 2,300 cases each month in the hospitals.⁵

The SRAO Program was designed to provide recreation programs to troops in areas that normally were unable to have access to the usual military recreation facilities. Priority was given to combat and combat support units in isolated areas. "We went to areas that had only been taken a day or two before, talked to men who had just lost their comrades, and tried to let them know we cared."⁶ The goal of the volunteers was to allow the men to relax and to distract them from the destruction and death that was all around. The Donut Dollies, an affectionate term that carried over from World War II, traveled all over the country bringing games, refreshments, and smiles to battle weary soldiers.

It is estimated that they traveled 27,100 miles each month by jeep, truck, airplane, and helicopter bringing their games and programs to twenty-eight SRAO units in the country. Approximately 280,500 servicemen took part in these recreation programs.⁷ The programs varied depending on the unit to which they were assigned. An example of one game that was used as an ice breaker, was putting a rubber band over a guy's pinkie and thumb and telling him that he had to get it off without using any part of his body.

⁵Sharon Dickerson, "American Red Cross Women in Vietnam," *Celebration of Patriotism and Courage*, November 1993, 67.

⁶Congress, House, *Testimony of M. Hodge on H.J. Resolution 36, before the House Administration's Task Force on Libraries and Memorials*, 99th cong., 1st sess., (20 May 1985), 3.

⁷Dickerson, "American Red Cross Women in Vietnam," 68.

"Eventually they'd start laughing and teasing each other, and before they knew it their minds were on something other than the war."⁸ Sometimes they would play games that resembled TV quiz shows or board games that required audience participation. For example, a popular favorite was Concentration. "In many cases the games were so silly that they would do nothing but make them laugh."⁹ Other times, when getting together in a large group was not possible nor advisable, they would simply spend time chatting one on one with a scared soldier, serving food, handing out puzzles or stationary, or perhaps organizing an informal program that they might pull out of their "bag of tricks."¹⁰ "I loved the one-to-one--you could come and sit down with a couple guys at a table and play cards. You could just talk," remembered one SRAO worker.¹¹ Two women would often provide programs to between five hundred to one thousand troops a day. It was always more than just playing games and talking--it was, in a way, a form of therapy. Men who were having trouble communicating got to talk and express their feelings about the war to people who understood what they were going through. Although they have been called cheerleaders in a war by their critics, it is obvious that the volunteers were always much more than that. They were counselors, therapists, and friends.¹²

⁸Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 177.

⁹Walker, *A Piece of My Heart*, 75.

¹⁰Nancy Smoyer, "Playing Games," 1995 Internet, Vietnam Veterans Home Page, 1.

¹¹Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 71.

¹²Congress, House, *Testimony of M. Hodge*, 3.

Service to Military Hospitals and Service to Military Installations were another division of the ARC program in Vietnam. Unlike the Donut Dollies, who traveled around the country, these women were stationed and generally remained at a base or in a hospital. In the bases and hospitals, they performed a variety of recreation, welfare, and social services. For example, some were social workers and recreation leaders; others assisted the medical staff, wrote Health and Welfare Reports, informed their units and their families on their condition, tried to get soldiers in touch with their families, wrote letters home for the patients, helped transport patients, and when necessary, held the hand of a dying soldier. Whatever the situation called for, these women were there to fill the demands, even if it meant doing something that they were not technically assigned to do. As Jeannie Hasenbeck, who worked with the ARC in Service to Military Hospitals, recollected of her time at the 24th and 93d Evac Hospitals in Long Binh, "I assisted in surgery. I've never had a day of medical training in my life, but I stood right there and assisted in surgery on more than one occasion." Basically, she said, "you did what had to be done."¹³

In addition to these three divisions of ARC workers, there were also women who worked as administrators, supervisors, and directors who typically were stationed in Saigon. They assisted the staff that served in the fields, bases, and hospitals by orientating new staff, writing monthly reports to headquarters in Washington, D.C.,

¹³Jeannie Hasenbeck, interview by author, 1 November 1995, Daly City, Ca., tape recording.

ensuring that programs were being run properly in all locations, and writing staff evaluations. As the Director of Hospital Service in Vietnam from 1970-1971, Betty Burton was responsible for the staff and programs in the eleven military hospitals in South Vietnam that the ARC worked. She was also responsible for handling public relations, funding, training, and obtaining supplies.¹⁴

The ARC ended its program in Vietnam on 18 May 1972--three days before the last SRAO workers went to Firebase Bunker Hill to say good-bye to the men of the 3d Brigade, 1st Cavalry.¹⁵ Seven months later, on 27 January 1973, the United States signed the Paris Peace Agreement, which allowed for the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from the country.

The United Service Organization was another agency similar to the ARC that, to put it simply, provided moral support to the American troops serving in Vietnam. Formed in 1941 by Franklin Roosevelt to help the Armed Forces personnel and their families, the USO served as a home away from home to all American military personnel. It was originally supported by six different agencies: the YMCA, the YWCA, the Jewish Welfare Board, the Salvation Army, the Traveler's Aid, and the National Catholic Community Services.

¹⁴Betty Burton, interview by author, 17 August 1995, San Mateo, Ca., tape recording.

¹⁵American Red Cross, "Last Run," *The Red Cross Newsletter*, July 1972, 1.

The USO served in Vietnam from 1963 through 1974. During its eleven years in Vietnam, it established twenty-two clubs throughout the country from as far south as Can Tho (approximately one hundred miles south of Saigon) and as far north as Da Nang.¹⁶

The USO was responsible for operating the eighteen service clubs and for hosting the ever popular USO shows. In the USO clubs soldiers could relax by watching television or playing pool. They could make overseas telephone calls, record messages to send home, and visit gift shops or barber shops. However, the greatest attraction was the chance to enjoy American-style food--hamburgers and milkshakes. One USO worker at the Tan Son Nhut USO Club said they served between five hundred and eight hundred shakes, hot dogs, and hamburgers every day.¹⁷ The idea for the USO clubs was to offer the soldiers a safe and sane diversion from the war. One woman who worked for the USO described her job as being just like "a mom."¹⁸ Of all the women who worked for the USO, about 98 percent worked in the service clubs.¹⁹

The USO shows were also a popular attraction for the soldiers. In 1964, Bob Hope presented the first of his eight annual Christmas Shows in Vietnam. Famous female celebrities who took part in the shows were Connie Stevens, Racquel Welch,

¹⁶Mo Nerli, "The Unsung Heroes of Vietnam: Those USO Club Women," *Celebration of Patriotism and Courage*, November 1993, 69.

¹⁷Walker, *A Piece of My Heart*, 155.

¹⁸Mo Nerli, interview by author, 3 August 1995, Burlingame, Ca., tape recording.

¹⁹Rice-Grant, "Does Anybody Care?," 17.

Phyllis Diller, and Nancy Sinatra, not to mention the countless others who made the shows possible. In May 1965 to June 1972, 569 USO Shows units put on over 5,600 performances in Vietnam.²⁰

In addition to the clubs and shows, the USO also had mobile units that, much like the Donut Dollies, visited remote firebases where they talked to the soldiers, served food, sang, or performed shows. One USO worker said that they were continually being asked to visit the men in the fields and usually did so several times a week despite their heavy workload at the club.²¹ The USO also had offices in Saigon where administrators, public relations, and support systems personnel worked to ensure the continuity of the program. For example, Gail Hemenway was the Assistant Director of Public Information in Saigon for the USO, and because of her job she was able "to travel all over the country," and "go to the different clubs."²²

The volunteers with the USO signed up for an eighteen month tour. If they wanted to leave earlier they could, but they had to pay for their own transportation home. Quite simply, their job in Vietnam, as the Executive Director Sam Anderson told everyone, was, "to be happy."²³

²⁰Frank Coffey, *Fifty Years with the USO* (New York: Brassey's Inc., 1991), 92.

²¹Nerli interview.

²²Gail Hemenway, interview by author, 10 August 1995, San Francisco, Ca., tape recording.

²³Nerli, "The Unsung Heroes of Vietnam," 69.

Those who worked in the clubs were responsible for the running and management of that club. They were also responsible for supervising the large Vietnamese staff, which sometimes numbered over fifty local nationals working in one club. In addition to the day to day running of the club, they would sometimes plan special programs.

Maureen (Mo) Nerli who worked at the Tan Son Nhut USO in 1969 and 1970 as the Associate Director said they planned Mexican Day, Irish Day, and Southern Day. "We would work on these for months, planning food and entertainment, putting out our PR."²⁴ One time, they hosted an Oktoberfest for over a thousand GIs. They cooked German food and used brown paper bags to make hats. "To see all these officers and enlisted men sitting at the tables with rubber bands around their necks with these hats on--it was hilarious."²⁵

The last agency to send women to Vietnam was the Army Special Services. Their service in Vietnam started on 1 July 1966. Again, it is difficult to estimate how many women worked for the Special Services: "Half the time I don't think they knew how many people were there, how many women were there," said one former Special Services worker.²⁶ Over the next six years, somewhere between three hundred to six hundred civilians worked for the Army Special Services, about three-fourths of that number were

²⁴Walker, *A Piece of My Heart*, 156.

²⁵Ibid., 157.

²⁶Cathleen Cordova, interview by author, 10 March 1995, Pleasanton, Ca., tape recording.

women. Unlike the ARC and the USO, the Special Services worked directly for the U.S. military in what was called the Department of Army Civilians. They were considered civil service employees.²⁷

The Army Special Services operated craft shops, libraries, service clubs, and coordinated entertainment programs. They also offered classes in metal enameling, model building, lapidary, photography, painting, and leather work. Their first program in Vietnam was the library. Special Services supervised 250 field library units, arranged the field distribution of 190,000 magazine subscriptions, and 350,000 paperbacks. Librarians helped those soldiers interested in taking correspondence classes through the University of Maryland. Special Services organized entertainment shows such as ping pong tournaments and theater productions, and coordinated USO tours.²⁸ Cathleen Cordova, who worked with the Army Special Services in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969 as the Director of an Army Service Club, described her work in Vietnam as what today might be called "stress management." As she said, "the whole idea was to provide some kind of distraction and get them away from the war." The volunteers tried to "calm them down and give them a break" by providing a clean, safe, and quiet place for them to relax.²⁹

²⁷Ann Kelsey, "Civilian Women in Vietnam: Army Special Services," *Celebration of Patriotism and Courage*, November 1993, 71.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Cordova interview.

"We spent many hours in the lounge just listening to the men ventilate," said another Special Services worker.³⁰

While most women who worked for nongovernmental organizations and religious groups were given extensive training for their new assignments in Vietnam, women who came with the ARC, USO, and Army Special Services were given very little training, if any at all. Many did not even know what they were going to do once they arrived in Vietnam. "My first assignment was in Saigon as Assistant Director of Public Information. And that kind of surprised me because I had come out thinking I was going to be running a club."³¹ A former Special Services worker admitted, "I didn't know what I was going to do. All I knew was that I was going to be running a service club and they said we would be given on-the-job-training."³² Jeannie Hasenbeck, with the ARC, said her training before she arrived in Vietnam, consisted of nothing more than getting her shots and being fitted for her uniform. "I had not spent one day in the Red Cross before I went over. I had not spent one day around the military which was what I was assigned to. I had not spent one day in a hospital. I had never spent a day in the war zone, and I had never spent a day in a foreign country." On her first day when she was being shown around the hospital by the Field Director, she became overwhelmed, "and vomited all over the place because I could not believe what I was seeing." Hasenbeck recalled, "I had

³⁰Walker, *A Piece of My Heart*, 36.

³¹Hemenway interview.

³²Cordova interview.

never seen such destruction of the human body before."³³ Because they had not been to any training sessions or orientation meetings, the volunteers did not know what to anticipate and were shocked at their situation.

Some women did receive training before arriving in Vietnam. Jeanne Christie, for example, who worked with the ARC, remembered that her training in Washington, D.C., consisted of, "how to tell the different branches of the service apart and how to tell who was an officer and who was an enlisted person. We were also told how to wear our uniforms and when we could wear civilian clothes." The ARC also taught her how to "answer an off-color remark and how to take a drink when we were in uniform."³⁴ Another ARC worker, Penni Evans, was taught military etiquette and was reminded to "be feminine," and "don't swear." Although it was not stated it was implied that they should not date enlisted men; "we were to be nonsexual symbols of purity and goodness."³⁵ Others remembered receiving a two week training course on how to do programs. USO volunteers were given training in how to run a club, plan menus, and write monthly reports.

Although some women did receive training for their assignments in Vietnam, none were given specific safety procedures or training for living in a war zone. Because of the dangers of the war and the fact that Vietnam had no front lines, it would seem

³³Hasenbeck interview.

³⁴Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 171.

³⁵Walker, *A Piece of My Heart*, 338.

necessary and vital to the welfare of all the women there to have received some degree of self-defense and safety training. They were told, "nothing is going to happen to you."³⁶ Few, if any, were assigned helmets, flak jackets, or gas masks. Betty Burton, who worked with the ARC for over thirty years, remembered her training in World War II as being "more vigorous" than what she received in Vietnam.³⁷ Cathleen Cordova said that the extent of her safety training in Vietnam was being given a jacket and helmet and told to go to the bunkers if anything happened. In some cases, the post commander "would give us weapons, but they never showed you how to use them, really. It was there in case you needed it and that was it. But we weren't suppose to have weapons, none of us were."³⁸

Some were not even issued helmets or jackets. When asked about safety procedures and equipment, Mo Nerli with the USO exclaimed, "helmets, are you kidding, helmets are you kidding! Never, boots, never, guns, never, vests, never, helmets, never. Nothing."³⁹ In most cases, training was more focused on how to behave like a "lady" than what to do when you are being mortared or how to respond in a war zone. Women learned what to do from watching others who had been in country longer. The naiveté or lack of concern on the part of these organizations is indeed startling. The men were

³⁶Nerli interview.

³⁷Burton interview.

³⁸Cordova interview.

³⁹Nerli interview.

expected to take care of the volunteers in case a dangerous situation arose and most felt reasonably safe with this option. It would seem, however, that in a war zone, one must have the ability to take care of oneself. It is because of the reluctance of these organizations, as well as the military, to view women in anything but their traditional roles, that women were placed in such harmful situations with no training on how to protect themselves.

Safety procedures and training for life in a war zone were essential for all women who were sent to Vietnam. The nature of the war as well as the nature of their jobs demanded this training. Civilian women were often put in the most harmful of circumstances. "The VC don't care whether you're a nurse, a clerk, or an infantryman. All they know is that you're an American."⁴⁰ Danger was everywhere. The threats were bombs, mortars, and rockets that were constantly being lobbed at U.S. compounds, hospitals, and bases--where many of the ARC, USO, and Special Services women worked and lived. It got to the point where Cordova said the bombing became "normal."⁴¹ There were even times when Nerli said, "explosives would be planted in the [USO] club. And you had to close it down You had all kinds of alerts."⁴² She remembered one time when a hand grenade was thrown into the kitchen in the USO building she worked in at

⁴⁰Lynda Van Devanter with Christopher Morgan, *Home before Morning: The True Story of an Army Nurse in Vietnam* (New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1983), 85.

⁴¹Cordova interview.

⁴²Nerli interview.

Tan Son Nhut. One ARC worker who worked in Da Nang remembered her base being hit all the time. They called Da Nang, "Rocket City, because it was always being rocketed. The first night I was there, seventeen rockets hit our base. I heard the alarm, jumped out of bed and ran to the bunker."⁴³ But the bunkers were not always the safest place. They crawled with rats, snakes, and giant cockroaches. As a result, many women chose to stay in their rooms rather than run across the compound in the dark and sit with bugs and snakes. They would, instead, "pull the mattress over us and get under the bed. You just got used to sleeping that way, right through the rocket attacks."⁴⁴ However, this alternative was not always a wise choice either because, after the attack, they would sometimes find pieces of shrapnel in their rooms, not far from their beds where they had waited out the attack.

Besides the threat of being bombed in the base, there was the obvious and more serious threats facing the women who daily went out to the fields and visited the men in remote firebases. They traveled all over South Vietnam in jeeps, choppers, and airplanes. They took an extreme risk in traveling this way. Choppers and planes were often shot at by the enemy and jeeps were continually exposed to land mines and sniper fire. Penni Evans recalled, "the chopper right ahead of us took enemy ground fire, and we took evasive action."⁴⁵ Judy Jenkins, who was with the Army Special Services from 1967 to

⁴³Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 67.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Walker, *A Piece of My Heart*, 341.

1970, was in a helicopter when it was fired upon. She could not hear the firing because of the blades on the helicopter but she could see the tracers. "Well, then the helicopter goes sideways and we start skimming the trees to get out of range. I remember I was terrified." She was also in a jeep when it was fired at. She flattened herself against the floor and the driver fired back and took off. Luckily, they made it back unhurt but the jeep behind her got its tires shot and was forced to stay behind and "shoot it out."⁴⁶

One night, Evans was stuck in Khe Sanh because of fog and was forced to stay overnight. She and another woman slept in an ambulance that night. All night she heard incoming, outgoing, and small arms fire. The next day, they went to look for another site and the driver got lost. They ended up in Laos. When they finally got back to Khe Sanh and the general discovered there had been two women up there, he ordered their removal from that area at once.

Another time, Evans was doing a quick ten to fifteen minute stop and she heard noises that sounded like outgoing fire. The soldiers quickly rushed her to the bunkers. "I stayed there and talked to the guys as they were unloading supplies, and I keep hearing these explosions. The ground is shaking, and dirt is coming down off the bunker."⁴⁷ She was later informed that the base had taken fourteen mortar rounds while she was there.

Jeannie Hasenbeck worked at two different hospitals about four miles apart. She could usually hitchhike a ride between the two hospitals with no problem because

⁴⁶Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 131.

⁴⁷Walker, *A Piece of My Heart*, 344.

military personnel were constantly moving back and forth. One day she took a ride with a Vietnamese man. She did not think anything unusual about it until he started driving her in the opposite direction of the 24th Evac where she was supposed to be going. Instead of taking her to the hospital, he took her to his house. Uncertain of what dangers the situation presented, Jeannie tried to remain calm. However, she kept insisting that he should return her to the base at once. He then told her that he was a VC. "My heart just fell." She admitted, "I didn't know what I felt."⁴⁸ After a little pleading on her part, the man finally dropped her off at the perimeter of the base. She was never certain who that man was or what he wanted, but she remembered it as one of the few times she was really afraid for her life while she lived in Vietnam. There were also other terrifying instances of civilian women's photographs found in the pockets of the captured enemy.⁴⁹

Gail Hemenway was in Saigon when the VC and the NVA launched their greatest offensive of the war--the Tet Offensive of 1968. She and three of her friends, who also worked for the USO, went out to dinner one night and then went back to her place for a drink. At the time, Gail lived by herself in an apartment near the Saigon market. Fifteen minutes after her friends had left, she heard pounding on the door. It was her friends who said they had run into MPs telling them to get off the streets because there was going to be an attack. So for the next week she and her three friends stayed in her apartment

⁴⁸Hasenbeck interview.

⁴⁹Jeanne Christie, [Manuscript Concerning Service in Vietnam, 1995], manuscript in possession of author, 5.

without electricity, waiting out the attack. Right across from her apartment there was a building under construction that the VC had been sneaking armaments into for months. During the week there was a stand off in that building. People were in the streets shooting and helicopters were hovering above. Gail noticed that there were bullet holes going through the wall "so we were pretty much on the floor the whole time during this action."⁵⁰ Fortunately, yet surprisingly, none of the four women were injured. Gail recalled that another civilian woman, a Scandinavian, was killed when a sniper shot her as she poked her head out of a window. Gail assumed she must have just arrived in Vietnam because she and her friends knew better than to take a chance like that.

Judy Jenkins was in Qui Nhon, an area that was attacked during the Tet Offensive. For ten days, she was under siege in the bunkers. Meanwhile, the VC were reported to be closing in on Qui Nhon and they could have been overrun any day. During her ten days in the bunkers, she saw "people cracking around me. We're shooting at snipers. We're having sapper attacks."⁵¹ It did not help matters for her when, in jest, the commander said that he was not worried for his safety because if they were overrun, he would exchange the females for his safety.

Although the military and the various civilian organizations promised their safety, some civilian women did not make it back from Vietnam. Dorothy Phillips, from the Special Services, died in a plane crash in Qui Nhon in 1967. Rosily Muskat, also from

⁵⁰Hemenway interview.

⁵¹Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 130.

the Special Services, died in a jeep accident in Bien Hoa in 1968. From the ARC, Hannah Crews died in a jeep accident in Bien Hoa in 1969 and Lucinda Richter died of Gillian-Barre disease in Cam Ranh Bay in 1971. Sharon Wesley died in a plane crash in 1975 when she was helping transport Vietnamese orphans out of Saigon before the Communists overran the city. She previously had worked for both the ARC and the Army Special Services. Sharon chose to stay in Vietnam after the pullout of American troops in 1973.⁵²

Even though these women lived in war zones, they did not live in a constant state of fear. They, for the most part, learned to adjust to the situation and were generally optimistic. Mo Nerli was told by the USO to make out a will before she left for Vietnam. "I was totally aware that anything could of happened at any time. When you do your will and it says what you want done with your body if something happens to you--trust me you are aware."⁵³ There was an awareness but the women were not going to live in fear for the next year of their lives. After all, "We were young, we were idealistic I felt invincible," said one former ARC social worker.⁵⁴

A civilian woman who worked in Vietnam had to worry about the potential threat of being overrun by the enemy, having a jeep or helicopter they were traveling in get hit, and numerous other incidents that could occur in a war zone. But a civilian woman who

⁵²"Women Who Died during the Vietnam War," 4.

⁵³Nerli interview.

⁵⁴Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 105.

worked in Vietnam and who worked closely with American troops also had another perceived threat--one that was not so obvious but was just as dangerous nonetheless--American troops. In some cases, the women's closest companions, their dearest friends, the men they had traveled half way across the world to help, were sometimes the ones who cost them their lives.

It must first be stated that the soldiers who harmed American women in Vietnam were more the exception than the norm. Furthermore, this is by no means, an attempt to perpetuate the stigma of the American soldier in Vietnam--that of a rapist, baby killer, and war monger. It is, rather, a truthful account of the circumstances that surrounded the rape, assault, and even death of a handful of American women in Vietnam. For the most part, the soldiers were extremely respectful and greatly admired the women for being in Vietnam. "I was never once treated disrespectfully. We were made to feel so special over there. Those men thought the world of us and showed it in a very positive way."⁵⁵ The chance to see an American woman or a "round eye," as they were called, was indeed something special. If a unit had gone through a particularly brutal encounter with the enemy, or if they had been especially brave, their commanders would request that the women come to the fields. The commanders knew how much it meant to the men to see an American woman. Often, the men in the field were more afraid of the women, than the women were of them. Most of the men were so amazed to see them, that they would just stare and follow the women around. Therefore, the women were treated very well for

⁵⁵Hasenbeck interview.

the most part. To some men they were thought of as sisters, mothers, and friends, but, unfortunately, to some they were merely women "for hire."⁵⁶

Most American women who lived on the bases did not live with fear for their safety. At best, there was a certain apprehension one felt at night, when everything was dark and a noise was heard down the hallway. "Whoever it was--I have to assume it was a man--got in and walked down the hall. He walked the whole length of the building. I could hear him. I remember lying there, waiting."⁵⁷ It was for this reason that guards were usually posted outside their rooms at night. There had been instances of men sneaking in and stealing something to show their buddies that they had made it inside the women's rooms. Jeanne Christie, a former Donut Dollie, recalled at least three separate occasions when she heard someone breaking into her quarters. On one night she remembered, "it was only a young man trying to look in the windows. In my most commanding voice I told him to put his hands in the air and to get down. Naturally I didn't have a weapon or even a popsicle stick to protect myself."⁵⁸ Fortunately, the man obeyed and Christie was left unharmed.

It was a common misconception in Vietnam that American women who worked for civilian organizations as well as military women were there merely as prostitutes. "Nurses do it for free, but the Red Cross girls charge," was a popular saying in Vietnam

⁵⁶Christie, manuscript, 5.

⁵⁷Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 223.

⁵⁸Christie, manuscript, 5.

that some men actually believed.⁵⁹ There were many rumors about the ARC women; "every guy claimed he'd had it with one of us."⁶⁰ Guys often asked the civilian women how much they charged. Why else would a woman voluntarily be in a war zone unless she was making money? "You spent a lot of energy proving you weren't over there making money."⁶¹ If they were not having sex, then they were considered to be just a tease. These were the thoughts that led some individuals to perpetrate rape against those who had come to help them.

Cheri Rankin barely escaped being raped by two servicemen when she accepted a ride from them. Rankin, who was with the ARC SRAO Program, in Da Nang, Cam Ranh, and Phan Rang from 1970 to 1971, was assaulted by two American servicemen who offered to give her a ride back to the base when she was coming back from visiting a local orphanage in Da Nang. At first she said no. Her instincts told her not to go with them because she felt something was wrong with the situation. On the way back, when they offered a ride, she accepted out of a sense of professionalism. After all, she was there to be friendly and supportive of the men. As soon as she got in the truck, one of guys started to molest her. "His hands were everywhere--up my dress, in my panties. I was biting him and yelling at him." However the men continued to molest her and said,

⁵⁹Walker, *A Piece of My Heart*, 345.

⁶⁰Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 270.

⁶¹Ibid., 73.

"Well, you do this all the time. You give it to the officers for free--what's the matter, you gonna charge us?" Luckily, she was not raped and was let go.⁶²

Virginia Kirsch was not so lucky. Ginny, as her friends called her, was with the ARC SRAO Program in Vietnam and was stationed in Cu Chi for only two weeks when she was killed. An American serviceman broke into her building and stabbed her to death on 16 August 1970. For two years, her death went unavenged until a former member of the 25th Infantry, who was confined in prison for a connection with a murder in Wisconsin, confessed to killing her.⁶³

The accomplishments of the volunteers who supported the military are somewhat less tangible than other civilian women in Vietnam. They do not have a hospital or rehabilitation center to illustrate the extent and devotion of their work. Nevertheless, they accomplished a great deal. Sam Anderson of the USO said, "by far, the women were the bulk of the USO staff. They did marvelous work. Our role in Vietnam could not have been accomplished if not for these completely unselfish women."⁶⁴ They have the quiet personal satisfaction of knowing that they made a difference in the lives of many men who saw them smiling and laughing, despite the cruelties and horrors of the war.

⁶²Ibid., 69.

⁶³Emily Strange, "Kirsch Family Coming in Force to Washington," *Round Robinette*, Fall 1993, 25.

⁶⁴Nerli, "The Unsung Heroes of the Vietnam War," 70.

Throughout the war years, the military commanders considered the ARC staff "indispensable" and "prime factors" in maintaining the morale of the troops.⁶⁵ General Creighton Abrams, the Commanding General of the forces in Vietnam, said the ARC workers, "were the core of this program's success [as they] contributed materially to the improvement of the morale of servicemen assigned in Vietnam." He went on to say, "their personal dedication and attitude reflected favorably on the American Red Cross and assisted the commander in the field in the accomplishment of his mission."⁶⁶

The servicemen were particularly grateful for the assistance they received. Seven U.S. servicemen wounded in South Vietnam wrote this letter to an ARC staff:

It gives us the most sincere pleasure to thank the Red Cross staff and its volunteer workers for a very pleasant atmosphere, assistance in personal matters, and recreational activities during our stay at the 106th General Hospital. We give thanks for the home atmosphere created by each Red Cross worker, for a wonderful Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.⁶⁷

Another grateful patient wrote a letter to the "Women of the Red Cross," and said, "just to see you smile and offer your help to us means more to me than words could ever express."⁶⁸

The first Black ARC volunteer, Barbara Lynn, said she was surprised but delighted at how happy the Black troops were to see her in Vietnam. Black troops made

⁶⁵American Red Cross, "Background on Eleven Year Red Cross Mission," 3.

⁶⁶Congress, House, *Testimony of M. Hodge*, 4.

⁶⁷American Red Cross, *Annual Report*, 1966, 4.

⁶⁸"How the Red Cross Helps," *Round Robinette*, Fall 1993, 31.

up a large percentage of the combat troops. For example, in the early years of the war, Black troops made up 23 percent of the fatalities.⁶⁹ Despite the high numbers of casualties, their morale increased when they saw that Lynn and other Black women were there to support them.⁷⁰

An area commander of the Army acknowledged the hard work and dedication that the women of the Special Services demonstrated. He said they "performed a major role in the base camp." There is "no substitute for the conversation or the sympathetic interest of a girl from the States. It's as close to home as you can get in Vietnam."⁷¹

Most women who worked with the military often went above and beyond the call of duty. There was not much they would not do for the soldiers. Christmas was always a special time for giving since this was the time that soldiers missed home the most. Civilian women worked harder than ever making sure all the men had something for Christmas. For instance, one Christmas a Special Services worker climbed up the guard towers to hand out stockings filled with gum, candy, and cigarettes to the men in the towers because they would be "all alone on Christmas Eve."⁷² Mo Nerli remembered that

⁶⁹Terry Wallace, *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans* (New York: Random House, 1984), xvi.

⁷⁰Barbara Lynn, "Good Samaritan in Vietnam: Red Cross Girl Brings Cheer to Men at Front," *Ebony*, October 1968, 179.

⁷¹*Special Services: Where the Action Is*, produced by Army Pictorial Center, 1970, videocassette.

⁷²Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 133.

Christmas in Vietnam was an extremely busy time. "We all worked for a week straight," she said. They took gifts out to the guys in the field and in the hospital and talked with all of them. They were given money by a private company to set up phone lines at the Tan Son Nhut Air Base Medical Facility so the men on each ward could call home for the holidays. Nerli remembered this period as a very emotional time as she stood by and listened to the men calling home for the first time in many months. "It was a very emotional thing, and yet we were doing something, and I am really pleased to say that I was part of what little bit was done by all the men and women who were with the USO."⁷³

Nerli also remembered another time, many years after the war, when she was able to hear, first hand, the gratitude and admiration that the soldiers had for the USO. At a speaking engagement in 1987, she and four other women were asked to talk about their experiences in Vietnam. After she talked, a man came to the microphone and after many years, was finally able to thank her for the wonderful Christmas the USO volunteers gave him. The former soldier recalled feeling depressed because it was Christmas and he had not received any letters or cards from his family or friends. He said when he walked into the Saigon USO Club, the Christmas spirit was truly in the air. They had a tree, gifts, food, and singing. The USO volunteers were running around trying to make it a good Christmas for all the guys. He told the audience that was the best Christmas he ever

⁷³Walker, *A Piece of My Heart*, 157.

had.⁷⁴ Stories like this one, let civilian women know they were appreciated. Compassion, empathy, and concern for the men were the real motives behind their work in Vietnam.

⁷⁴Nerli interview.

CHAPTER SIX

LIFE AFTER VIETNAM

The stress of being in a war zone has led men to experience a wide array of psychological illnesses. In World War II it was called shell shock. For the Vietnam veterans, it has been termed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Simply put, PTSD is a normal response to trauma or to an event that is outside the usual human experience. As the American Psychiatric Association describes it, PTSD symptoms include recurrent and intrusive recollections of the event, nightmares of the event, flashbacks, efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings, or people associated with the event, trouble sleeping, depression, and difficulty getting close to other people.¹ Many Vietnam veterans have indeed suffered from these symptoms which can only be explained by the fact that they witnessed, and sometimes participated in horrendous acts of war. The stress and frustration that American soldiers experienced during the war has been well documented. Studies by Arthur Egendorf and the President's Commission on Mental Health are two examples among many that have documented the existence of PTSD in male Vietnam veterans. Studies have also shown that the Vietnam War produced more victims of PTSD than any other U.S. war.²

¹American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-III-R* (Washington D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1987), 247.

²Margaret Benshoof-Holler, "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder," *Vietnam* 6 (December 1993): 39.

But what does this say about the women who served? From the studies done on military women concerning PTSD, the results have shown that, like male soldiers, they too suffered from the effects of PTSD.³ Some studies have documented the stress factors for military women--in particular, military nurses in Vietnam. Jenny Schaier's thesis "Women Vietnam Veterans and Mental Health Adjustment" illustrates that military nurses underwent severe stress and depression by witnessing the death and destruction of so many young soldiers. Baker, Menard, and Johns also did a study confirming the stress of military nurses. Other studies found that the most stressful aspect of the war for military nurses was living in a war zone. Yet no study to date has documented the stress factors concerning civilian women in Vietnam.⁴ Because of their nonmilitary status, civilian women are restricted from participating in the studies done on PTSD. Not only are these women virtually ignored in the history of the war, but their problems are ignored also. And problems do exist. Civilian women have complained of flashbacks, nightmares, depression, difficulty adjusting, isolation, and other classic symptoms of PTSD. While not directly related to women in Vietnam, a study completed on women and PTSD showed that a high rate of PTSD was found in civilian women who were in life threatening situations--events in which the participant perceived that her life was in

³Constance J. Moore, "Oral History Reflections of Army Nurse Vietnam Veterans: Managing the Demanding Experience of War" (Master's Thesis, San Jose State University, 1993), 11.

⁴Schwartz, "Women and the Vietnam Experience," 168.

danger or that she would sustain serious injury.⁵ This would certainly apply to civilian women who lived in Vietnam during the war.

There is no question that civilian women in Vietnam saw the death and destruction of war. Many worked in hospitals where they witnessed, first hand, the death of soldiers and civilians. "Sometimes I ended up in triage, where they were bringing in patients from a helicopter crash. There was one guy--I will never forget this--who was burned over ninety percent of his body."⁶ They had to face extremely sick patients and not be affected by the blood and guts they saw, while reassuring the men everything would be all right.

Women who worked closely with the military saw soldiers die and they also saw men cry yet they could not shed a tear themselves. The women held the hands of patients and wrote letters telling wives and parents how much they were loved. They saw men they knew and men they had talked with hours before, come back injured or worse--in a body bag. "You learned not to ask for them because sometimes when they came back a second time they weren't there."⁷ "It would just blow your mind to see the guys laughing

⁵Heidi Resnick and others, "Prevalence of Civilian Trauma and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in a Representative Sample of Women," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 61, no. 6 (1993): 987.

⁶Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 133.

⁷Cordova interview.

with you in the morning and blown to bits and in the hospital in the afternoon. That tends to be a demoralizing item when you're the one passing out smiles."⁸

Another haunting experience is that of Larry Young Hines, a SRAO worker who had a favorite stop on her run. It was called LZ East, which was a remote base on top of a little hill in the middle of nowhere. She would provide programs to the eleven to fifteen guys that were there from time to time. She really enjoyed that particular group. Since they were in such a remote area, they rarely had visitors and greatly appreciated her and the ARC program. In June of 1969, it became too dangerous for the ARC to make it out to LZ East. Two weeks later, Hines discovered that their base had been overrun and everyone there had been killed. It was devastating for her then and to this day is still difficult to talk about.⁹

Once when Jeanne Christie saw men pulling green plastic garbage bags off the truck, she asked them what they were doing. When they told her they were throwing bodies off the truck, she had to take a deep breath and then go on with her program. She still remembers the sound the dead bodies made when they hit the ground. "The body bags had bodies in them with no head or arms or feet."¹⁰ Sights and sounds like this left an impression on her. Despite what she had just seen, she had to go on with her program

⁸Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 178.

⁹*No Time for Tears: Vietnam: The Women Who Served*, directed by West End Films, 59 min., New York, 1993, videocassette.

¹⁰Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 174.

and try to cheer men up who had probably seen worse than she had. After all, she was there to take care of the men. No one, however, was there to help her.

Civilian women who lived closest with the military had similar stress factors as the soldiers, but they also experienced unique factors as well. They lived in a world where death and destruction knew no bounds and were inescapable. Just because they were women does not imply that they were protected from the war. The war could not be contained. It affected everyone. Women's experiences in the war might be different from men's but that should not imply that they were any less real. In addition to the stress of living in a war zone, there were at least three unique problems civilian women had in Vietnam, that men did not. First, there was only a handful of women surrounded by thousands of men. Second, they were not trained to protect themselves in a war. Finally, they had no outlet to express feelings of frustration and anger.

The tension, isolation, and loneliness were feelings that everyone experienced in Vietnam, but for women these feelings were often compounded by the fact that they were sometimes only one of a handful of American women in an area. They had no one to share their feelings or concerns with. They were living in a glass bowl where everyone watched their every move. Everyone wanted to talk with them, be near them, and so on. Their time was never their own. In most cases, they worked with two or three other women. When Betty Burton, who worked for the ARC, first arrived in Saigon in 1970 she was the only woman living in the Bachelor Officers Quarters.¹¹

¹¹Burton interview.

Women also had the added stress of not being able to protect themselves. As mentioned before women were not issued guns except in rare circumstances, and then they were not shown how to use them. They were in a war zone yet did not know how to protect themselves. All they knew was what they learned by watching others who had been in Vietnam longer.

Civilian women, who worked with the military, were there to boost the spirits of the men around them who may have just seen their best friends die or maybe had been in a confrontation with the enemy. Whatever the case, the women were there to be a source of comfort. They were not entitled to get upset, be depressed, or show anger. War is a man's domain and women are not supposed to be confronted by its misery. Women were not allowed nor expected to let off steam like their male counterparts. If a man was upset or frustrated because of the death of a friend or for the war in general, he could demonstrate or release his anger in many ways. He could take his aggression out on the enemy. Soldiers used to carry ears or scalps of the men they had killed. This sounds strange but in a war zone it was used as a means of survival for the men.¹² Women, by comparison, did not have those options. "Because they were women, they could not go out and shoot a gun or punch somebody in the nose or get drunk. They had to hold their feelings inside," said a former Vietnam veteran and Army Psychologist.¹³ That is just what they did. "We women, you know, were noncombatants in a place where we could

¹²Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 179.

¹³Saywell, *Women in War*, 225.

have gotten killed just as easily as the men. Only we couldn't shoot back. We never had the chance," said Judy Jenkins. "So what do you do with all your fear and anger? You internalize it. You just absorb it. Because you have a job to do and that job involves taking care of people."¹⁴ Sometimes women would internalize so many emotions and feelings that they became physically sick. An SRAO worker collapsed from the exhaustion and emotional strain. "I couldn't move, I was paralyzed all over."¹⁵ She admitted to suppressing feelings that she could not deal with at the time.

Not only were women unable to demonstrate frustration or anger, they were supposed to act as if they did not have these emotions. They were making "happiness in the middle of a war."¹⁶ They were the sunshine girls, the happy face from home--always cheerful, with never a bad thought. This placed great strain and stress on civilian women, sometimes for many months and even years after the war. In addition, women were on duty all the time. Even when they were supposed to be off, they were still expected to act and look a certain way. They always had to be smiling and pleasant. They were not allowed to have bad days.¹⁷ They were there to listen to the men let off steam, but no one was there for them. Sam Anderson, the director of the USO in Vietnam, told his staff,

¹⁴Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 132.

¹⁵Ibid., 237.

¹⁶Ibid., 133.

¹⁷*No Time for Tears*, videocassette.

"never let the men see you cry."¹⁸ It is extremely stressful to be forced to contain so many intense emotions over such a long period of time.

A former ARC social worker in Vietnam said she could not handle seeing any more "dead, burnt bodies."¹⁹ The stress of that, in addition to the fact that she did not talk to anyone about her feelings, led her to resign seven months before her tour was to end. Although many women felt the same sense of frustration and depression around dying soldiers, only a very few resigned early. Betty Burton, who was responsible for staff and programs with the ARC Service to Military Hospitals in Vietnam, recalled only one woman being sent home early from her tour in Vietnam. But on the whole, "our staff did remarkably well considering the circumstances," acknowledged Burton.²⁰

The real tragedy for those who served in Vietnam, both men and women, is not the stress they faced when they were there, but the lingering effects of that stress combined with the inability to communicate their experiences with others after the war. A former SRAO worker suffered from depression and isolation after her return from Vietnam in 1971 until she got help a few years later. "I was having acute depressions, depressions so bad I'd have to drop out for a week or two because I could not communicate with people."²¹ She also suffered from paralysis. One time during a

¹⁸Nerli, "The Unsung Heroes of Vietnam," 69.

¹⁹Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 105.

²⁰Burton interview.

²¹Marshall, *In the Combat Zone*, 240.

therapy session her thoughts about Vietnam surfaced. She had an image of graves. Then, her whole body became frozen and she could not move. A former Special Services worker also recalled suffering from symptoms related to PTSD. She recalled suppressing her memories of Vietnam for several years after the war. She eventually joined a therapy group with another nurse who was also suffering from symptoms of PTSD.²²

Others have lived with nightmares, depression, frustration, and medical problems relating to stress, loneliness, and isolation after they returned from Vietnam. One woman contemplated suicide twice after her return. "I turned off emotions, resented the hell out of authority and normalcy, and felt I couldn't fit into society." She was looking for "love and recognition, yet running, putting up barriers--my own emotional claymore mine perimeter."²³ All of her feelings demonstrated the telltale signs of PTSD. Her feelings were, in fact, quite similar to those of her male counterparts. It was not until she was able to talk with other ARC volunteers who had been in Vietnam that she was able to deal with the past and not feel as if she was alone and crazy.

Another problem civilian women encountered when they returned to the States was the same prejudice that their male and female counterparts in the military faced. Because of the unpopularity of the war, military personnel were treated with great disrespect when they arrived home. Often they were spit at, called names, and physically assaulted by angry war protesters. This also held true for civilian women who worked

²²Walker, *A Piece of My Heart*, 40.

²³Ibid., 346.

with the military. They were seen as an extension of the military and, therefore, were thought of in the same negative way. Jeannie Hasenbeck was cursed at and then spit on when a man she was sitting next to at the airport found out she had just returned from Vietnam.²⁴ Mo Nerli remembered people she thought were her friends saying, "you commie! What the hell were you doing over there?"²⁵ She was hurt and confused that people would treat her this way for serving her country. It was also difficult for her to adjust because she had no one to talk to. No one wanted to hear about Vietnam. "I know how our GIs felt when they came home, because we got the same treatment."²⁶ Volunteers soon realized after returning to the States, that people did not want to hear about Vietnam. As a result, without any support system, many women had difficulty adjusting. Some even thought about volunteering again.

Cathleen Cordova, with the Army Special Services, can remember the prejudice she experienced when she was looking for a job upon her return from Vietnam. Nobody wanted to hire her when they found out she had been to Vietnam. One interview in particular stands out in her memory. She was interviewing with one man for quite a while when he finally told her he did not have a job for her and even if he did he would not hire her. When she asked him why, he explained that he just called her in because he

²⁴Hasenbeck interview.

²⁵Nerli interview.

²⁶Walker, *A Piece of My Heart*, 159.

wanted to see what kind of woman would go to Vietnam. It was at that point when she decided to join the Special Services again and this time, went to Korea.²⁷

Yet another problem these women experienced when they returned home was the inability to find satisfaction with their work. When they were in Vietnam, they worked with a large group of people. They experienced a sense of camaraderie with their co-workers. The jobs they had were very intense, very demanding, and enabled them to exert a certain degree of power. When they got back to the States, they were never able to match the excitement, importance, and intensity of their previous work. This led many to experience feelings of depression and isolation.

These are just a few examples of some of the women who were able to find a support system that is so vital in the recovery process. There are others who were not so fortunate. For example, one former USO worker killed herself when she returned from Vietnam. Another victim of PTSD, she became overwhelmed by what she saw during her tour and did not feel she could discuss her feelings with anyone.²⁸

Although there has been no study of the prevalence of PTSD in civilian personnel who worked in Vietnam, there are certainly enough instances to warrant such a study. Considering their proximity to the military it would seem only logical that the volunteers would suffer from similar psychological issues arising from the war.

²⁷Cordova interview.

²⁸Mo Nerli, "The Unsung Heroes of Vietnam," 70.

Another tragedy that has surfaced from the Vietnam War is Agent Orange and its effects on those people who have acquired illnesses from their exposure to it. Agent Orange is a chemical that was used in Vietnam by the U.S. military to defoliate the jungles and perimeters of bases so the enemy could not hide. It is a herbicide containing TCDD-dioxin, which is an extremely toxic substance and has been found to cause cancer in laboratory animals. By 1970, approximately twelve million gallons of Agent Orange had been dumped on the vegetation and people of Vietnam. After the war, some veterans began to suffer from pains in their joints, skin rashes, severe acne, miscarriages, children born with birth defects, and a plethora of other symptoms. Many male veterans are dying from diseases related to Agent Orange and yet the Veterans Administration is reluctant to help.²⁹ The military is not the only group affected by Agent Orange. Civilian women were in areas that were sprayed and were around men who had just come in out of the field that were sprayed with it. Some studies show that women may be more susceptible to the side effects of exposure to Agent Orange than men.³⁰ "It seems to me, if you were in Vietnam more than likely you were exposed to it [Agent Orange]," said a member of the Special Services.³¹

²⁹Fred Wilcox, *Waiting for an Army to Die: The Tragedy of Agent Orange* (Washington D.C.: Seven Locks Press, 1989), xii.

³⁰Rice-Grant, "Does Anybody Care?," 4.

³¹Cordova interview.

Civilian women who ate and drank off the local economy faced a particularly high risk of exposure to Agent Orange because when vegetation was sprayed, the chemicals would run off into the river and water supplies.³² They also carried it on their skin, hair, and clothes. The chemical has the ability to hide in fatty tissue thereby not presenting itself for many years. In many instances, people did not even realize that they were exposed to the chemical until years later when they began showing the physical signs.

³²William Lewis and Edmund Sweeny Forker, *Forgotten Warriors: Agent Orange and the 'Smell' of Perfume* (New Jersey: New Jersey Agent Orange Commission, 1989), 8.

CONCLUSION

The two groups of civilian volunteers discussed in this thesis by no means encompass all American women who worked in civilian capacities in Vietnam. Other women, equally heroic and dedicated, worked for numerous governmental organizations. Many women worked for the U.S. Embassy, Defense Attaché Office, CIA, and other agencies. One member of the CIA, Barbara Robbins was killed in the 1965 bombing of the American Embassy. There were thousands of women who helped transport soldiers into the war as flight attendants. And there was a remarkable group of women journalists who wrote investigative pieces on the war, sometimes risking their own lives to get the story right. Of the approximately seventy women journalists in Vietnam, two are known to have died as a direct result of the war and one journalist died from diseases she acquired while in Vietnam. The greatest loss in terms of numbers of American civilian women came on 4 April 1975, when a C-5A transport plane carrying Vietnamese orphans and employees from the Attaché Office and other U.S. government agencies, crashed in a rice paddy after a cargo door malfunctioned. This last desperate attempt to evacuate women and children from the country, called Operation Babylift, resulted in the deaths of thirty-eight civilian women.¹

¹"Women Who Died during the Vietnam War," 4.

Civilian women who went to Vietnam worked in different areas of the country and were exposed to different lifestyles. Just as the American soldiers had different experiences in Vietnam, so too did civilian women. Depending on what organization they worked for and what their motives for being in Vietnam were, they had different experiences. Those who worked with the civilian population of Vietnam became acquainted with the culture and people of Vietnam. They lived in the towns and cities and became life long friends with the Vietnamese, who regarded them warmly. Those women who worked with the U.S. military generally stayed on bases and "being on a big U.S. base is not being in Vietnam. It is being on a little piece of the U.S. transplanted."² They were often confined to one area of Vietnam. The people of Vietnam saw them as an extension of the military and treated them as such. Only a small number were exposed to the culture. Some participated in village MedCaps where they would travel to the villages and dispense medical aid, but most stayed with the military where they were greatly needed. Their warm smiling faces and their attitude of care and concern for the soldiers enabled many men to forget about the death and destruction around them for a while.

Although there are obvious differences between the two groups of civilian women, there are striking similarities that do exist. At first glance, their primary motives for going to Vietnam seem very different. However, at closer inspection they are not so different after all. To put it plainly they went to help and assist others. Some went to

²Trembly, *Petticoat Medic in Vietnam*, 33.

help the Vietnamese, others to help the Americans. All of them went as volunteers, which is one of the things so remarkable about them. At a time when many Americans were doing anything to avoid going to Vietnam, they willingly went to help others.

Most of the women performed work that is defined as women's work and generally undervalued in our society. They took care of others. Civilian women in Vietnam saved thousands of lives, taught vital medical skills, taught Vietnamese children English and other subjects, provided support to GIs, increased morale among the troops, and performed a host of other duties as well. They tried, both physically and psychologically, to repair the wounds the war created. All too often, women's war experiences are never heard. Society is becoming slightly more tolerant and is gradually accepting the idea of women in war. Women, flying combat planes and leading troops into battle, makes for great sensationalism. But is this the only role that arouses people's interest? Are women to be forced into traditional male fields before they can be seen or heard? While applause and respect are due to any woman who wishes to enter into a male dominated field, there should still be an equal amount of respect and admiration to be paid for work traditionally seen as women's work.

Even the women themselves often undermined the importance of their own work. Civilian women who worked closest with the military, felt that since they were not out actually "fighting," that they were less important than the men and, therefore, had it much better than their male counterparts.³ Because organizations labeled them as "recreational

³Schwartz, "Women and Their Vietnam Experience," 169.

specialists," they came to believe that was all they did. They were that and much more. They became a source of support, and their strength and endless determination provided the men with strength as well. Civilians who worked with sick and wounded Vietnamese felt that since there were so many injuries and deaths, they never felt like they were doing enough to help. They worked in hospitals that many times were not staffed as well as the U.S. military hospitals. They worked at hospitals without the convenience of the latest technology or even electricity. To make matters worse, they were working on innocent children who had no involvement in the war whatsoever. For many civilian nurses it was hard to let go of the pain they felt after being witness to the atrocities and suffering the war produced and the death of so many people. How could they feel like they made a difference when there was so many that needed their help?

Both groups were witnesses to the pain and devastation the war created. They both became intimately connected with the suffering, death, and utter chaos the war produced in their lives and the lives of those around them. They have suffered from the same stress and nightmares from the war. They have had to hide intense emotions because as one civilian nurse in Vietnam said, "tears in Vietnam were useless."⁴

While war was all around them, civilian women were unequivocally unprepared for being in a war zone. The agencies that sent them to Vietnam, provided no training on how to survive in a combat zone. Because they were women and noncombatants, it was assumed they would be safe. But no one can be safe in a war zone, much less a war like

⁴Hasselblad, *Lucky-Lucky*, 97.

Vietnam with no front lines. They were in extremely dangerous positions, and the fact that more women were not seriously injured or killed, is a result of pure luck.

The only image that most people have of women in Vietnam is that of a military nurse. This has led to the exclusion of thousands of women who have served in different capacities, as well as women in the military who served in non-medical capacities. But all military female personnel are entitled to veterans benefits and health care. Civilian personnel who were injured while in Vietnam could go to military hospitals and be seen for their injuries. However, once they came home, they did not have any access to health care from the military, even for injuries they received while in Vietnam. Those civilian women who suffered from exposure to Agent Orange and psychological problems relating to PTSD have virtually nowhere to turn. The Veterans Administration will not take them and many insurance companies have dropped them once they found out their illnesses were war-related.

The Vietnam War is one example of a time when women performed vital and necessary functions in a nontraditional atmosphere. The work women did in Vietnam was not far from what women do everyday. They cared for others by being nurses, teachers, or Donut Dollies. But what is unusual is that they performed these jobs in a foreign country which was in the midst of a violent and relentless war. They performed these jobs continually; there was nowhere to go to get away from the war. They performed these jobs with bombs going off all around them and friends and strangers dying near them every day. Their jobs lasted as long as they had stamina to keep

working. These women are truly the invisible and forgotten heroines whose sacrifices are unseen and whose stories are unheard.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Adams, Lily, Army nurse. Interview by author, 11 January 1995. San Francisco, Ca.
Tape recording.

Adler, Bill, ed. *Letters from Vietnam*. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1967.

American Friends Service Committee. *Quaker Service Viet Nam: 1994 Viet Nam Country Report*. Philadelphia: AFSC, 1994, 1-16.

American Red Cross. *Annual Reports*. 1966-1970.

_____. "Background on Eleven Year Red Cross Mission to U.S. Troops in Vietnam." Press Release, Washington D.C., (May 1973): 1-4.

_____. "Last Run." *The Red Cross Newsletter*, July 1972, 1.

Anderson, Wendy, Flight Attendant. Interview by author, 22 August 1995, Pittsburg, Ca.
Tape recording.

"Army Nurse Killed by Enemy Rocket." *Army Reporter*, 23 June 1969, 2.

Baker, Mark. *Nam: The Vietnam War in the Words of the Men and Women Who Fought There*. New York: Quill Press, 1982.

Barton, Jane. "Vietnamese Women--POWs in South Vietnam." *Off Our Backs* 3, no. 7 (April 1973): 1, 67.

Beechy, Atlee and Winifred Beechy. *Vietnam: Who Cares?* Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1968.

Berman, David M. "Interview with Two Vietnam Veterans: Welcome Home." *Vietnam Generation* 1 (1989): 46-58.

Borton, Lady. *Sensing the Enemy*. New York: The Dial Press, 1984.

_____. *After Sorrow: An American among the Vietnamese*. New York: Viking Press, 1995.

Burton, Betty, American Red Cross. Interview by author. 17 August 1995, San Mateo, Ca. Tape recording.

Chrisite, Jeanne. Speech to National Association of Concerned Veterans. May 1982.

_____. [Manuscript Concerning Service in Vietnam, 1995.] Manuscript in possession of author, 1-8.

_____. "The Silent March: 1981 to 1993: History of My Experience with ARC/VWMP." *American Overseas Association Newsletter* 44 (August 1993): 9-11.

Cordova, Cathleen, Army Special Service. Interview by author, 10 March 1995, Pleasanton, Ca. Tape recording.

_____. "Curiouser & Curiouser." Internet. Vietnam Veterans Home Page. 26 June 1995, 1-2.

_____. "Mystery at the Wall--Orange Flames Sequel." Internet. Vietnam Veterans Home Page. 1995, 1-2.

_____. "Orange Flames." Internet. Vietnam Veterans Home Page. 1995, 1-2.

Dickens, Martha L. "Very Few Dull Moments in My Unforgettable Two Years as AID Nurse in Da Nang." *The Weather Vane* 37, no. 4 (August 1968): 3-33.

Edelman, Bernard, ed. *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1985.

Emerson, Gloria. *Winners and Losers: Battles, Retreats, Gains, Losses and Ruins from a Long War*. New York: Random House, 1976.

_____. "Gloria Emerson's Vietnam Diary." *Vogue*, 1 January 1972, 159.

_____. "Rehabilitation Is Rare for Vietnam's Many Wounded Civilians." *New York Times*, 26 October 1970, 3.

Engelmann, Larry. *Tears before the Rain: An Oral History of the Fall of South Vietnam*. New York: W W Norton and Co., 1985.

Fallaci, Oriana. *Nothing and So Be It*. Translated by Isabel Quigly. New York: Doubleday and Co, Inc., 1972.

- Farish, Terry. *Flower Shadows*. New York: Morrow Books, 1992.
- "Femininity at the Front." *Time*, 28 October 1966, 73-74.
- Freedman, Dan, ed. *Nurses in Vietnam: The Forgotten Veterans*. Texas: Texas Monthly Press, 1987.
- Gehan, Jeanne. "One Woman's War." *Nursing Care* 6, no. 8 (August 1973): 15-18.
- Hasenbeck, Jeannie, American Red Cross. Interview by author. 1 November 1995, Daly City, Ca. Tape recording.
- Hasselblad, Marva with Dorothy Brandon. *Lucky-Lucky*. New York: M. Evans and Company, Inc., 1966.
- Hegelheimer, Helen Tennant. "I Still See Their Eyes." Internet. Vietnam Veterans Home Page. 1995, 1-2.
- Hemenway, Gail, USO. Interview by author. 10 August 1995, San Francisco, Ca. Tape recording.
- Hensley, Anne, IVS. Interview by author. 5 December 1995. Telephone. Tape recording.
- Kelsey, Ann, Special Services. Interview by author. 10 December 1995. Telephone. Tape recording.
- Krich, Claudia. "Vietnam Journal: Witness to the War's End." *Ms.*, July 1976, 108-16.
- "Lady at War." *Time*, 14 January 1966, 61.
- Larsen, W.W. and Tran Thi Nga. *Shallow Graves: Two Women and Vietnam*. New York: Random House, 1986.
- Lynn, Barbara. "Good Samaritans in Vietnam: Red Cross Girl Brings Cheer to Men at Front." *Ebony*, October 1968, 179-85.
- Marron, Judy. "A Women Veteran Speaks Out: Don't Tell Me Women Don't Know about War. . . ." *The Veteran* 12 (November/December 1982): n.p.
- Marshall, Kathryn. *In the Combat Zone: An Oral History of American Women in Vietnam: 1966-1975*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1987.

- Miller, Carolyn Paine. *Captured!* New York: Christian Herald Books, 1977.
- Nerli, Maureen, USO. Interview by author, 3 August 1995, Burlingame, Ca. Tape recording.
- No Time for Tears: Vietnam: The Women Who Served.* Directed by West End Films. 59 min. New York, 1993. Videocassette.
- Noel, Chris with Bill Treadwell. *Matter of Survival: The 'War' Jane Never Saw.* Boston: Branden Publishing Company, 1987.
- Round Robinette*, Fall 1993.
- Santoli, Al. *Everything We Had: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Thirty-Three American Soldiers Who Fought It.* New York: Randon House, 1981.
- "Secretary on the Edge of War." *Ebony*, June 1966, 27-34.
- Smith, Hilary. "What Do Nurses Do in America?" *American Journal of Nursing*, 76 (February 1976): 278-80.
- Smith, Winnie. *American Daughter Goes to War: On the Front Line with an Army Nurse in Vietnam.* New York: William Morrow and Co., 1992.
- Smoyer, Nancy. "Playing Games." Internet. Vietnam Veterans Home Page. 1995, 1-2.
- Special Service: Where the Action Is.* Produced by Army Pictorial Center. 1970. Videocassette.
- Trembly, Diane L. *Petticoat Medic in Vietnam.* New York: Vantage Press, 1976.
- Turpin, James. *Vietnam Doctor: The Story of Project Concern.* New York: Signet Books, 1966.
- U.S. Congress. House. *Testimony of M. Hodge on H.J. Resolution 36 before the House Administration's Task Force on Libraries and Memorials.* 99th Cong., 1st sess., 20 May 1985, 1-5.
- Van Devanter, Lynda with Christopher Morgan. *Home before Morning: The True Story of an Army Nurse.* New York: Warner Books Inc., 1983.

- Van Devanter, Lynda and Joan Furey, eds. *Vision of War, Dreams of Peace: Writings of Women in the Vietnam War*. New York: Warner Books Inc., 1991.
- Vietnam Women's Memorial Project. *Celebration of Patriotism and Courage: Dedication of the Vietnam Women's Memorial*. November 1993.
- Voisard, Micki, Flight Attendant. Interview by author, 1 August 1995, St. Helena, Ca. Tape recording.
- Walker, Keith. *A Piece of My Heart: The Stories of Twenty-Six American Women Who Served in Vietnam*. Novato, Ca.: Presidio Press, 1985.
- Wallace, Terry. *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans*. New York: Random House, 1984.
- Walsh, Patricia L. *Forever Sad the Hearts*. New York: Avon Books, 1982.
- _____. *The Other Angels*. Produced and Directed by Patricia Walsh. 56 min. 1995. Videocassette.
- Webb, Kate. *On the Other Side: Twenty-Five Days with the Viet Cong*. New York: Quadrangle Books Inc., 1972.

LETTERS

- Beckwith, Gloria to Maryann Weber, 14 September 1995. Transcript in possession of author.
- Beckwith, Kate to Maryann Weber, 24 September 1995. Transcript in possession of author.
- Christie, Jeanne to Maryann Weber, 30 September 1995. Transcript in possession of author.
- Danielson, Judy to Maryann Weber, 9 September 1995. Transcript in possession of author.
- Diller, Phyllis to Maryann Weber, 20 September 1995. Transcript in possession of author.
- Hensley, Anne to Maryann Weber, 30 November 1995. Transcript in possession of author.

Numi, Carli to Maryann Weber, 24 September 1995. Transcript in possession of author.

Reznichuk, Carol to Maryann Weber, 16 October 1995. Transcript in possession of author.

Secondary Sources

- American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-III-R*. Washington D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1987.
- As, Berit. "A Materialistic View of Men's and Women's Attitudes Towards War." *Women's Studies International Forum* 5, nos. 3 and 4 (1982): 355-64.
- Attenbury, Mary Ann. "Women and Their Wartime Roles." *Minerva* 8 (Spring 1990): 11-28.
- Baker, Rodney, Shirley Menard and Lois Johns. "The Military Nurse Experience in Vietnam: Stress and Impact." *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 45, no. 5 (September 1989): 736-74.
- Benshoof-Holler, Margaret. "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder." *Vietnam* 6, no. 4 (December 1993): 39-44.
- Bloom, Marie. "Small Actions, Long Years." *AFSC Quaker Bulletin Service* 76 (Spring 1995): 6-7.
- Bowman, John, ed. *The Vietnam War: An Almanac*. New York: World Almanac Publications, 1985.
- Breault, Judith. *The World of Emily Howland*. Milbrae: La Femures, 1976
- Brownmiller, Susan. *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975.
- Butler, Deborah. *American Women Writers on Vietnam: Unheard Voices. A Selected Annotated Bibliography*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990
- Carey, Lynn. "Straight from the Heart." *Contra Costa Times*, 5 February 1995, 1-2.
- Carter, Susanne. "Visions of Vietnam in Women's Short Fiction." *Vietnam Generation* 1 (1989): 74-89.
- Chen, John. *Vietnam: A Comprehensive Bibliography*. Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1973.

- Christopher, Renny. "I Never Really Became a Woman Veteran Until. . . I Saw The Wall": A Review of Oral Histories and Personal Narratives by Women Veterans." *Vietnam Generation* 1 (1989): 33-45.
- Coffey, Frank. *Fifty Years with the USO*. New York: Brassey's Inc., 1991.
- Cook, Karne. "Mary Comes Marching Home." *Savvy* 9 (March 1988): 44-48.
- Coppola, Vincent. "They Also Served: Vietnam's Women Vets Get Recognition at Last." *Newsweek*, 12 November 1984, 35-36.
- Dellinger, John. "TWA Stewardess Marilyn Genz Cared about the Soldiers, and Her 'Iron Dress' Proved They Cared, Too." *Vietnam* 6, no. 4 (December 1993): 10-12.
- Denzler, Brenda. "Acceptance and Avoidance: The Woman Vietnam Vet." *Minerva* 5 (Summer 1987): 41-44.
- Desch-Scannell, Elizabeth. "The Lived Experience of Women Military Nurses in Vietnam during the Vietnam War." Ph.D. diss., Georgia State University, 1992.
- Dewane, Claudia J. "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Medical Personnel in Vietnam." *Hospital and Community Psychiatry* 35 (December 1984): 1232-34.
- "Did Agent Orange Kill My Babies?" *Woman's Day*, 20 June 1989, 58-62.
- Dienstfrey, Stephen J. "Women Veterans' Exposure to Combat." *Armed Forces and Society* 14 (Summer 1988): 549-58.
- Earley, Pete. "Forgotten Women: Effects of War on Female Vietnam Veterans Are Only Now Emerging." *Washington Post*, 24 March 1981, A1 and A13.
- Eauclaire, Sally. "Sculpting A Vision." *Vietnam* 6, no. 4 (December 1993): 22-28.
- Eby, Omar. *House in Hue*. Scottdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1968.
- Egendorf, A., and others. *Legacies of Vietnam: Comparative Adjustment of Veterans and Their Peers*. Washington D.C.: GPO, 1981.
- Elwood-Akers, Virginia. *Women War Correspondents in the Vietnam War: 1961-1975*. New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1988.

- Furey, Joan A. "Women Vietnam Veterans: A Comparison of Studies." *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services* 29, no. 3 (1991): 11-13.
- . "For Some the War Rages on." *American Journal of Nursing* 82 (November 1982): 1695-96.
- Gruhzit-Hoyt, Olga. *They Also Served: American Women in World War II*. New York: Carol Publishing Co., 1995.
- Holm, Jeanne. *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution*. Novato, Ca.: Presidio Press, 1992.
- Huston, Nancy. "Tales of War and Tears of Women." *Women's Studies International Forum* 5, nos. 3 and 4 (1982): 271-82.
- Karnow, Stanley. *Vietnam: A History*. New York: Penguin Books, 1983.
- Lewis, William W. and Edmund Sweeny Forker. *Forgotten Warriors: Agent Orange and the 'Smell of Perfume.'* New Jersey: New Jersey Agent Orange Commission, 1989.
- McKay, Bernadette A. "Civilian Assignment." *American Journal of Nursing* 68 (February 1968): 336-38.
- McLaughlin, Ken. "Head Mother of Saigon Tells Her Story." *San Jose Mercury*, 30 April 1995, 3B.
- McVicker, Sara J. "Invisible Veterans: The Women Who Served in Vietnam." *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services* 23 (October 1985): 13-19.
- Mithers, Carol Lynn. "Missing in Action: Women Warriors in Vietnam." *Cultural Critique* 3 (Spring 1986): 79-90.
- Moore, Constance J. "Oral History Reflections of Army Nurse Vietnam Veterans: Managing the Demanding Experience of War." Master's Thesis, San Jose State University, 1993.
- Morden, Bettie J. *The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978*. Washington D.C.: GPO, 1989.
- Morrow, Lance. "The Forgotten Warriors: A Nation Begins to Understand, as the Viet Nam Vets Wait for Their Parade." *Time*, 13 July 1981, 18-23.

- Norman, Elizabeth. *Women at War: The Story of Fifty Military Nurses Who Served in Vietnam*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990.
- Osby, Liv. "N.J. Agent Orange Commission Begins Study of Women." *Daily Record*, 13 March 1991, A8.
- Ostroff, Roberta. *Fire in the Wind: The Life of Dickey Chapelle*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1992.
- Palmer, Laura. *Shrapnel in the Heart: Letters and Remembrances from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*. New York: Random House, 1987.
- Paul, E.A. and J.S. O'Neill. "American Nurses in Vietnam: Stressors and Aftereffects." *American Journal of Nursing* 86 (May 1986): 526.
- Peace in Vietnam: A New Approach in Southeast Asia*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1966.
- Piemonte, Robert V. and Cindy Gurney. *Highlights in the History of the Army Nurse Corps*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1987.
- President's Commission on Mental Health. *Mental Health Problems of Vietnam Era Veterans*. Washington D.C.: GOP, 1978.
- Resnick, Heidi and others. "Prevalence of Civilian Trauma and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in a Representative National Sample of Women." *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 61, no. 6 (1993): 984-91.
- Rice-Grant, Sharon. "Does Anybody Care? About the Health Effects of Women Who Served in Vietnam." Master's Thesis, California State University, Sacramento, 1986.
- Rogers, Barbara and Janet Nickolaus. "Vietnam Nurses." *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services* 25, no. 4 (1987): 11-15.
- Rothblum, Esther and Ellen Cole, eds. *Another Silenced Trauma: Twelve Feminist Therapists and Activists Respond to one Woman's Recovery from War*. New York: Harrington Press, 1986.
- Saywell, Shelley. *Women in War: From World War II to El Salvador*. Markham, Ontario: Penguin Books, 1985.
- Schlossberg, Nancy. "A Model for Analyzing Human Adaptation to Transition." *The Counseling Psychologist* 9, no. 2 (1981): 2-18.

- Schnaier, Jenny Ann. "Women Vietnam Veterans and Mental Health Adjustment: A Study of Their Experiences and Post-Traumatic Stress." Master's Thesis, University of Maryland, 1982.
- Schwartz, Linda Spoonster. "Women and the Vietnam Experience." *Image: Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 19 (Winter 1987): 168-73.
- Sevy, Grace. "Lessons of the War: The Effects of Disillusionment on the Consciousness and Political Thinking of Conservative Women Veterans." *Minerva* 4 (Summer 1986): 96-132.
- Smith, Stephen C. "'Doughnut Dollies' Fight Vietnam Syndrome." *Daily Ledger*, 3 March 1982, 11.
- Sonnenberg, Stephen, Arthur Blank Jr. and John Talbott. *The Trauma of War: Stress and Recovery in Viet Nam Veterans*. Washington D.C.: American Psychiatric Press, Inc., 1985.
- Spelts, Doreen. "Nurses Who Served--And Did Not Return." *American Journal of Nursing* 86 (September 1986): 1037-38.
- Stiehm, Judith Hicks. "The Protected, the Protector, the Defender." *Women's Studies International Forum* 5, nos. 3 and 4 (1982): 367-76.
- Stretch, Robert H., James D. Vail, and Joseph Maloney. "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Among Army Nurse Corps Vietnam Veterans." *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 53, no. 5 (1985): 704-08.
- Stroud, Julia Meta. *Adjustment Difficulties of Women Vietnam Veterans*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Microfilms International, 1984.
- Summers, Colonel Harry G. "Nurses Have Served Officially in Wartime since 1861." *Vietnam* 6, no. 4 (December 1993): 8.
- Tal, Kali. "Feminist Criticism and the Literature of the Vietnam Combat Veteran." *Vietnam Generation* 1 (1989): 190-201.
- Theiler, Patricia. "A Vietnam Aftermath: The Untold Story of Women and Agent Orange." *Common Cause Magazine* 10 (November-December 1984): 28-34.
- Wilcox, Fred. *Waiting for an Army to Die: The Tragedy of Agent Orange*. Washington D.C.: Seven Locks Press, 1989.

Willenz, June. "Women Veterans from the Vietnam War through the Eighties."
Minerva 6 (Fall 1988): 44-60.

_____. *Women Veterans: America's Forgotten Heroines*. New York: Continuum
Publishing Co., 1983.

Williams, Reese, ed. *Unwinding the Vietnam War: From War into Peace*. Seattle:
The Real Comet Press, 1987.

"Women Who Died during the Vietnam War." Internet. Vietnam Veterans Home
Page. 1995, 1-5.