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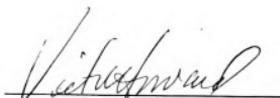
THE REPORTING OF AMERICAN WOMEN FOREIGN
CORRESPONDENTS FROM THE VIETNAM WAR

presented by

Donna Jones Born

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in English


Major professor

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**THE REPORTING OF AMERICAN WOMEN FOREIGN
CORRESPONDENTS FROM THE VIETNAM WAR**

by

Donna Jones Born

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

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**Program in American Studies
Department of English**

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ABSTRACT

THE REPORTING OF AMERICAN WOMEN FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS FROM THE VIETNAM WAR

by
Donna Jones Born

The Vietnam War was a transitional period for women in war correspondence. They had been reporting American wars, though peripherally, since the mid-1800s, but it was during the Vietnam War that women gained full access to the field, received support from the military, and reported war as regular correspondents on long-term assignments. Women reported from everywhere in Indochina, including the front lines of battles.

Most important to their achievement of professional status as war correspondents were women's own efforts. They were encouraged by the woman's movement and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as they pressured news organizations and the military to extend them opportunity and the equal right to report the war. Pioneers still, they were inspired by a long tradition of women foreign correspondence as they proved their grace and courage in the field.

Women's dispatches were published in a variety of newspapers and magazines and were reported on radio and television. While they wrote about all aspects of the war, women focused on the effects of the war on the Vietnamese people and society, primarily because they believed this was an important story that needed to be told but was being overlooked by the regular press corps.

As was true of previous wars, most women journalists in Vietnam were freelancers. As the war continued, news organizations dispatched more and more

women reporters, most for brief tours as special correspondents but some for regular tours as resident correspondents. Women reported the war from the early 1950s until the Americans evacuated Saigon in April 1975. They received several journalism awards, including the Pulitzer Prize and Overseas Press Club awards, among others. Three were killed, several were wounded, at least two were held prisoners, and others contracted serious diseases.

Major sources for this study are the published work of the women reporters, supplemented by interviews with twenty-two and letters from five. The reportage and experiences of nearly seventy correspondents were analyzed. Files of the United States Department of the Army identified 267 American women correspondents accredited for the Vietnam War.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study is about the reportage and experiences of American women who covered the war in Indochina during the American involvement, as early as 1950 and as late as 1975. Women contributed significantly to the media coverage of the Vietnam War, reporting from the field of battle to the refugee camps, where millions of displaced civilians struggled to survive in the face of this new kind of war that spilled everywhere. Their dispatches were published in a variety of newspapers and magazines and reported on radio and the major television networks. Their stories described and analyzed all aspects of the war, including combat and politics, but the focus of their reporting was the effect of the war on the lives of the Vietnamese people.

The Vietnam War was a transitional era for women in journalism and war correspondence. Women had been reporting American wars, though peripherally, since the mid-1800s, but it was during the Vietnam War that they became regular war correspondents. In World War II, most of the few women who reported combat watched the fighting from a distance or reached the front lines through subterfuge. In Korea, Marguerite Higgins did break barriers as the only woman front-line reporter there. But it was not until Vietnam that women as a group gained full access to fighting zones, received full support from the military for transportation and accommodations, and began to be sent to the war as regular

correspondents on long-term assignments. Today, in Central America and the Middle East, women correspondents are regularly reporting the conflicts in those regions.

In Vietnam, women focused on the effect of the war on the Vietnamese. Although there were notable exceptions, the predominantly male correspondent corps focused on the strategy and outcome of the battles and on the American G.I.'s as fighting soldiers. Most women reported the war as a terrible disruption of Vietnamese society. When they wrote about the American soldier, he was less often a hero defending his country and more often a confused, anguished young man fighting a war he little understood and sometimes even did not support. This perspective dominated women's reporting from the beginning of United States involvement in the war, although it did not become an aspect of the general coverage until much later.

There are a number of possible reasons why women focused on the underlying issues and the effects of the war. Women said they believed these were important news stories that needed to be told and were being overlooked by the majority of the press. They were stories that particularly interested them. What was happening to the people attracted their attention far more than the daily fighting, which many said was to them essentially the same from battle to battle, even war to war. Some women thought tradition was a factor: women journalists have covered human-interest stories and the emotional angle since the late nineteenth century, and many employers did ask their female reporters to focus on those aspects of the story. Others thought perhaps women's historical cultural role and conditioning as the compassionate nurturers of society may have been a factor.

Practical considerations were certainly a factor. Most women correspondents in Vietnam were freelancers, who financed their way to Vietnam and sold

their stories after they were written. Their stories had a better chance to sell if they were fresh and different from the usual news of battle, which regularly assigned, experienced war correspondents were covering daily for the news services, which in turn furnished newspapers and broadcast stations with most of the news of Vietnam. One story in particular—about the home-town soldier at war—was always in demand by local papers and went a long way toward the support of many freelancers. Many women also felt the Vietnamese people were more comfortable with them than with men, giving them a certain advantage in interviewing and reporting stories about the people. The guerrilla nature of the war meant that the war was not confined to isolated battlefields and front lines, but rather was everywhere in Vietnam, and the effect of the war on the society and culture of Vietnam became an important news story. There were, of course, outstanding women combat reporters who focused on the battlefield.

Several factors contributed to women's success in establishing themselves during the Vietnam War as professional war correspondents with the right to report war as any journalist. Most important were their own efforts to secure this status. A long tradition of women's foreign and war correspondence inspired them. The woman's movement in the United States encouraged them to struggle for greater participation in the profession. Women journalists sought opportunities to report news wherever it was made. Women journalists made strategic use of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to put pressure on news organizations to include them in all levels of the organization and to put pressure on the military to extend them the equal right to report the war.

Of some assistance to them were circumstances peculiar to the war itself. The Vietnam War was perhaps the most accessible war in American history. In spite of a number of official obstacles placed in the way of their reporting throughout the war, never had the press been extended such freedom to cover

a war or such complete assistance and cooperation from the U.S. military in reaching combat zones. Press credentials were relatively easy to obtain, even by freelance reporters, which most women were in Vietnam. Access to the fighting was also made easier—though more dangerous—by the guerrilla nature of the war.

Once women's legal right to access to the field was finally established in 1967, most military officers treated them as journalists; enlisted soldiers had generally been cooperative all along. Most women found their male colleagues to be supportive and indeed helpful. Some employers attempted to restrict women's movements "for their own safety," but women managed to break that barrier and to report from where the story happened to be.

Sources

This study is based for the most part on interviews with correspondents and the correspondents' published work. Studies about foreign correspondents include few women, and no studies have analyzed their war reportage. One master's thesis¹, essentially biographical and descriptive, has been written about some of the women reporters in Vietnam.

The women correspondents were identified from the files of the U.S. Department of the Army. All correspondents for the Vietnam War had to secure credentials from the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, and the files are at the U.S. National Archives. Unfortunately, the accreditation files are not complete: those before 1965 were destroyed by fire, and for unknown reasons, some files are missing from a few boxes.

More than 467 women eventually were accredited by MACV as correspondents between 1965 and 1973, when America pulled out of the war. Of these,

¹Virginia Edythe Elwood-Akers, "Women Correspondents in the Vietnam War 1961-1975" (Master's Thesis, California State University, Northridge, 1981)

approximately 267 were Americans. They are listed in Appendix A.

Not all accredited correspondents were reporters in the field, and the number of actual American women who were working correspondents is difficult to determine precisely. Interpreters, secretaries, technicians, and many wives of male correspondents were also accredited as correspondents, mainly to take advantage of the military PX and transportation privileges. The accreditation form simply states that the person is accredited as a correspondent for a certain news organization.

Approximately seventy of the 267 accredited American women correspondents have been identified by their published work or by colleagues as having been working correspondents in Vietnam either as freelancers, special correspondents, or resident correspondents. This study is based on those seventy. It is important to note, however, that many more women reporters went to Vietnam for one- to two-week tours either as freelancers or special correspondents.

In addition, four correspondents from other countries are included because their reporting was published extensively in the United States. These are Kate Webb (Australia and New Zealand), who was the first woman resident correspondent for an American news agency in Vietnam and became widely respected as a war correspondent for UPI for many years in Indochina; Catherine Leroy (France), whose highly acclaimed photographs were published by *Life* and other magazines; Oriana Fallaci (Italy), whose interviews and book about her Vietnam reporting for the Italian weekly *L'Europea* were widely read in the United States; and Hilary Brown (Canada), who was a foreign correspondent for ABC News and covered the final days of the war before the North Vietnamese occupied Saigon, 30 April 1975.

The reportage of women correspondents, which was reviewed for content and focus, appeared in numerous publications, including major papers such as

the *The New York Times*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, the *Washington Post*, *Newsday*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Chicago Daily News* as well as lesser known papers throughout the country such as the *Phoenix Gazette*, the *Honolulu Advertiser*, the *Manchester* (New Hampshire) *Union Leader*, and the *Chicago Defender*. Women wrote for public-affairs and opinion magazines such as the *Nation*, *The New Yorker*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, and the *New York Review of Books* and for more popular, general-interest magazines such as *Parade*, *Reader's Digest*, *Life*, *Look*, and *National Geographic*.

Nineteen women correspondents wrote books about the war. Often based on their reportage, these books provided the content and focus of their reporting and sometimes information about their experiences. A few women published articles describing their experiences in Vietnam.

Not all correspondents' work could be examined, for example, the reporting of broadcast and news-agency journalists was not often available. Interviews provided the basis for generalizations about such reportage. Efforts were made to locate and interview all seventy women, and twenty-two were interviewed. Except for one interview, the interviews were by telephone, because telephone was the most feasible method. The average length of the interviews was one hour. All the persons interviewed were cooperative and generous with their time and information. Five additional correspondents, for different reasons, chose in place of the interview to describe their reporting and experiences in letters to me.

The questions that guided the interviews appear in Appendix B, although not all persons were asked every question when the information was available through the correspondent's published work or other published biographical information. As the questions illustrate, they were primarily directed at the focus

of the reportage and the reporter's experiences while covering the war. Many of the interviews were recorded.

Secondary sources, mostly about the press and the Vietnam War, were used in this study mainly to place the reportage of women in a context of the overall coverage of the war. Many of the books and articles used for this purpose were written by male correspondents who themselves reported on the war, and these sources also provided insight into the content and focus of their reporting as well. Histories of the war provided a necessary context for the press and Vietnam in general.

CHAPTER II

THE PRESS AND THE VIETNAM WAR

An overview of the role of the press in Vietnam is a necessary context against which to assess the contribution of women correspondents to the general coverage of the war. The following review of the literature briefly summarizes the discussions of the press and the war, which have concentrated on three main issues: (1) the shortcomings of the Saigon press corps; (2) the difficulties covering an undeclared guerrilla war in a distant land and a foreign culture; (3) and the superficial coverage of the war primarily as the fighting, especially by television news, with little coverage of the complex issues underlying the war.

A major criticism of the coverage of the war is that not until very late did reporters from major news outlets begin to write about the political, economic, social, and cultural issues of Vietnam and the Vietnamese people. The American press reported the war from the American perspective as an American war against Communism. Few American reporters wrote about the war from the Vietnamese perspective as a national war of liberation. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, women correspondents from the beginning of the war wrote about the Vietnamese, but their impact on the overall coverage was limited by their small numbers and their minor representation in the major media.

The reporting of the Vietnam War has been nearly as controversial as the war itself. The extreme view is that a sensationalistic, unpatriotic, even disloyal

press lost the war for America and South Vietnam. President Reagan has many times, before receptive audiences, delivered the line: "Vietnam is the war we were not allowed to win." That the Reagan administration believed the media were among the conspirators responsible for not "allowing" the United States to win was implicit in its approval of the barring of the press from accompanying American troops into Grenada. Conclusions of major research to the contrary, that the press actively opposed American involvement in Vietnam is a myth that persists to this day.

The Saigon Press Corps

Criticism of the Saigon press corps began early in the war, and *ad hominem* attacks from the Kennedy administration sought to diminish the impact of the reports out of Saigon by discrediting the correspondents responsible for them.¹ Charges that most correspondents were too young or too inexperienced to cover the complexities of the war were really intended to cast doubt on the credibility of their essentially accurate, but pessimistic, reports.

Press reports of the 1963 battle at Ap Bac as a "stunning defeat" prompted American Ambassador to South Vietnam Frederick Nolting to order John Mecklin, public affairs officer of the U.S. mission, to prepare a white paper on the role of the press. The paper asserted that sensational reporting was hurting the American interest in Saigon, and identified the Saigon reporters as young, immature, and inexperienced journalists who sought "black-and-white answers where they do not exist."²

¹Francis Donald Faulkner, "Bao Chi: The American News Media in Vietnam" (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1981), 50. See also Daniel C. Hallin, *The "Uncensored War:" The Media and Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 6, and David Halberstam, "Getting the Story in Vietnam," *Commentary* 39 (January 1965): 33.

²David Halberstam, *The Making of a Quagmire* (New York: Random

Critics from outside the government, while they did not agree that the dispatches were erroneous, did agree, however, that the youth of the reporters was perhaps partly responsible for their limited coverage of the complex issues beyond the fighting. Vietnam correspondents Robert Shaplen of *The New Yorker* and Edward Behr of *Newsweek* and columnist Joseph Alsop wrote that young, brash reporters were eager to report the action and not the politics of war.³ In one of the bitterest attacks on the press, Robert Elegant, a correspondent in Southeast Asia for *Newsweek* and the *Los Angeles Times*, wrote that the "distorted" press picture of the war resulted in part from the lack of senior correspondents on extended tours.⁴

Rodney Tiffen notes in his study of the sociology of newsmaking that reporters who covered Vietnam were like reporters of all wars. They were young correspondents who established their reputations by "taking on exploits too hazardous for regular correspondents to bother with."⁵

Contributing to the impression of a young Saigon press corps, however, was that the three leading press critics of American policy during the early years of the war—David Halberstam of *The New York Times*, Neil Sheehan of United Press International, and Malcolm Browne of the Associated Press, were in their late twenties. Also among these early critics was Beverly Deepe, twenty-six when she replaced Francois Sully as *Newsweek's* correspondent when he was expelled by the Diem government in May 1962. They were indeed young compared with

House, 1965), 159.

³See Robert Shaplen, "The Challenge Ahead," *Columbia Journalism Review* 9 (Winter 1970-71): 40-46; Edward Behr, *Bearings: A Foreign Correspondent's Life Behind the Lines* (New York: The Viking Press, 1978), 240; and Halberstam, "Getting the Story in Vietnam," 33.

⁴Robert Elegant, "How to Lose a War," *Encounter* 57 (August 1981): 73-90.

⁵Rodney Tiffen, *The News from Southeast Asia: The Sociology of Newsmaking* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1978), 11.

the typical foreign correspondent, who was a man in his late thirties or early forties,⁶ but they were not without foreign experience. Halberstam and Sheehan had reported from Africa and Asia; Browne had also reported from Asia for a time, was married to a Vietnamese and could speak the language; Deepe had reported from the Soviet Union and Asia as a freelancer.

There were older experienced reporters in Vietnam in 1962, who had been reporting on Indochina for some time, and they were soon joined by other experienced foreign correspondents. Among those in Vietnam before 1962 were Homer Bigart, in Vietnam since 1945 first for the *Herald Tribune* and then for *The New York Times*; Francois Sully, a French correspondent who had covered Dien Bien Phu; Peggy Durdin, who had been writing political analysis about Indochina as a freelancer in Southeast Asia mostly for *The New York Times Magazine* since the early fifties; Dickey Chapelle, who made several visits to Vietnam beginning in 1961 as a freelancer for the *National Observer*; Ray Herndon, UPI; Jerry Rose, *Time*; Mert Perry, UPI and Time-Life. Joining them during 1962-63 were Horst Faas and Peter Arnett, AP; Charles Mohr, *Time*; Peter Kalischer, CBS; Takashi Oka, *The Christian Science Monitor*; Robert Martin, *U.S. News and World Report*, Robert McCabe, *Newsweek*; Jim Robinson, NBC; Bernard Kalb, CBS; and Stanley Karnow, *Saturday Evening Post*.⁷

Some critics claimed that it was actually the small size of the Saigon corps

⁶Frederick T. C. Yu and John Luter, "The Foreign Correspondent and His Work," *Columbia Journalism Review* 3 (Spring 1964): 7; Leo Bogart, "The Overseas Newsman: A 1967 Profile Study," *Journalism Quarterly* 45 (Summer 1968): 295.

⁷For various lists of those in the early Saigon press corps, see: Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, *The Press and America*, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1984), 561; Phillip Knightley, "How to Lose a War: A Response From a Print Historian," in *Vietnam Reconsidered: Lessons From a War*, ed. Harrison E. Salisbury (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 154; "Dateline, Saigon: War of Words," *Newsweek*, 7 Oct. 1963, 98; Halberstam, *The Making of a Quagmire*, 275.

that was responsible for inadequate coverage of the complex issues surrounding the war. News organizations, as a measure of economy, staffed only small bureaus in Saigon and depended on freelancers or stringers to fill the voids.⁸ According to Halberstam, this was its true weakness:

What was particularly shocking was that such a major American commitment—this country's only war—was covered by so few reporters. For most of my tour—until late 1963—I was the only full-time staff correspondent of an American daily newspaper. I believe that the *Washington Post*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, the *Baltimore Sun* and other papers which have great influence in the United States failed to meet their obligations during those months in 1962 and early 1963. If some of us had more journalistic power than was merited, it had been granted us purely by default.⁹

At the beginning of 1964, still only ten resident correspondents were based in Vietnam, with ten additional outside correspondents visiting Saigon regularly.¹⁰ Although the number of accredited correspondents began to grow rapidly after the March 1965 landing of U.S. marines at Danang, many reporters continued to make brief visits to Vietnam while the resident press corps remained relatively small throughout the war.

Over the course of the war, approximately 5,000 persons—including nearly 500 women—were accredited as correspondents by the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), but the totals are deceiving. Fewer than one-third of the 360 accredited by July 1966 actually were correspondents.¹¹ By February 1968, during Tet, 637 reporters were in Vietnam of whom 300 were Americans, the highest number recorded throughout the war.¹² Of these, Peter Braestrup, Vietnam correspondent and media critic, wrote that the actual working field

⁸Faulkner, 719.

⁹Halberstam, *The Making of a Quagmire*, 275.

¹⁰Faulkner, 96.

¹¹James Aronson, *The Press and the Cold War* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1970), 238.

¹²Faulkner, 156, 188, 255.

press was only sixty “resident representatives of ‘major media’—those news publications, news agencies, and TV networks with national U.S. audiences.”¹³ This number and definition may be excessively restrictive, but most writers agree that there never were enough full-time correspondents covering the war for extended tours. After Tet, the number of correspondents gradually declined to 295 in 1972 and to thirty-five by mid-1974, mostly American and Japanese.¹⁴

Some critics blamed much of the “erroneous” reporting on the fact that correspondents did not stay long enough in Vietnam to develop sufficient experience and understanding to write intelligently about the issues. Typical was the criticism of Major General Winant Sidle, chief of information for General William Westmoreland in Saigon from 1967-1969, who believed that the American people suffered from poor reporting while reporters did their “on-the-job training.” Sidle (who thought that one of the real problems with the press was that there were too *many* reporters), acknowledged that “young reporters who stayed a year or longer eventually became quite good.”¹⁵

According to Braestrup, the short tour of most reporters—the average stay of newspaper and news-magazine reporters was a year to eighteen months; news-agency reporters tended to stay eighteen months or more—“flattened” their “learning curve.”¹⁶ According to media critic Daniel Hallin, short tours after 1965 were in part a result of the expansion of American involvement: correspondents, “like the soldiers, would be rotated out of their dangerous assignments in six months

¹³Peter Braestrup, *Big Story: How the American Press and Television Reported and Interpreted the Crisis of Tet 1968 in Vietnam and Washington* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977), 12.

¹⁴Knightley, 398.

¹⁵Winant Sidle, “The Role of Journalists in Vietnam: an Army General’s Perspective,” in *Vietnam Reconsidered: Lessons From a War*. ed. Harrison E. Salisbury (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 110.

¹⁶Braestrup, 14.

or a year."¹⁷

Difficulties in Reporting the War

Much has been written about the difficulties of reporting the war in Vietnam, where few reporters understood the language or the complexities of Vietnamese culture and society. It was a new kind of war, one with no battlefronts, in fact, few major battles, and an elusive enemy who was difficult to distinguish from civilians or even from one's allies. In one of the earliest books about the war, Malcolm Browne, who photographed the first Buddhist self-immolation, described the use of terror as a military tactic, and the new face of war.¹⁸ It was a dangerous story to cover. In all, sixty men and women correspondents were killed in Indochina between the years 1960 to 1975.¹⁹

Journalists were vulnerable to many of the dangers that threatened soldiers. In addition to those who were killed, many were wounded, suffered incurable tropical diseases, and were captured and held prisoner. Elizabeth Pond of the *The Christian Science Monitor*, Richard Dudman of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and Michael Morrow of Dispatch News Service International were captured in May 1970 as they were driving into Cambodia to cover the fighting there. Pond described their captivity in a series of articles in the *Monitor*. Their experiences illustrate not only the physical dangers but also the moral dilemma many faced in reporting a war in which one's enemy was fighting for the freedom and independence of its country.

How to deal with their captors so as not to excite their wrath or contempt was the journalists' first concern. In her first report to the *Monitor*, Pond said

¹⁷Hallin, 135.

¹⁸Malcolm W. Browne, *The New Face of War* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1965), 120.

¹⁹Faulkner, 710.

the three journalists decided not to assume an adversary relationship with their captors, no matter how frightened they were, and to maintain their positions as journalists. Their first week was the most frightening, and the period during which Pond felt they were closest to being killed at any moment. They were treated roughly and with some hatred, but they were made to understand they would be treated civilly if indeed they were journalists and not spies.²⁰

After about a week of interrogation, they began to settle into a routine that included increasingly less hostile conversation with their captors. The days passed as they were continually moved from place to place.²¹ One Cambodian and five Vietnamese soldiers cared for them during their captivity. From time to time they would see other Cambodians, as they always stayed in the homes of Cambodian families.

Pond continued her work during her captivity and was allowed to interview her captors. All five captors told her they were willing to make unlimited sacrifices for the causes of the revolution, with the immediate objective being to get the Americans out of Indochina. The aim of the revolution was a good society, and a good society depended on unselfishness. Even though family was basic in Vietnam culture, in the revolution, friendships and family were subordinate to the cause. Enemies could be reeducated to goodness, but unless they accepted the revolutionary truth, enemies were killed.²²

Eventually as their captors grew to believe that they were journalists and not spies, they came to be on rather good mutual terms. On the day before their

²⁰Elizabeth Pond, "Out From Cambodian Captivity," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 20-22 June 1970, 1.

²¹Elizabeth Pond, "Typical Day in Captivity," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 23 June 1970, 1.

²²Elizabeth Pond, "We Are Part of the Revolution," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 24 June 1970, 1; "Portrait of a Revolutionary, Parts I and II," in *Newsletter From Southeast Asia: Vietnamese Politics* (New York: Alicia Patterson Fund, 1970), Newsletters 9 and 10.

release—after five and a half weeks of captivity—they were given a dinner attended by almost everybody they had come in contact with during their captivity. A gathering of about 1,000 villagers turned out to say farewell.²³

Pond's struggle to evaluate their experiences and to explain to herself as well as to others why she and the other two journalists had been released when some twenty newspaper journalists at the time were still missing in Cambodia illustrates the psychological problems of reporting this difficult war. She and the others had one of the few opportunities as journalists to look at the enemy from the other side, and they found that they developed a certain understanding and empathy for the point of view of the enemy. They even developed relatively friendly relations with their captors, exchanging gifts just before their release.

In a final article in the series, Pond wrote about her ethical dilemma. "These questions have haunted me since our release. So have others—questions about the nature of friendship and the trust of friendship, of freedom, of moral responsibility and moral ambiguity." She wrote that the three journalists said nothing in captivity contrary to their convictions. They signed a joint statement that said they had been well cared for after the first day, that the morale of the five guards was excellent, and that they had seen "South Vietnamese troops stealing civilian rice reserves and household goods in the town of Prasaut." They told their captors they regretted that American and South Vietnamese troops had entered Cambodia, and that they hoped as journalists they could alter American policy. Pond said they could have made other choices, for example, to be silent.

As it turned out, we made a choice that was not one of confrontation. We expected to be treated as journalists once it was ascertained that we were not spies, and we acted this way. We proposed interviews and trips whenever we could. We posed questions. We took—in the latter period—copious notes, which were not censored. We lived, to some extent, the "other side" of this bitter war with an immediacy

²³Elizabeth Pond, "A Farewell Dinner," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 25 June 1970, 1.

that we had never imagined possible.²⁴

Correspondents were frequently troubled by conflicting emotions about the war. Michael Herr described soldiers and reporters alike, despite the madness, to be at times “literally High On War, like it said on all the helmet covers.”²⁵ The helicopter became the symbol of the war, of the sophisticated weapons technology of the war, and of the excitement, the “sexiness,” the love-hate fascination of the violence.²⁶ Ward Just described the schizophrenia of living in peace and comfort in Saigon while hearing the war a few short miles away. From the relative safety of the city, reporters would fly—or even take a taxi—to cover a skirmish, a disturbance, sometimes even a battle, and be back in Saigon in time for dinner in one of the fine French restaurants.²⁷

Just also wrote about reporters being pulled in two directions by professionalism and patriotism:

It seemed anachronistic in the cool world of 1967, where reporters of my generation prided themselves on a professional detachment. The compulsion was to tell it like it was, even if what it was was your own country at war and the way it was, if told truthfully, was not “helpful” to the effort.²⁸

The Vietnam war was unlike any war America had waged in recent times, difficult to fight and to report, and difficult for the American people to understand. AP correspondent Ed White attempted to explain the differences between Vietnam and World War II or Korea:

²⁴Elizabeth Pond, “Freed Journalist’s Question: ‘Why us?’” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 26 June 1970, 1.

²⁵Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 63.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 9.

²⁷Ward S. Just, *To What End: Report From Vietnam* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968), 19-20.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 24.

In those wars you had lateral lines and correspondents went up to the front and got their stories and came back to write them. In Viet Nam you have complex politics and complex military situation with no lateral front but with pockets of fighting all over the country. When you put down in a helicopter, you have no idea whether you are in enemy territory or not.²⁹

The difficulty in reporting the war was complicated by the confusion over the reasons for the fighting. As the war dragged on, American officials at different times changed the official reasons for American involvement. First America was defending democracy against communism and containing communism within China; as part of that goal, it was aiding the South Vietnamese ally in a civil war against a Communist enemy. When relations between China and the United States improved with detente, the reason given for continuing American involvement in Vietnam gradually changed to the necessity to maintain American prestige by not losing the war.

Many reporters told Thomas Morgan in a series of interviews in 1984 that reporting the war had severely altered their personalities and careers. Ward Just told him that he was ruined as a journalist after Vietnam. Gloria Emerson, correspondent for *The New York Times* from February 1970 to February 1972, said that she became a harsher, crueler person because of her experiences there. Peter Arnett said he thought the press corps suffered mass stress and trauma: "Some newsmen committed suicide....Some lost their careers. I'm sure there's been a greater percentage of failure after Vietnam than after World War II."³⁰

A variety of government restraints further exacerbated the journalists' difficulties. Pressures applied by the Army, which controlled transportation for correspondents, could be cruel, wrote Gloria Emerson; so could those applied by

²⁹Ray Erwin, "Viet Nam's Story is Hard to Explain," *Editor and Publisher* 99 (3 Sept. 1966): 18.

³⁰Thomas B. Morgan, "Reporters of the Lost War," *Esquire*, July 1984, 49.

the American ambassador and members of the U.S. Mission.³¹ The Diem government resorted to physical attacks on the reporters, and Malcolm Browne wrote that American officials, who shared the Saigon government's view that reporting should be positive, refused to interfere with Diem's tactics:

Police methods became increasingly harsh. Correspondents were tailed constantly, and the telephones of all newsmen were monitored twenty-four hours a day. Sometimes callers received sinister threats from the government. Visitors to news offices frequently were picked up and spirited off by plainclothesmen a few yards from the doors. Correspondents were regularly expelled from Vietnam, on the direct orders of Madame Nhu.³²

An important difference between Vietnam and previous American wars is that the military guidelines restricting press coverage of strategic information were "voluntary" in Vietnam. There was no formal censorship even though reporters themselves believed everyone would be better served if the press submitted dispatches to the military censors in exchange for full access to information and to the field. Because of the impracticality of U.S. imposed censorship in an undeclared war and in a country not officially under American jurisdiction, American officials substituted voluntary guidelines, beginning with the buildup of American troops in 1965. (See Appendix D.)

Accredited correspondents agreed not to report information that fell within fifteen categories of classified information. A violation of any of the rules would result in disaccreditation. The procedure worked well for the military, and both Generals Westmoreland and Winant Sidle, chief information officer for the U.S. Mission, praised the press for its cooperation.³³

³¹Gloria Emerson, "Comments on Chapter 17, 'The Vietnam Press Corps,' *The First Casualty*" (Unpublished paper in Gloria Emerson papers, Boston University Library.)

³²Malcolm W. Browne, "Vietnam Reporting: Three Years of Crisis," *Columbia Journalism Review* 3 (Fall 1964): 4-9.

³³See Daniel C. Hallin, *The "Uncensored War": The Media and Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 126-129.

Lack of official censorship was used by the government as a public relations tool to demonstrate its liberal cooperation with the media,³⁴ and some journalists called for official censorship and standard wartime reporting procedures as a more positive and productive alternative to government news management.³⁵ The government did not invoke such procedures, partly because government tactics used to control the press were successful to a large degree. According to Hallin, "the U.S. mission not only released very little useful information, but made efforts to clamp down on officials who leaked 'negative' information and to restrict reporters' access...to 'military activities of the type that are likely to result in undesirable stories.'"³⁶

Women correspondents experienced special difficulties. In the early years, in particular, military officers objected to their presence in the field, especially overnight, primarily because women were thought to need additional protection and thus would be an added burden for soldiers. A few officers thought their presence could also be distracting to the fighting troops. One Marine commander told Beverly Deepe that she was to wear fatigues all the time: "We don't want women with legs down here."³⁷

The lack of facilities was sometimes a problem, but was usually a source of embarrassment for others more than for the woman. UPI reporter Maggie Kilgore, determined not to be treated in any special way because she was a woman, for some time repeatedly declined invitations from pilots to ride in the cockpit on troop transports because she thought they were being gracious when actually they were trying to get her to leave the cabin so the troops could use

³⁴Faulkner, 717-719.

³⁵Kathleen J. Turner, *Lyndon Johnson's Dual War: Vietnam and the Press* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 151.

³⁶Hallin, 39.

³⁷Beverly Deepe, "The Woman Correspondent," *Dateline* 1 (Jan. 1966): 95.

the open hose latrine system in the tail of the plane.³⁸ Once at the Quang Tri press camp, a male correspondent groped in the dark for the toilet and found himself sitting in Gloria Emerson's lap. "The yell, it should be noted, came not from Gloria, but from the embarrassed man."³⁹

Criticism of the Coverage

Criticism during the early years of the war was prompted most often by the pessimistic news reports of the failure of tactics in carrying out American policy and came mostly from government officials, who were concerned about maintaining positive public opinion toward their conduct of the war. Hanson Baldwin, military correspondent for *The New York Times*, expressed this attitude when he predicted in 1966 that public opinion "could win or lose the war, regardless of what happens in the jungle battles."⁴⁰ As the war expanded and continued—particularly after the Tet offensive of 1968—criticism began to focus on the failure of the media to explore and to explain the underlying issues of the war to the bewildered American public.

The New Yorker in 1967 strongly censured the press for not looking at the larger questions, asserting that it was covering the war like a "fast-breaking news event back home," treating the war like an "accounting exercise" and reporting it in isolated hard-news battle pieces.⁴¹ The press was not investigating the "various parts of the Vietnam picture" and putting these parts together to explain the

³⁸Margaret Kilgore, "The Female War Correspondent in Vietnam," *Quill* 60 (May 1972): 12.

³⁹Behr, 280.

⁴⁰Hanson W. Baldwin, "The Information War in Saigon," *The Reporter*, 24 Feb. 1966, 29.

⁴¹Michael Arlen, "Television and the Press in Vietnam; or, Yes, I can Hear You Very Well—Just What Was It You Were Saying?" *The New Yorker*, 21 Oct. 1967, 173-186.

meaning of the war to the American public.

Among male correspondents there were notable exceptions who tried to mix interpretation of the issues with breaking news. From the early years of the war, Bernard Fall wrote always about the Vietnamese and the historical and political issues of Vietnam.⁴² Jonathan Schell's *Village of Ben Suc* powerfully described the effect of pacification on the Vietnamese people.⁴³ Robert Shaplen criticized the press for its failure to cover the politics or the social and economic aspects for the Vietnamese, but he noted that outstanding reporting on these issues was done by R. W. Apple, Jr., Peter Grose, Gene Roberts, Robert Kaiser, Ward Just, William Tuohy, Robert Keatley, Peter Kann, and Bernard Weinraub.⁴⁴ Michael Morrow, Peter Arnett, and photographer Philip Jones Griffiths were others, but for the most part, the story of the effect of the war on the Vietnamese was covered usually by women correspondents.

The *Columbia Journalism Review* devoted its Winter 1970-71 issue to an assessment of the media's coverage of the war to that date. The press was especially criticized for its failure to perceive and report on the war as a political struggle, to place the war in its historical context, and to explain the underlying social, economic, and cultural issues. "Particularly poor to my mind was political and economic coverage of the period of political chaos in 1964-65, the general internal situations in 1967, and problems and perspectives of the Vietnamese," wrote Barry Zorthian, U.S. military information officer of MACV.⁴⁵ Fred Friendly

⁴²See Bernard Fall, *Last Reflections On a War* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1964); *Street Without Joy* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Company, 1964); and *Viet-Nam Witness 1953-1966* (New York: Praeger, 1966).

⁴³Jonathan Schell, *The Village of Ben Suc* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1967).

⁴⁴Shaplen, 46.

⁴⁵"The Media and Vietnam: Comment and Appraisal," *Columbia Journalism Review* 9 (Winter 1970-71): 26-27.

wrote that the press failed to analyze and synthesize the various issues to give the public an understanding of what the war was really all about.⁴⁶

Louis Heren of the *Times* of London faulted the press for not questioning official policy “and, indeed, some of the old ideas of patriotism.”⁴⁷ Heren also was critical of the press for not covering the effects of the war on the South Vietnamese. Halberstam wrote that the questions the reporters asked were the “smaller” ones. “Only in the latter part of 1963 and in early 1964 did they begin to perceive that the . . . real problem had its roots in the French Indochina war. By then it was very late.”⁴⁸ Years later, Halberstam expressed regret that he and the other journalists had not understood the crucial importance of the historical roots of the conflict, and that they did not from the start “make clear the impossibility of the struggle.”⁴⁹

The press failed to report the complexities of guerrilla conflict, and instead, reported battles as though they resembled World War II, criticized correspondent James McCartney. Rarely did stories explain political and economic factors, “probably more important in a guerrilla struggle than all that could be written about military maneuvers.”⁵⁰

Jules Witcover pointed to the failure of the Washington press corps to question officials in Washington, where policy was made.⁵¹ Few questions were asked

⁴⁶Fred Friendly, “TV at the Turning Point,” *Columbia Journalism Review* 9 (Winter 1970-71): 15.

⁴⁷“The Media and Vietnam: Comment and Appraisal,” 26.

⁴⁸David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1969), 206.

⁴⁹Quoted in Thomas B. Morgan, “Reporters of the Lost War,” *Esquire*, July 1984, 52.

⁵⁰James McCartney, “Can the Media Cover Guerrilla Wars?” *Columbia Journalism Review* 9 (Winter 1970-71): 33-37.

⁵¹Jules Witcover, “Where Washington Reporting Failed,” *Columbia Journalism Review* 9 (Winter 1970-71): 7-12.

about policy and its effectiveness; instead, reporters tended to report the Pentagon briefings as the final word. Reporters did little questioning or analyzing of official statements about the issues surrounding the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution of 1964, the bombing of North Vietnam as a response to the attacks at Pleiku and Quinhon of February 1965, and the American buildup in Vietnam in the spring and summer of 1965.

Faulkner, who had also been a correspondent in Vietnam, criticized reporters for failing to investigate issues and said they “sought the paths of least resistance,” which for the most part meant reporting the briefings made at the “Five O’Clock Follies” and statements made by American commanders in the field.⁵² Braestrup cited similar weaknesses as responsible for the “catastrophic misreporting” of the Tet 1968 offensive as a major victory for the North Vietnamese and a setback for the South, profoundly influencing public support and government policy to turn away from the war.⁵³

The most serious of all criticisms of the Saigon press was that correspondents were not only passively incompetent but also were actively disloyal to the American and South Vietnamese cause, forsaking traditional standards of objectivity and distorting reality to favor the Communists and the National Liberation

⁵²Faulkner, 726.

⁵³Braestrup, 705-714. Braestrup wrote in his indictment of the coverage of Tet 1968: “Retrospectively, it becomes clear that the American press—as it was and is still organized—could only have been overwhelmed by events at Tet. . . . The cultural, military, and political mosaic of South Vietnam, affected increasingly since 1961 by the American presence, demanded insights and background which the recently arrived newsmen. . . did not possess.” (xxv) Braestrup further concludes: “Rarely has contemporary crisis-journalism turned out, in retrospect, to have veered so widely from reality. Essentially, the dominant themes of the words and film from Vietnam (rebroadcast in commentary, editorials, and much political rhetoric at home) added up to a portrait of defeat for the allies. Historians, on the contrary, have concluded that the Tet offensive resulted in a severe military-political setback for Hanoi in the South. To have portrayed such a setback for one side as a defeat for the other—in a major crisis abroad—cannot be counted as a triumph for American journalism” (p. 75).

Front. Elegant accused a “superficial and biased” press of being “instinctively” against the Government and “for Saigon’s enemies.”⁵⁴

Few critics went so far, but some cited the “biased” reporting that resulted in harm—even defeat—for the American and South Vietnamese cause and aid for “Saigon’s enemies.” Baldwin wrote that some of the press, television, and other media failed to provide a balanced and factual picture of the war.⁵⁵ The argument was that pessimistic and distorted reporting eventually influenced negative public opinion, ultimately leading to American withdrawal and subsequent defeat for the South Vietnamese.

Historian Guenter Lewy accused a “politically motivated” press—especially television journalists—of reporting the war as “an atrocity writ large,” exaggerating atrocities by Americans and ignoring those by the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong. The “one-dimensional coverage of the conflict...contributed significantly to disillusionment with the war.”⁵⁶

Such is the tone of General S. L. A. Marshall’s vitriolic attack on the press in the *New Leader* in 1966, in which he attributed the erroneous reports to lazy and even cowardly reporters who refused to go to the “front” and instead covered the war sitting in Saigon. Implicit in the attack was the disloyalty and lack of patriotism of the correspondents, whose “distorted” reports allegedly contributed to the “blighting and confusing of American public opinion regarding the war and the national prospects in it.”⁵⁷

During the Kennedy years, such attacks accused Saigon reporters of not portraying the optimistic view of the war that the Kennedy administration believed

⁵⁴Elegant, 73.

⁵⁵Baldwin, 30.

⁵⁶Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 433.

⁵⁷S. L. A. Marshall, “Press Failure in Vietnam,” *The New Leader*, 10 Oct. 1966, 5.

was crucial to the success of the war effort and to "national security."⁵⁸ Admiral Harry Felt, the American commander for the Pacific, expressed this attitude when he snapped "Get on the team!" at Peter Arnett in response to his probing question about the battle of Ap Bac (1963).⁵⁹ (David Halberstam later wrote that reporters failed their journalistic charge to the public by actually being "too optimistic."⁶⁰)

Most distressing to the Saigon reporters were similar charges made by experienced war correspondents, including Keyes Beech, Richard Tregaskis, Joseph Alsop, and Marguerite Higgins, who supported the direction of the war effort being made by Diem and the Kennedy administration. To offset the pessimistic reports out of Saigon, the government initiated a "press orientation program consisting of sponsored visits to Saigon by mature and responsible American correspondents and executives."⁶¹ The program encouraged reporters not only to write positive reports of progress in Vietnam, but "to attack the [regular Saigon]

⁵⁸Hallin, 28-32. "Its [government management of Vietnam news] purpose was to keep the issue off the agenda of political discussion. In order to defuse the issue politically, it was essential that major policy decisions appear routine, incremental, and automatic. This in turn required that policy debate within the administration be kept out of the public eye. It also required that an appearance of crisis be avoided, which meant that the pessimistic intelligence reports which preceded this and every major escalation of the war were kept secret. The emphasis in published news reports at the time of the Taylor-Rostow mission was on the strength of the Saigon government, not the imminent possibility of its defeat, which had led to the mission to begin with" (p. 31)

⁵⁹Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam* (New York: Viking Press, 1983), 262.

⁶⁰Halberstam, *The Making of a Quagmire*, 166.

⁶¹Hallin, 48 and note 78, p. 224. See also Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 378-80. Perry Young also quotes Keyes Beech as having spoken openly and unashamedly about how closely he had worked with the CIA: "Beech said he didn't know how a foreign correspondent could properly do his job without cultivating sources in the CIA." See Perry Deane Young, "Revisionism Reconsidered," *Quill* 71 (May 1983): 10; See also Jules Witcover, "Where Washington Reporting Failed," *Columbia Journalism Review* 9 (Winter, 1970-71): 9.

correspondents in print and in private conversations with other reporters.”⁶²

In September 1963, *Time* magazine (whose founder Henry Luce, a long-time member of the China lobby and a supporter of Diem, believed that the American press was Communist infiltrated⁶³) attacked the Saigon reporters, accusing the press of reporting defeats in “rich and flowing” color and victories with qualifications that diminished their significance. Further, the article continued, independent reports infuriated the “club members,” who dismissed the analysis of an “outsider” as “therefore patently wrong.”⁶⁴

The attack stunned the correspondents, and two of *Time*’s Vietnam correspondents, Charles Mohr (who had recently filed a story beginning “The war in Vietnam is being lost,” which *Time* refused to print) and Mert Perry, resigned over the incident.⁶⁵ *Time* published a second story the following week that somewhat tempered the accusations but did not retract them.

Other publications came to the journalists’ support. *Newsweek* published (with no byline, but Beverly Deepe was *Newsweek*’s Vietnam correspondent at the time) a strong defense of the correspondents, naming Halberstam as the main target of the detractors. The article said that colleagues within the press should know the problems reporters are confronted with in the field, especially in Vietnam: “It is a peculiar inversion of things to blame reporters, who face enormous difficulties in digging out the facts, for the confusion. And it makes even less sense to blame them for the events they are seeking to chronicle.”⁶⁶

An editorial in the *Nation* further attacked *Time* as having done a “hatchet job on its brethren covering a civil war in a country 10,000 miles away,

⁶²Faulkner, 52.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 22-32, 48.

⁶⁴“Foreign Correspondents: The View from Saigon,” *Time*, 20 Sept. 1963, 62.

⁶⁵Halberstam, *The Making of a Quagmire*, 269-274.

⁶⁶“Dateline, Saigon: War of Words,” *Newsweek*, 7 Oct. 1963, 98-99.

under conditions of extreme difficulty and danger.” The editorial expressed even greater concern about the news management being carried on by both the U.S. government and the press itself, specifically naming Marguerite Higgins as a propagandist for official policy.

Thus, when the New York *Herald Tribune* dispatched Marguerite Higgins to South Vietnam, it was a sure bet that what emerged from her typewriter would please the Ngos, General Harkins and the everything’s-gonna-be-all right people in the Defense Department, the State Department, the CIA and civilian warriors outside the government. Miss Higgins covered pages and pages of the *Trib* with what amounted to an apologia for Ngo Dinh Diem.⁶⁷

Higgins’ reporting on the Buddhist crisis illustrates the attacks on the regular Saigon press corps made by another reporter, partly as a result of government encouragement. Higgins, who had won many prizes for her reporting of the Korean War, was sent on special assignment by the *Herald Tribune* in mid-July 1963 to cover the Buddhist crisis and to check on the accuracy of the reports coming out of Saigon about the Buddhist rebellion against the Diem government. Higgins made four trips to Vietnam for the *Tribune* between July 1963 and October 1965, and her reports on the Buddhist insurgency were reprinted in the *Congressional Record* (14 January 1964). She eventually used her reporting as the basis for her book *Our Vietnam Nightmare*, where she stated that even before she left on the assignment she had doubts about the validity of the uprisings as religiously motivated and about the press portrayal of the crisis:

What bothered me was that the question about “religious strife” seemed utterly unrelated to what I knew or understood of Vietnam. . . . Certainly the newspaper reports of Buddhist monks rampaging through the streets collided with my own memories, for in all my previous contacts with Vietnamese Buddhists they had seemed sincerely to practice the spirit of nonviolence and compassion that was the soul of South Asian Buddhism, as I understood it.⁶⁸

⁶⁷“Managing the News,” *Nation*, 26 Oct. 1963, 250-251.

⁶⁸Marguerite Higgins, *Our Vietnam Nightmare* (New York: Harper &

What she found in Vietnam corroborated her memories, and she reported that the activist Buddhist leaders involved in the uprisings were not representative of the majority of Buddhists. In fact, she reported, they were either Communists, Communist-dominated, or Communist agents, whose leader Thich Tri Quang incited Buddhist disciples to suicide "for their own political ends" (p. 34). She claimed that the press was duped by, or even in cooperation with, the politically sophisticated "Communist" Buddhists, who used the press to get their message against Diem publicized (pp. 23-34). She also wrote that contrary to press reports, in the summer of 1963, the Vietnamese army was doing better than ever before (p. 49). The vicious attacks on Diem and Madame Nhu, Higgins reported, were made by correspondents, "who, no doubt, out of the most idealistic motives, believed that his regime had to go because he didn't correspond to their occidental views of how an Oriental leader getting one million dollars a day from the United States ought to govern" (p. 60).

Higgins accused the press of taking sides against the U.S. mission, which she claimed the press had declared to be not only a losing effort from its inception but also a foolhardy interference in another country's war of liberation. Because of this bias, Higgins reported, the resident press corps ignored successes of the South Vietnamese and misrepresented the true assessment of the strategic hamlets, which Higgins declared a great success. She wrote that contrary to press reports that ignored South Vietnamese successes, the South Vietnam army made important gains during 1962-1963. She cited correspondent Keyes Beech's reports, which praised the good morale and professional fighting of the Vietnamese soldiers, as support for her positive assessments. She claimed the "distorted" coverage resulted from the refusal of correspondents to get out of Saigon and into the countryside. Their reports of the Buddhist insurgency, she

Row, Publishers, 1965), 3. All further references to this work appear in the text.

claimed, were beginning to affect the war effort: "It was the first time that I began to comprehend, in depth and in some sorrow, what was meant by the *power* [Higgins' italics] of the press" (pp. 112-125).

Although a story by Charles Mohr in *Time* quoted her as having said, "Reporters here would like to see us lose the war to prove they're right," she denied having said it, and wrote that she didn't believe any American wanted to lose the war:

I do think, however, that there was a demonstrable preoccupation of the resident press corps in Saigon with Vietnamese failure under Diem and that it can be argued that the space and attention given to the regime's shortcomings in the war (Ap Bac) were rarely balanced by equal attention to its successes (Quang Ngai). And there are many parallel examples (p. 128).

Although most criticism was directed at the reporters themselves, television was the medium most censured for its "distorted" coverage of the war. President Johnson blamed the public despair over Tet on television's "lurid and depressing accounts."⁶⁹ Vietnam, in this context, has often been called the "television war," and the "coming of age" of television news. Networks expanded the evening newscasts from 15 minutes to a half-hour in September 1963, and in the late 1960s significantly increased daytime newscasts partly because of the increasing importance of the story of the war in Indochina.⁷⁰

Guenter Lewy's description of the one-sided, one-dimensional television coverage has already been noted, and his conclusions about its impact on the public reflect the popular beliefs about its powerful role in influencing public opinion and thus American policy:

Not surprisingly this close-up view of devastation and suffering, repeated daily, strengthened the growing desire for peace. The events

⁶⁹Turner, 233.

⁷⁰Christopher H. Sterling and John M. Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A Concise History of American Broadcasting* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1978), 407.

of Tet and the siege of Khe Sanh in 1968, in particular, shook the American public. The nightly portrayal of violence and gore and of American soldiers seemingly on the brink of disaster

contributed significantly to disillusionment with the war.⁷¹

The Criticism Re-examined

Correspondents defended themselves against charges of disloyalty and bias and insisted that they reported the war with professional objectivity, but, for the most part, they continued to focus their reporting on the battle until the end. Peter Arnett, who reported the war for more than eleven years, said the criticism represented “the classic syndrome of blaming the bringers of bad news rather than the news itself.” The correspondents, he wrote, adhered to a strict professional detachment.

We deal in facts.... We took pictures of those burning buildings, we told of the civilian dead and how they died, but we didn't make judgments because we were witnesses,..it was not for us to be judge and jury.⁷²

In February 1983, the University of Southern California held a four-day conference on the Vietnam war. More than eighty journalists, historians, diplomats, military and intelligence personnel discussed the war and its implications, including the performance of the media. Several conclusions refuted the charges against the press of bias and distortion, but they did reaffirm those charges that said the coverage failed to explain the complex political issues and the Vietnamese perspective. Some conclusions were: throughout the war the press corps shared a consensus supporting American policy in Vietnam; officials, both in

⁷¹Lewy, 433-444.

⁷²Peter Arnett, “Reflections on Vietnam, The Press and America,” *Editor & Publisher* 104 (10 July 1971): 28-30.

Vietnam and Washington, were always reporters' major sources, and this official story was reported; the press covered military aspects far better than the political, which were almost nonexistent in the coverage; television focused on the "shooting war" to the exclusion of almost everything else; most problematic for reporters was that they reported what they saw, which was what got them into trouble with government officials.⁷³

Most scholarly research into the media coverage of the war has concentrated on television, and most studies agree that the coverage was extremely limited, with the major focus on the fighting and very little examination of the political issues. The findings, however, give little support to those who contend that the coverage was controversial, interpretive, adversarial, or even very graphic regarding the blood and gore of battle. Television overwhelmingly supported American policy until the end of the war, and usually presented participants and issues in simplistic, ideologically consensus terms such as Democracy versus Communism.

George Bailey's study of television news anchormen concluded that they read stories of events without much interpretation, "certainly without challenging adversary interpretation." The daily reports were usually brief reports of combat, which came from the daily military briefings. "The combatants...were the Americans and the South Vietnamese against the Communist enemy or the Viet Cong, a most simplistic and overgeneralized shorthand for the tangled alliances of the many-sided conflict."⁷⁴

Lawrence Lichty and Murray Fromson pointed out that Morley Safer's report in 1965 of the village burnings at Camne was far from typical, as the myths

⁷³Harrison E. Salisbury, ed., *Vietnam Reconsidered: Lessons From a War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984).

⁷⁴George Bailey, "Interpretive Reporting of the Vietnam War by Anchormen," *Journalism Quarterly* 53 (Summer 1976): 319- 324.

proclaim, although it became the symbol for television coverage of Vietnam. Contrary to Lewy's characterization of typical evening television news as bloody stories, Lichty's extensive research into television's Vietnam coverage shows that such stories were a "very small percentage of the television coverage." The typical reports up until the Tet offensive of 1968 were about victories over the Vietcong and Hanoi and about the break in morale of the Communists. In addition, television usually reported criticism of the war effort as radical echoes of the Moscow line.⁷⁵

Lichty suggested that, instead, a few highly dramatic pictures seemed to have made such a lasting impression on the public's consciousness that they have become symbols of the war and are remembered as representative of television coverage. The pictures were: the self-immolation of the Buddhist monk Quang Duc on 11 June 1963; Brigadier General Nguyen Ngoc Loan, South Vietnam's national police chief, shooting the handcuffed Viet Cong suspect through the head during Tet 1968; the little girl, accidentally sprayed with napalm by South Vietnamese soldiers, running down the road; and the marine with the Zippo lighter setting fire to a thatched roof in the village of Camne.

Herbert Gans' study of *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines and CBS and NBC network news broadcasts between 1965 and 1975 supports the findings of both Bailey and Lichty. Gans wrote that television actually reported a "highly sanitized version" of the war. "During the Vietnam War, film editors routinely cut the bloodier scenes from battle and patrol film before top producers reviewed it; and presumably, camera crews did not bother to shoot carnage scenes that they knew to be unusable."⁷⁶ American atrocities did not get into the news very often,

⁷⁵Lawrence Lichty and Murray Fromson, "Comparing Notes on Television's Coverage of the War," *The Center Magazine*, Sept./Oct. 1979, 42-46.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 244.

and then only toward the end of the war.⁷⁷ After the Tet offensive, reporters began to question whether the war could be won, even suggesting that perhaps it should not be won, but none ever went so far as to openly support the anti-war protesters.⁷⁸

Gans concluded that journalists practiced self-censorship. They reported the war as a domestic story—an American war against a Communist enemy.⁷⁹

Daniel Hallin's studies of the media refute several myths about television coverage that have arisen since the Vietnam war. The first is the belief that since the late 1960s, television has consistently opposed political authority. Hallin found that journalists maintained their professional commitment to objectivity and gave increasing coverage to opposition viewpoints only as these increased among official sources and the public. The increase in critical coverage did not involve the political system but was directed at the administration and its policies.⁸⁰

In a study of *The New York Times* and CBS and NBC television network news coverage of the war, Hallin found that despite the popular notion by many veterans that the press was their enemy, the war correspondent was an advocate of the soldier in the field throughout the war.⁸¹ Ward Just wrote about the "extraordinary courage" of the soldiers, who fought too often "to no applause."⁸² Herr wrote especially sensitively and sympathetically about the soldier, whose

⁷⁷Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), 43.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 137.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 280.

⁸⁰Daniel C. Hallin, "The Media, the War in Vietnam, and Political Support: A Critique of the Thesis of an Oppositional Media," *The Journal of Politics*, 46 (Feb. 1984): 2-24.

⁸¹Hallin, *The "Uncensored War,"* 40. All further references to this work appear in the text.

⁸²Just, 24-28.

story, which he said “never bored him,” was always the same: “Put yourself in my place.”⁸³ Soldiers and reporters alike endured the horror and terror of the fighting and, sometimes far more difficult, the long periods between, waiting.

Hallin wrote that perhaps the press’s greatest failure was that it did not prepare the American people for the eventual defeat, and thus when it finally came, it seemed to them to be irrational. The press always reported the war as an American war and wrote little about the hopes and motives of the North Vietnamese and their unshakable determination to win. With little information to persuade them of the contrary, the American people assumed that the huge war power of the United States would prevail over a small, undeveloped nation such as Vietnam. Although the reporting of the early years of the war reflected the conflict among American officials in the field—who were the reporters’ major sources—and strained the relations between the press and the administration, the press never questioned the Cold War consensus or American intervention in Vietnam (p. 28). Again despite all the charges about the disloyalty of the press during the Kennedy years, the image of Vietnam that the press left of those years was that Vietnam was vital to the interests of the Free World and could not be abandoned (p. 49). But the press reported little of what was going on in the South Vietnamese countryside nor why the peasants failed to rally to the anti-Communist government, probably because the press was itself ignorant of these issues (pp. 54-55). The media expressed alarm about the beginning of the bombings of the North in 1965, but strongly supported the administration decision to land ground troops in June and July of that year (p. 98).

Television’s mild turnaround on the war after Tet 1968 was as much a response to a move of public opinion away from support of the war as it was a cause of that move (p. 110). Television’s most important source was the soldier

⁸³Herr, 31.

in the field, and it remained in support of the war until the soldiers' support began to fail (p. 134). Television adhered almost totally to the official line.

Eventually television brought the bad news. But it never explained *why*; it never reexamined the assumptions about the nature of the war it had helped to propagate in the early years. So to the public, the bad news must have seemed...incomprehensible.... Add to this the fact that the United States had clear military superiority at the time, and it is hardly surprising that a great deal of the public should have accepted the notion that treason was the only reasonable explanation for defeat. In the same way, it is hardly surprising that Americans should gravitate toward the view that "loss of Vietnam" resulted simply from a lack of American will, which leads easily to the conclusion that the media were to blame: no more sophisticated explanations were put before them (209-210).

Frances FitzGerald, who was a freelance journalist in Vietnam in 1966 and whose book about the Vietnamese and the war *Fire in the Lake* won several prestigious prizes including the Bancroft prize for history and the Pulitzer, wrote that the press did little better covering the last days of the war. Television, as it always had, reported the events as a series of images, "once again incapable of describing the situation or presenting the issues in comprehensible form." As it had throughout the war, the press discussed the issues in the "terms the Administration presented them." The press never altered its perspective on the Indochinese, and never reported the point of view of either North or South. "In other words after 15 years of reporting Vietnam the press still does not accord the Vietnamese the status of sources—or persons." (Hallin noted when the press did cover the North Vietnamese and the NLF, it focused almost exclusively on terrorism, dehumanizing them and making them appear more as "criminals than as a political movement or rival government."⁸⁴) Throughout the war, the story, to the American press, was about America and Americans in Vietnam, and even after the Americans finally left, the stories from Saigon continued to have more

⁸⁴Hallin, *The "Uncensored War,"* 149-158.

to do with "the fate of foreigners—and particularly the press corps—and less and less to do with the Vietnamese."⁸⁵

That the coverage of the war represents a large failure on the part of the American press seems clear, but that failure has little to do with the popular notion that it was responsible in some way for America's defeat. Its failure was far greater and in the end more devastating perhaps for America, surely for Vietnam, because it did not ask the larger questions of those officials forming and directing American policy, and then did not provide thoughtful analysis to prompt those policy makers to examine American policy or the efficacy of that policy. Finally, the press neglected to investigate and explain the story from the perspective of the Vietnamese.

The press corps was beset by tremendous difficulties, not the least of which was the opposition of its own government. The correspondents did report honestly and courageously and well what they saw of those elements of the war they were most familiar with from the reporting of previous wars—the fighting and the American soldier in the field. They were captives of their American provincialism and ideology, and not until late in the war did they report what the war meant, or was doing, to the civilians of Vietnam.

⁸⁵Frances FitzGerald, "Covering The Happy Ending," *More*, July 1975, 6-8.

CHAPTER III

WOMEN AS WAR CORRESPONDENTS

Women have been reporting wars for American news media since the Mexican War, when in 1847, Jane McManus Storms, under the pseudonym "Montgomery," wrote about the war from Mexico City, Vera Cruz, and Havana for the *New York Sun* and the *New York Tribune*.¹ With each successive war, their numbers and contribution to the overall coverage increased. During World War II, a few women did report from combat zones, and during the Korean War, Marguerite Higgins was the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for comprehensive coverage of front-line fighting. Finally, during the Vietnam War women established their right to report war according to the ground rules that applied to any accredited journalist. They achieved this status not only because of a long tradition of professional reporting and grace and courage in the field but also because of their aggressive assertion of their professional and legal rights to do so.

The emphasis of women's war correspondence has differed from that of traditional combat reporting. Women have been more interested in understanding and explaining the perspectives of the people involved in war—in the effect of war on their lives and in the underlying issues of the conflicts—rather than in

¹See Thomas W. Reilly, "American Reporters and the Mexican War—1846-1848" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Minnesota, 1975), 261-271.

the strategy and outcome of daily battle. In Vietnam, women continued in that tradition and reported on the historical, political, economic, and cultural issues, perspectives for which the press has been so severely criticized for its generally inadequate coverage.

Until the late 1960s and the early 1970s, few women reported from foreign countries, and least of all, on war. As a young reporter in the early 1960s, Georgie Anne Geyer realized how slight were her chances to be a foreign correspondent when she looked at her colleagues at the *Chicago Daily News* and saw that “all the correspondents were men in their fifties and sixties.”² Wars and foreign countries, the prestige journalism beats, were covered by men.

At about the time when Geyer was trying to convince the *Daily News* to assign her abroad, a survey of 140 American foreign correspondents showed that the typical foreign correspondent of the early 1960s was a man in his late thirties or early forties.³ Of ninety-seven correspondents named to be the most competent “newsmen” stationed abroad, none was a woman. In 1967, at the height of the Vietnam War, a survey of its membership conducted by the Overseas Press Club of New York showed that the typical correspondent was still a “man in his forties.” Not one reference throughout the study was made to women or to the possibility that correspondents would be women. The study concludes, somewhat ironically: “What is perhaps surprising is the fact that so much diversity still exists within the correspondent corps, and that some spirit of individualistic journalism continues to flourish.”⁴

During the early sixties, women who had ventured beyond the “hearth and

²Georgie Anne Geyer, *Buying the Night Flight* (New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1983), 47.

³Frederick T. C. Yu and John Luter, “The Foreign Correspondent and His Work,” *Columbia Journalism Review* 3 (Spring 1964): 5-12.

⁴Leo Bogart, “The Overseas Newsmen: A 1967 Profile Study,” *Journalism Quarterly*, 45 (Summer 1968): 293-306.

home" (still considered by most Americans at that time to be the proper sphere for women's work) into a career in journalism were regularly assigned to cover so-called "women's news": the home and family, fashion and "society," the arts and entertainment, gardening, and sometimes front-page news if it had possibilities for exploiting an "emotional" angle. These were the stereotypical "women's beats" by professional tradition and by cultural definition.⁵

Because so few women covered national and international beats, until the 1970s news about politics and war did not include or reflect women's perspectives or experiences.⁶ As early as 1900, Susan B. Anthony had noted that women's ideas and convictions were practically absent from newspapers and magazines, and the situation had little changed by the Vietnam War. Surveys of the *Washington Post* during 1972 and 1973 found that ninety-four percent of Section A stories (national and international news), of front page stories, and of editorial page columns were written by men. Not until the late 1960s and early 1970s were women allowed to sit on the floor seats at the National Press Club or admitted to membership in the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi. In 1972, Jill Ruckelshaus told the National Press Club that coverage suffered when women's perceptions were not brought to an event.⁷

Women correspondents faced prejudices against their presence on the battlefield and the stories they wrote about war until well into the Vietnam War. They would frequently be regarded on the battlefield as nuisances who dampened men's style. Their stories, which more commonly looked at the participants and

⁵See William Winslow Bowman, "Distaff Journalists: Women as a Minority Group in the News Media" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1974), 100-117.

⁶See Suzanne Pingree and Robert P. Hawkins, "News Definitions and their Effects on Women," in *Women and the News*, ed. by Laurily Keir Epstein (New York: Hastings House, 1978), 120-128.

⁷Joan Behrmann, "How the Press Treats Women," in *Questioning Media Ethics*, ed. Bernard Rubin (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978), 118-119.

victims of war, were not the "spot news" stories of battle that men had long since defined as the quintessential war story. Men covered war, and they established a tradition of reporting war as the unfolding developments of battle, planned and directed by military leaders, and fought by heroic warriors.

Women's stories about the people in war have often been regarded condescendingly as "soft" news and peripheral to the "real" war story of front-line combat. The human stories about the hardships suffered by victims of war have appeared most frequently in the newspaper in the "Women's" section, more recently "upgraded" as the "Style" or "Living" sections. As with most women's reporting, these stories have been considered inferior to the spot news of combat reporting, which more accurately reflects the dominant male view of what is news.

"If it represents conflicts and differences, it gets more attention than stories of cooperation and compromise," observed Wilma Scott Heide after her bitter experiences with the press as the president of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in the early 1970s.⁸ Joan Behrmann noted in her study of women and the press that women's reporting and issues have generally been ridiculed or simply ignored by a profession that has been a "man's world."⁹ Women continue to define news as issues; whereas men define news as event.¹⁰ When Barbara Walters, who covered China in 1972, was asked what changes she would make when she became co-host on ABC network nightly news in 1976, she said the news would be less reading of the events of the day and more investigation, with interviews, features, personality profiles, and stories that ask "Why?"¹¹

⁸Quoted in Behrmann, 95-96.

⁹Ibid., 89.

¹⁰Pingree and Hawkins, 116-133.

¹¹Ron Powers, *The Newscasters* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), 179.

On the other hand, women who did successfully report combat were often criticized for being “unfeminine” or accused of using feminine wiles and sexual favors to get information. Georgie Anne Geyer’s humor best dismisses this myth: “I just couldn’t picture waking up at three in the morning with some stranger lying next to me and saying, ‘Eh, Che, *mi amor*, tell me where your missiles are?’ Men apparently think this is the way it’s done.”¹²

It is interesting to note that women journalists in fiction (for example, Henry James, *Portrait of a Lady*, Katherine Anne Porter, *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, Martha Gellhorn, “Portrait of a Lady” in *Heart of Another*, Josephine Lawrence, *In All Walks of Life*, and Joyce Carol Oates, “Getting and Spending”) are consistently portrayed as torn between demands of the profession, which require them to possess “male” skill and assertiveness, and cultural expectations, which say they are to be passive and feminine. They struggle to achieve a certain “male” competence necessary for professional success while maintaining those feminine qualities necessary to personal happiness. This balance is especially difficult because the woman has no definition of the ideal (male) to act upon, mainly because the ideal is imprecise, elusive, and depends upon the situation, which is different every time. Compassion is almost always a negative sentimental trait that interferes with the journalist’s professionalism, as is the case for Miranda in *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*. Yet the successful woman journalist, for example, the protagonist in Allen Drury’s *Anna Hastings, the Story of a Washington Newspaperperson*, is portrayed as an unhappy, lonely “bitch.”¹³

¹²Geyer, 58.

¹³Mary Ellman, *Thinking About Women* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1968). Ellman offers a comprehensive discussion of the stereotypes of Women. Of particular relevance to the stereotypes revealed in the fiction of women journalists are the qualities consistent in stereotypes that associate woman with nature and man with art and that attempt to move women in two directions away from a premised, though indefinable, human center. Opinions of women reflect two impulses away from some central premise; that is, every

Georgie Anne Geyer, like many other women correspondents before and after, financed her own first foreign assignment: she obtained a grant that allowed her to live and study in Latin America for six months while she continued to report from there for the *Daily News*. In spite of Geyer's experience in Latin America and her fluency in Spanish, her editor, the following year, was reluctant to send her to cover the revolution in the Dominican Republic because he said it was too dangerous a place for a woman. She eventually did convince him to send her, and Geyer was the first woman to be assigned as a resident correspondent in Latin America. She later covered the war in Vietnam as a special correspondent for the *Daily News*.

As more and more women gained success in foreign correspondence, they would feel less compelled to prove they could do "man's" work and would more confidently report the issues that they valued as important news. In war correspondence, these were most often the underlying issues of the war and the effects of war on the lives of those in its path.

Women Foreign Correspondents Before Vietnam

Three of the earliest American women correspondents—Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), Anna Benjamin (1874-1902), and Teresa Dean (1850?- 1910?)—covered war

feminine virtue implies a feminine vice, for example chastity and frigidity, intuition and irrationality, or in the case of the woman as journalist, better than female—like male—and less than feminine. The directions of the movements involve at least two fixed moral judgments: women unfortunately are women whose ideal condition is attained by rising above themselves, reaching toward the male; men attain their ideal condition by their becoming and remaining men. See also: Viola Klein, "The Stereotype of Femininity," in *Woman: Dependent or Independent Variable*, ed. by R. K. Unger and F. L. Denmark (New York: Psychological Dimensions, 1975); Susan Koppelman Cornillon, ed., *Images of Women in Fiction—Feminist Perspectives* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1972); and Judith Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader* (Bloomington, Indiana: University Press, 1978).

and revolution. They expressed a compassionate empathy for victims of war and stressed the crucial importance of understanding the history and culture of the societies involved in such conflict.

Margaret Fuller was probably the first American woman to be sent by an American newspaper to a foreign country as its regular correspondent.¹⁴ An intellectual, scholar, writer, literary critic, as well as correspondent, Fuller belonged to the inner circle of Transcendentalists and was the first editor of their literary magazine, *The Dial*.¹⁵

She had been working as a reporter and literary critic on the *New York Tribune* when Horace Greeley sent her to Europe as a correspondent in 1846. Her reports about her experiences and interviews with notable persons were published as letters in the *Tribune*. Traveling first to England and then to France, she soon settled in Italy, where she reported on the Italian Revolution for nearly three years. When Louis Napoleon sent French troops to aid the Papacy against the new Roman Republic in April 1849, just two months after it had been declared, Fuller witnessed the siege firsthand and described it as a “slaughter” of “unpracticed” Roman soldiers and citizens. She wrote about the young fighters for freedom, who after the fall of the Republic were forced to flee Rome with their families or be imprisoned—the first of many stories to be written by women about the soldiers and the refugees of war:

Where go, they knew not; for except distant Hungary there is not now a spot which could receive them, or where they can act as honor commands. . . . They had counted the cost before they entered on this perilous struggle; they had weighed life and all its material advantages against liberty, and made their election; they turned not back, nor

¹⁴Maurine Beasley and Sheila Gibbons, *Women in Media: A Documentary Source Book* (Washington D.C.: Women’s Institute for Freedom of the Press, 1977), 15.

¹⁵Madelon Golden Schilpp and Sharon M. Murphy, *Great Women of the Press* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 49-61.

flinched, at this bitter crisis. I saw the wounded, all that could go, laden upon their baggage cars; some were already pale and fainting, still they wished to go. I saw many youths, born to rich inheritance, carrying in a handkerchief all their worldly goods. The women were ready; their eyes too were resolved, if sad. The wife of Garibaldi followed him on horseback.¹⁶

Fuller left Rome for Florence, where she worked for some months on a history of the Roman Republic. In May 1850, she left Italy for the United States with her husband and young child, but all three drowned when their ship sank off Fire Island just before it was to dock in New York. She had celebrated her fortieth birthday aboard ship on the journey home.

Another early woman war correspondent was Anna Northend Benjamin, who reported the Spanish-American War, the Philippine insurrection, and the Boxer rebellion in China for several publications, including *Leslie's*, the *New York Tribune*, *Outlook*, and the *Atlantic Monthly*. Like Margaret Fuller, she was self-exacting and fearlessly willing to seek information in dangerous surroundings not only of the battlefield but also in places remote from the conveniences and protection of civilization.¹⁷

Two other women reported on the Spanish-American war—Kathleen Blake Watkins, of the *Toronto Mail and Express*, and Katherine White, for the *Chicago Record*. Their reporting, like Benjamin's, was typical of the reporting of many women, not "breaking" news of the battles but stories about the living conditions of the soldiers, life of the women among the Cuban exiles, or care of the wounded and sick in the hospitals. Benjamin wrote that it was crucial that Americans try to understand the point of view of other peoples and "to appreciate standards of

¹⁶Margaret Fuller, "Letter XXXIII," reprinted in Beasley and Gibbons, 16-19.

¹⁷Charles B. Brown, "A Woman's Odyssey: the War Correspondence of Anna Benjamin," *Journalism Quarterly*, 46 (Autumn 1969): 522-530.

civilization different from our own.”¹⁸

Teresa Dean focused on the plight of the Sioux and called for greater understanding of Indian problems when she reported on the Dakota Sioux uprisings shortly after the battle at Wounded Knee in 1891 for the *Chicago Herald*. She was critical of the sensational stories of her male colleagues, who, for the sake of the story, exaggerated and even lied about the so-called violent escapades of the Indians. She was most concerned about the effect such stories would have on the Indians.¹⁹

What set Anna Benjamin’s work apart from the usual “mediocre” war reporting of women, according to one biographer, Charles Brown, was that at least her human-interest stories were reported from a “man’s point of view.”²⁰ Brown does not explain this exactly, but he clearly means it is superior to the “woman’s point of view.” He describes Benjamin’s reporting as unsentimental and direct, suggesting these to be the qualities that make it “male.” Also important to Benjamin’s success—that is, what else distinguished her as better than women but not quite as good as men—according to Brown, was that she did away with “feminine frivolities of dress,” and although “direct and decisive as a man, she was not mannish in looks.”²¹ The suggestion seems to be that women should be as much like men as possible, but not too much.

When Teresa Dean first arrived in the Sioux territory in South Dakota in 1891, she was greeted with disparagement by the other correspondents, all male. They refused to allow her to be included in a group photograph of the correspondents because they were afraid the presence of a female in the photo

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Douglas C. Jones, “Teresa Dean: Lady Correspondent Among the Sioux Indians,” *Journalism Quarterly*, 49 (Winter 1972): 656.

²⁰Brown, 523.

²¹Ibid., 524.

would cast doubt back home on their "hair-raising accounts of death on the border."²²

Anna Benjamin's male colleagues complained bitterly about women reporters in the field. In 1901, war correspondent James Creelman wrote (in a probable reference to Benjamin) that women brought "sorrow" to the profession of war correspondence. He accused them of taking unfair advantage of their sex and using "sly" methods to extract information from an unsuspecting male source. He thought that a woman (most probably he was describing Benjamin) watching a battle was "horrible" and "embarrassing," and a nuisance who had to be taken care of in spite of her insistence that she hadn't asked anyone to be responsible for her.²³

Women themselves often failed to value that aspect of their reporting that did not conform to male definitions of news. For Rheta Childe Dorr, who reported the beginnings of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1917 for the *New York Mail*, covering war was "real" journalism—what men wrote, and she regarded her reporting on the revolution as her most important. Yet Zena Beth McGlashan's study pointed out that what has held up over the years was Dorr's earlier reporting about the inequalities suffered by the American laboring class and women in the labor force. Dorr's reporting on the Bolshevik revolution, on the other hand, has since been criticized as distorted and biased.²⁴

Dorr accompanied the women's Battalion of Death on its trip to the front lines to rally demoralized Russian government troops. She tried many times to gain permission to go to the front lines of World War I, but she was refused "because she was a woman." General Pershing did allow her to witness the

²²Jones, 658.

²³Quoted in Brown, 522, 527.

²⁴Zena Beth McGlashan, "Club 'Ladies' and Working 'Girls': Rheta Childe Dorr and the *New York Evening Post*," *Journalism History* 8 (Spring 1981): 8.

American occupation of a small village in France.²⁵

Louise Bryant also covered the early days of the revolution and knew well Lenin and other figures of the revolution. At one time Bryant challenged Dorr to debate the issues of the revolution, but Dorr declined.

The only woman to be accredited by the United States War Department to cover World War I was Peggy Hull. She had great difficulty convincing a newspaper to hire her as a correspondent so that she could get accredited, but she persisted and, after applying to fifty editors, was at last hired by the Newspaper Enterprise Association in 1918.²⁶ She never covered combat of the war, but she spent ten months in Siberia with the American expeditionary force.

Like many other women who have pursued careers in foreign correspondence, Dorothy Thompson began her distinguished career as a freelancer. She eventually covered five revolutions for such papers as the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* syndicate, the New York *Herald Tribune*, the New York *Evening Post*, and several magazines.²⁷ Thompson became the first woman to head an important American overseas bureau, as Central European Bureau Chief in 1924 for the *Ledger* and the *Evening Post*.²⁸ She interviewed Hitler in 1931, when she made her greatest reporting error by predicting that Hitler, an "insignificant man," would never be able to seize power. She was expelled from Germany in 1933 for her opposition to Hitler and the Nazis. In 1936, she began her *Herald Tribune* political column "On the Record," which alternated with that of Walter Lippmann.²⁹ Thompson

²⁵Beasley and Gibbons, 63.

²⁶Isabel Ross, *Ladies of the Press* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1936), 377.

²⁷Meyer L. Stein, *Under Fire: The Story of American War Correspondents* (New York: Julian Messner, 1968), 217.

²⁸Schilpp and Murphy, 172.

²⁹Marion Marzolf, *Up From the Footnote: A History of Women Journalists* (New York: Hastings House, 1977), 54-56.

was most interested in the underlying issues of the news. According to Ishbel Ross, a contemporary of Thompson's and a historian of women journalists:

[Thompson's] conception of good foreign correspondence is the type of dispatch that would give the complete social, diplomatic and economic history of a country, if assembled over a period of years. Spot news and the constant striving for scoops seem to her to create a false picture in the foreign field and nothing bores her more than the stunt journalist.³⁰

The first woman to receive a Pulitzer Prize for foreign correspondence was Anne O'Hare McCormick in 1937. McCormick wrote for *The New York Times* from 1921 until 1954, most of the time as a roving correspondent in Europe. She spent much time in Italy, where she interviewed Mussolini several times.³¹ Eventually McCormick became the first woman to contribute regularly to the *Times* editorial page.³²

Agnes Smedley reported the Chinese Revolution from 1928 to 1941, attempting to "tell her countrymen" of China's struggles. She was among the earliest to predict that the communist revolution in China would inevitably win. She wrote for the German published *Zeitung* until the Nazis forced her to be dropped because of her views, and then freelanced for several other publications, including the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, the *American Mercury*, the *People's World*, and the *New Masses*. Committed to the "liberation of the poor and oppressed" everywhere, she wrote about the appalling conditions of workers in China, of the Kuomintang's terror against liberals and anyone who opposed the regime, of the "incredible misery, corruption, brutality, and hunger of China." She was one of the first reporters to visit Eighth Route Army headquarters in Yen-an and to interview there Chou En-lai, Mao Tse-tung, and Chu

³⁰Ross, 365.

³¹John Hohenberg, *Foreign Correspondence: The Great Reporters and Their Times* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1964), 267.

³²Marzolf, 56.

Teh.³³

Another American journalist in China in 1941 was Martha Gellhorn, who wrote that she reported about what happened during war to ordinary people, all of whom were typical of “uncounted others.”³⁴ Gellhorn had earlier reported on the Spanish Civil War, declaring her commitment to justice and the defenders of liberty. She covered the Finnish front at the invasion of Russia, the front lines of World War II in France, Italy, Germany, and was at the Battle of the Bulge and at Dachau shortly after its liberation. In spite of her claim after covering World War II that she no longer believed that journalism was a “guiding light” but rather, at its best, a corrective record, she remained an “advocacy” journalist. She stated in her reporting of the early years of the Vietnam War that she hoped her work would inform and influence Americans to effect change in government policy. She was one of the early journalists in Vietnam to describe the sufferings that war imposed on the Vietnamese.³⁵

Margaret Bourke-White was the first woman to be accredited as a war correspondent by the United States War Department in World War II, she was the only woman correspondent to cover the Russian front, and she was the first woman to fly on a combat mission, a B-17 bombing raid of a German airfield in Tunis, North Africa.³⁶ She covered the ground war in Italy and the last stages of the war in Germany, where she made her memorable photographic record of the liberation of the Buchenwald concentration camp. When Bourke-White decided to go to Korea, where she photographed guerrilla warfare in 1952, she

³³Paul Lauter, “Afterword,” in Agnes Smedley, *Daughter of Earth* (New York: Feminist Press, 1973), 395-412.

³⁴Martha Gellhorn, *The Face of War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959).

³⁵See also Jacqueline Elizabeth Orsagh, “A Critical Biography of Martha Gellhorn” (Ph.D. diss., Michigan State University, 1977).

³⁶Schilpp and Murphy, 179-190.

wrote that her reasons for going were different from other correspondents who wanted to photograph battles; she wanted "to photograph the Korean people, whom photographers had neglected."³⁷

Five women who reported on World War II would eventually cover the war in Indochina during the American involvement—Martha Gellhorn, Flora Lewis, Peggy Durdin, Marguerite Higgins, and Dickey Chapelle. Flora Lewis was accredited with the Associated Press during World War II. Peggy Durdin was a free-lance writer who was accredited with *Time*. She reported on Laos and other areas of Southeast Asia early in the war in Vietnam. Marguerite Higgins, with the *Herald Tribune*, covered the bombing raids on London and the last days of the war in Germany, where she reported the liberation of Dachau and Buchenwald. She later reported the Nuremburg war trials.³⁸

Dickey Chapelle went as a freelancer for Fawcett Publications to the Pacific front in 1945.³⁹ She interviewed and photographed wounded soldiers at Iwo Jima and Guam, and witnessed several Japanese bombing attacks while she was aboard ships in the Pacific. She managed to get to the front lines with the marines—the only woman to do so—during the invasion of Okinawa, although there was no fighting at the time. When navy officials discovered that a woman correspondent was on the island, Chapelle was arrested and sent home "for her own safety." Chapelle, whose parents were Quakers, believed that war would end if only people were made to know its horror:

This is too important an experience to be reserved only for people who happen to be young when their country is engaged in warfare. If the experience were widely enough undergone, it would make war

³⁷Vicki Goldbert, *Margaret Bourke-White: A Biography* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 330-331.

³⁸Antoinette May, *Witness to War: A Biography of Marguerite Higgins* (New York: Beaufort Books, Inc., 1983).

³⁹Dickey Chapelle, *What's a Woman Doing Here?* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1962).

correspondents obsolete and unemployed. We'd have no wars to cover.⁴⁰

To bring this experience to people so that they might end wars, she spent much of her career photographing the ravages of two wars and four revolutions.

By World War II, women had achieved some credibility as foreign correspondents, and 131 women were accredited by the United States War Department as correspondents to cover the war.⁴¹ Few saw actual combat, and women were nowhere welcome at the front lines. Martha Gellhorn managed to be at several fronts, but only by resorting to stealth, and she eventually lost her accreditation because of it:

The U.S. Army public relations officers, the bosses of the American press, were a doctrinaire bunch who objected to a woman being a correspondent with combat troops. I felt like a veteran of the Crimean War by then, and I had been sent to Europe to do my job, which was not to report the rear areas or the woman's angle. The P.R.O.s in London became definitely hostile when I stowed away on a hospital ship in order to see something of the invasion of Normandy. After that, I could only report the war on secondary fronts, in the company of admirable foreigners who were not fussy about official travel orders and accreditation. By stealth and chicanery I managed to sneak to Holland and watch the superb U.S. 82nd Airborne Division at work. But it was only during the Battle of the Bulge, and from then on, that I dared attach myself to American fighting units. The war may have softened the P.R.O.s, or they no longer cared what anyone did, with the end so near.⁴²

Still, twenty-one women were at the Allied invasion of Normandy in 1944.⁴³

For a time women correspondents were barred from Korea by Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker, commander of the United Nations Eighth Army, who believed the battle zone's "primitive standards of dress, language, and sanitation"

⁴⁰Ibid., 127.

⁴¹See Appendix C. "U.S. Accredited Women Correspondents for the World War II Period."

⁴²Gellhorn, 108.

⁴³Stein, 218.

made it no place for women.⁴⁴ Marguerite Higgins appealed personally to General Douglas MacArthur, who lifted the ban primarily because of his respect for her as a reporter. Her success, although not the last struggle for access to the field, was an important victory for women war correspondents. Higgins' reporting of the Korean War won her many awards including the Pulitzer Prize; she was the first woman to win that prize for war correspondence.

Women correspondents in Vietnam could look back on a substantial number of women reporters before them who had done a great deal of foreign and war correspondence, and who had proved their competence to report all aspects of war, including combat. Women reporters in Vietnam followed in the tradition of women war correspondence, reporting on combat, strategy, soldiers, but most of all, on the lives of the Vietnamese people.

The Woman Correspondent in Vietnam

Despite a long tradition of reporting war, women once again had to fight for their rights in Vietnam. When women heard that a directive prohibiting them from remaining in the field overnight was soon to be issued by the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), ten correspondents on 29 June 1967 signed and sent a letter of protest to General William C. Westmoreland, then commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam.⁴⁵ Copies of the letter were also sent to several other public officials including Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Philip Goulding, and Ambassador to South Vietnam Ellsworth Bunker, as well as members of the U.S. Congress. The women claimed that such restrictions of their movements would severely

⁴⁴Schilpp and Murphy, 196.

⁴⁵ *Washington Post*, 30 June 1967, and *Overseas Press Club Bulletin*, 8 July 1967.

hamper their effectiveness as reporters and cited the 1964 Civil Rights Act as forbidding such discrimination. In their letter, they referred to a "tradition" of professional coverage by "courageous women war correspondents." Their protest was supported by their male colleagues.

The MACV ruling would have been far more limiting than it appeared on the surface; it virtually would have kept women out of the battlefield. In many cases, for example, it was impossible for a helicopter to get a person into a battle area and out again that same day; thus the practical thing to do would be to deny women access at all.⁴⁶ The directive was ordered by Westmoreland when he and McNamara saw Denby Fawcett, a reporter with the *Honolulu Advertiser*, while they were visiting a combat zone. Both men were astonished to learn that women would be in a combat area and that Fawcett had been there for several days. Westmoreland was particularly upset and declared emphatically: "I don't want women up here in these places."⁴⁷

Although they could not arrange a meeting with McNamara to protest the ban, Anne Morrissy Merick, Ann Bryan, and Jurate Kazickas did eventually meet with his press secretary and strongly denounced the directive as discriminatory and shortsighted, again citing the 1964 Civil Rights Act as forbidding such discrimination. The matter was subsequently dropped, and the directive was never issued.⁴⁸

This was the last known official attempt by the U.S. military to bar women

⁴⁶Telephone interviews with Ann Bryan Mariano, 12 July 1985, Jurate Kazickas, 30 July 1985, Anne Morrissy Merick, 18 July 1985, and Denby Fawcett, 31 July 1985. Mariano was bureau chief for the *Overseas Weekly* from 1966 to 1970. Kazickas was a freelancer in Vietnam from Feb. 1967 to Nov. 1968. Morrissy Merick was with ABC in 1967 and later was a freelancer. Fawcett was a correspondent for the *Honolulu Advertiser*. All three signed the letter.

⁴⁷Quoted by Morrissy Merick in telephone interview, 18 July 1985.

⁴⁸Morrissy Merick interview.

as a class from combat areas; after that time, few correspondents had problems with access just because they were women. Westmoreland apparently never said officially why he didn't want women in combat places, but the usual reasons given by other officers who attempted to keep women from the front lines were similar to those given by Walker in Korea: women's safety, lack of facilities for women, the distraction women may present to the soldiers, or simply that the battlefield was too coarse and too unpleasant a place for women. When a soldier in the field asked NBC correspondent Liz Trotta "What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?" her response, characteristically caustic but not lacking in sensitivity, "What's a nice guy like you doing in a place like this?" seems to accurately convey the final word on the issue of women at the front.⁴⁹

But many women did go to Vietnam, and they were there during the earliest involvement of the United States in Indochina during the last years of French control until the North Vietnamese entered Saigon in April 1975. The earliest women correspondents in Indochina were freelancers. Peggy Durdin reported on Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam from the early 1950s to the early 1960s as part of her general coverage of the Southeast Asia area, Marguerite Higgins covered Indochina while she covered the Korean War, and Dickey Chapelle visited Vietnam in 1960 and 1961. But the first woman to reside in Vietnam as a correspondent was Beverly Deepe, who arrived in February 1962 and stayed until 1969. Eventually nearly 300 American women reporters became accredited correspondents to cover the war in Vietnam.

By far the majority of women correspondents were self-employed freelancers or stringers, who stayed in Vietnam for periods as brief as two weeks and as long as seven years. Most women correspondents got to Vietnam on their own and supported themselves as freelancers with the stories they were able to sell while

⁴⁹Liz Trotta, "Of Arms and the Woman," *The New York Times*, 15 Dec. 1968, Sec. D, 29.

they were writing in Vietnam.

Many women were sent as special correspondents to Vietnam for brief tours of anywhere from two weeks to as long as six months. Newspapers frequently sent reporters for short visits to interview soldiers from the local area for feature stories on them. Television and radio networks sent a few correspondents for tours of one to two months. Correspondents were sent to Vietnam on special assignment throughout the war.

The resident correspondent, sent by a news organization as its regular or permanent correspondent to cover a foreign country for one to two years and frequently longer, is usually the most respected and prestigious correspondent. At least nine women were resident correspondents in Vietnam, five of whom were assigned after 1970, when the ground war was winding down. Of the four women resident correspondents before 1970, two became resident correspondents after they had been in Vietnam for some time.

The correspondents' ages ranged from the youngest, Elizabeth Townsend Alexander, 17-1/2, a freelancer from Boston whose accreditation was rescinded after one month because she was legally a minor and could not release the U.S. government from responsibility for her safety, to the oldest, Geraldine Appleby, 70, the women's editor of the *Las Vegas Sun*, in Saigon and Long Binh to look at field hospitals and to interview service personnel from Nevada. The average age was 30. Although there were notable exceptions, few had had experience as foreign correspondents before going to Vietnam; some had not long been out of journalism school. Almost all had had some years of reporting experience either in print or broadcast journalism, and a great many had done outstanding work as students at some of the best journalism schools.

Accreditation as a correspondent in Vietnam was fairly easy to acquire. Not so easy was obtaining the necessary visas from the South Vietnamese government,

which often denied these to correspondents who had been critical of its policies or actions. Martha Gellhorn, Judith Coburn, and Gloria Emerson all were denied visas at one time or another. The correspondent's employer had to send a letter to MACV stating she was assigned to Vietnam as a correspondent and would be supported by the news organization while she was in the country. A free-lance correspondent had to provide letters from two organizations stating that they would use her dispatches. The correspondent had to sign statements releasing the U.S. and South Vietnamese governments and military of responsibility for her injury or death and promising to follow currency regulations and to adhere to fifteen "ground rules," which dealt mostly with maintaining military security.⁵⁰

Her MACV press card (or "pass") was a military airline "ticket" for transportation within South Vietnam, and it identified her as a responsible journalist. As such, she was entitled to cooperation from commanders and information personnel in the field, use of camp press facilities, ground and air transportation, telex, and other support. She also was issued an authorization to purchase military clothing that she was to wear in the field: two fatigue shirts, two fatigue trousers, a pair of combat boots, a fatigue cap, and four pairs of cushion soled socks. U.S. correspondents were also authorized limited PX and APO privileges. A press card went a long way toward the support of a correspondent, and according to Jurate Kazickas, a freelancer in Vietnam from February 1967 to November 1968, it provided the journalist with incredible access to almost anyplace in South Vietnam. Kazickas said:

There was no place that you wanted to go that you couldn't get to, nobody that you wanted to speak to that you couldn't speak to.

I look back, and I think it is incredible. I just flashed a press card, and I got on fire bombers. I broke the speed of sound on F-6 airplanes. I went on bombing missions. I went all over Vietnam. I went on aircraft carriers. You name it, I did it. And nobody said:

⁵⁰See Appendix D. "Ground Rules Regarding Press Coverage of Combat in Vietnam."

“Who is she? Who is she writing for? What does she do?”⁵¹

And why did she go to Vietnam?

Ambition was what drew reporters to war, wrote Phillip Knightley in his study of war correspondents: “There was no better place for a young reporter to put a gloss on a new career or an old reporter to revitalise a fading one. . . . War provides rich material for a correspondent, and Vietnam was the richest ever.”⁵²

Women were surely prompted by ambition to go to Vietnam, but they were motivated by a variety of other reasons as well. Most, of course, were drawn to the “biggest story” of the time. Several went with their correspondent husbands and used the opportunity to do free-lance reporting on the war and Vietnam. Some wanted to achieve for themselves an understanding about what really was happening in this confusing and controversial war; others came to confirm their preconceptions about the war. A few were sent by employers who were being pressured by the civil-rights act of 1964 and the women’s movement to assign more women to more prestigious news beats. A few were assigned by news organizations because they were already established foreign correspondents, and Vietnam was a story that needed to be covered. A great many said they went because they wanted to find out and report what was happening to the Vietnamese people.

Many women who went to Vietnam were young reporters at the beginning of their careers. Beverly Deepe arrived in Saigon in February 1962 as a stop on a tour of Asia, doing free-lance stories for AP Newsfeatures. Deepe had earned a Bachelor’s degree in journalism and political science in 1957 from the University of Nebraska, where she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. In 1958, she graduated with honors from Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

⁵¹Telephone interview with Jurate Kazickas, 30 July 1985.

⁵²Knightley, 402-403.

The following summer she participated in the first Soviet-U.S. student exchange, visiting the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, and writing about the exchange for AP Newsfeatures. The experience convinced her she wanted to be a foreign correspondent. For the next two years, she worked as an assistant to Samuel Lubell, a syndicated political columnist, and by December 1960 she had enough money saved to support herself for a time in Asia while she did free-lance work in hopes of getting a regular job as a correspondent.⁵³

One year into her Asian trip when Deepe had gotten as far as Hong Kong, the chief of the Associated Press bureau there told her to get down to Vietnam because things were "getting hot." At last she found the job she had been looking for. Instead of staying the two weeks she had allotted for Vietnam when she planned her tour of Asia, she stayed seven years, longer than any Western correspondent to that date and most others after that. At one time or another during those seven years, she was a stringer and sole resident correspondent for *Newsweek* from October 1962 to January 1964, the resident correspondent for the *Herald Tribune* until it ceased publication in 1966, and the resident correspondent for *The Christian Science Monitor* until January 1969, when she left Vietnam. Deepe was 27 when she arrived in Saigon.

Denby Fawcett, a young reporter of 24, was drawn to Vietnam partly by professional interest and curiosity and partly by boredom with her job on the *Woman's Page* of the *Honolulu Advertiser*.

I was looking for something more significant and more important to do. The Vietnam War was very much alive in Hawaii because there is a large military contingent here. It was something we were thinking about at the time.⁵⁴

She talked her paper into sending her, and she stayed as its resident correspondent from May 1966 until the end of 1967, eventually returning to Vietnam for

⁵³Telephone interview with Beverly Deepe Kever, 11 August 1985.

⁵⁴Telephone interview with Denby Fawcett, 31 July 1985.

two more tours. On the third trip in 1972- 1973--this time with her husband who was working as a correspondent with NBC--her only child was born in Saigon.

Several women journalists went with their husbands to Vietnam and took advantage of the opportunity to report on the war. Karen Peterson was an on-air reporter in 1967 with WLS, the Chicago ABC affiliate, when she married Roger Peterson, a correspondent for ABC in Vietnam, and quit her job to join him there. A *magna cum laude* graduate of Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism, Peterson was excited to be going to Vietnam to take advantage of the opportunity to report on the war. She had no desire to report on the fighting, nor did she feel qualified to do so, although she knew several women who were good and highly respected as combat reporters. She was drawn to the personal stories of the Vietnamese people, especially the plight of the children, and she wrote about them as a freelancer for the *Chicago Tribune*.⁵⁵

Women correspondents knew few women colleagues in Vietnam for the obvious reason that at any one time, there were so few of them, but when the opportunity presented itself, they cooperated with and respected each other. Peterson and several other wives of correspondents who were also journalists formed a community to provide both personal and professional support. They were serious about their work, were professional and competitive, and had strong respect for one another. Peterson was one of the ten women who protested Westmoreland's ban on women correspondents in the field overnight. She was 25 at the time and stayed in Vietnam for six months.

Betsy Halstead was 23 when she was sent by United Press International to Vietnam in 1964 with her husband Dirck, who was to run the photography desk in Saigon. As a student, she had been the editor of the Temple University newspaper and a part-time stringer for the *Philadelphia Bulletin*. After graduation in

⁵⁵Telephone interview with Karen Peterson, 9 July 1985.

1962 she became a reporter in the UPI Philadelphia bureau, covering the racial disturbances and civil-rights sit-ins of the early sixties. Her marriage to Dirck Halstead, a reporter in the same bureau, placed her in violation of UPI's nepotism rules, and she left the bureau rather than be transferred to another city. (These were the days prior to the Civil Rights Act.) She was working with a Philadelphia public relations firm when she was rehired by UPI to go to Vietnam as a reporter, or so she thought until she arrived in Saigon and found that the job UPI had in mind for her was to operate the teletype.⁵⁶

The news agencies, which "form the backbone of international reporting" and have had a profound influence on American journalism,⁵⁷ were slow to hire women correspondents. It was not until after women journalists began to take legal action in the late sixties and early seventies, based on the Civil Rights Act of 1964, to break discriminatory policies against women that the Associated Press and United Press International began affirmative action programs to increase women employees.⁵⁸ One woman correspondent who earlier had applied for a position in UPI's Paris bureau was told by the bureau manager: "Our policy is three females in Europe and one female to a bureau." Another woman journalist said of the Associated Press, which at the same time had only two women among its seventy-five domestic correspondents, "to a lot of old guard newsmen and executives, AP women are children whose careers are only temporary aberrations."⁵⁹

In many cases before affirmative action policies, women had to get hired "through the back door," but not without having proved beforehand that they

⁵⁶Telephone interview with Betsy Halstead Doucet, 16 July 1985.

⁵⁷Rodney Tiffen, *The News From Southeast Asia: The Sociology of News-making* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1978), 26.

⁵⁸Marzolf, 95-116.

⁵⁹Behrmann, 115-122.

were expert. It took some months and several stories on her own initiative before Betsy Halstead convinced the UPI to let her report for the bureau. She did most of her reporting on the air war, flying with the first group of reporters on the B-52 bombing missions. She flew on many missions after that, did political reporting, and covered the daily "follies." UPI ran a series of her feature stories under the title "Letter From Betsy."

The first woman to be permanently assigned by the UPI as a resident correspondent was Kate Webb, one of the most highly respected correspondents in Vietnam. Different colleagues have said of her that she was a "correspondent's correspondent" and "a prime example of grace and courage in the field." Tracy Wood, who was UPI's resident correspondent in Vietnam from 1972 to 1974, said Webb did everything the hard way: "She went to Vietnam as a freelancer and was hired there by the UPI, which is very unusual, but she got to the top through hard work and persistence."⁶⁰ Webb eventually became head of the UPI bureau at Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Before going to Vietnam, Webb, a British citizen from Australia, had worked for the *Sydney Daily Mirror* as a general-assignment and police-beat reporter after graduating from Melbourne University in 1963 with a degree in philosophy. She was 26 when she went to Vietnam, and she reported in Indochina from 1967 until long after the American pullout in 1973, except for nine months in the United States with the UPI bureau in Pittsburgh, during which time she covered the Kent State campus killings and the murder of union leader Joseph A. Yablonski and his family.⁶¹

She went to Vietnam because she "didn't understand the war, the causes, the feelings, why people were being drafted. News stories didn't tell much."

⁶⁰Telephone interview with Tracy Wood, 27 June 1985.

⁶¹Craig Tomkinson, "Kate Webb Prefers Anonymity to Fame," *Editor & Publisher* 104 (10 July 1971): 20, 34.

Older people were likening the issues to the Spanish Civil War, especially the draft. It was this need that influenced the direction of her reporting.

The focus [of my reporting], in my mind, was asking people why they were fighting who and what for (included generals, politicians, soldiers as well as French civilians still there, and what comparisons they made). Political parties, candidates and affiliations interested me very much, even though they appeared largely submerged and seemingly irrelevant to most in the tide of war.⁶²

The Associated Press sent its first woman reporter to Vietnam in 1967 on a special assignment. Kelly Smith Tunney had been at the AP Washington Bureau for four years and was an experienced reporter when she was sent to Saigon, the first woman reporter sent to a war zone by the AP since World War II. She had made no special request to join the AP's corps of correspondents in Vietnam. She reported more on the civilian population than the fighting because she saw a need for that story to be reported.

I could do the other story very well, but there were already nineteen AP reporters reporting on the fighting. There were no front lines, and you ran into human victims of the war everywhere. Women were smart enough to see the human story was an important story.⁶³

Tunney was 26 when she went to Vietnam, and she stayed four months.

Another young free-lance journalist who, like Beverly Deepe, got caught up in the story of Vietnam during a self-paid tour of Asia was Frances FitzGerald, who stayed ten months rather than the one month she had planned for her stop in Saigon.⁶⁴ A 1962 *magna cum laude* graduate in Middle Eastern history from Radcliffe College, FitzGerald had been a free-lance journalist for the New York *Herald Tribune* magazine and other publications, writing mainly profiles of

⁶²Letter to the author from Kate Webb, undated.

⁶³Interview with Kelly Smith Tunney, New York, 20 May 1985.

⁶⁴Betty Flynn, "Frankie FitzGerald, the Beautiful Blueblood Who Wrote 'the Best Book Ever on Vietnam.'" *Chicago Daily News*, 21- 22 Oct. 1972.

notable persons, when she decided to tour Asia in 1966. Her Vietnam reporting was so important that she eventually won an Overseas Press Club award in 1967 for interpretive reporting and a Pulitzer Prize (among many others) in 1973 for her book on Vietnam, *Fire in the Lake*.

FitzGerald stated in the Preface of *Fire in the Lake* that her interest in the Vietnam War was the challenge to try to "understand the politics of Vietnam and the effect of the American presence and the war on Vietnamese society."⁶⁵

The need to understand the war drew other women to Vietnam. A correspondent with experience in both World War II and the Spanish revolution, Martha Gellhorn said she went to Vietnam "to see for herself what her country was really doing in Vietnam."⁶⁶ Esther Clark, who had been covering military affairs for the *Phoenix Gazette* since 1948, said she went to Vietnam because she felt she had "to try explaining to the people at home what is going on."⁶⁷

Mary McCarthy had long been opposed to American involvement in Vietnam, and she was openly frank that her intentions were to write about American involvement in the war in order to oppose it:

I confess that when I went to Vietnam early last February [1967] I was looking for material damaging to the American interest and that I found it, though often by accident or in the process of being briefed by an official. Finding it is no job;...⁶⁸

McCarthy was 54 and well established as a writer, but she was not primarily a journalist, although she had done some reporting for the *Nation*, *The New Yorker*, and the *New York Post*. Still, it was as a correspondent that she went to Vietnam, and she was accredited by MACV. Bob Silvers, editor of the *New*

⁶⁵Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1972.)

⁶⁶Orsagh, 336.

⁶⁷"Femininity at the Front," *Time*, 28 Oct. 1966, 73.

⁶⁸Mary McCarthy, *The Seventeenth Degree* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1974), 63.

York Review of Books, asked her to go to Vietnam to write on the war for the *Review*. Like so many other women correspondents, she said it was not to cover combat that she went nor to interview prominent figures.

...the truth I was after in Vietnam would not be found on the battlefield, which would be no different from battlefronts in any other war, but among the people, theirs and ours, in hamlets, hospitals, and refugee camps, on the one hand, in offices and field huts, on the other.⁶⁹

There were also those who went to support the war. Marguerite Higgins, as was already noted in the previous chapter, believed that the stand against communism must be made in South Vietnam; failing that, Vietnam's fall would be only the first of the Southeast Asian countries condemned to fall like dominoes behind the iron curtain. Philippa Schuyler, one of the few black women correspondents to cover the war, agreed with Higgins' assessment that Vietnam must not be allowed to go to the Communists: "Communism is our implacable and declared enemy, and the greatest enemy of freedom in our time."⁷⁰ She was an avowed hawk and strongly believed that the United States should end its policy of restraint and bomb any target in the North, including harbors, electric power, and dams, that would bring speedy victory to the South.⁷¹

Schuyler had been a child prodigy and was a noted concert pianist. She was in Vietnam both on a concert tour and on a reporting assignment for the *Manchester* (New Hampshire) *Union Leader*. For six years she had been combining her concert tours with reporting assignments for the *Union Leader* in Africa, British Guiana, Pakistan, and parts of Europe, and she had previously been a free-lance foreign correspondent for the *New York Daily Mirror* in the Congo.⁷²

⁶⁹Ibid., 20-21.

⁷⁰Ibid., 214.

⁷¹Phyllipa Duke Schuyler, *Good Men Die* (New York: Twin Circle Publishing Co., 1969), 31-32.

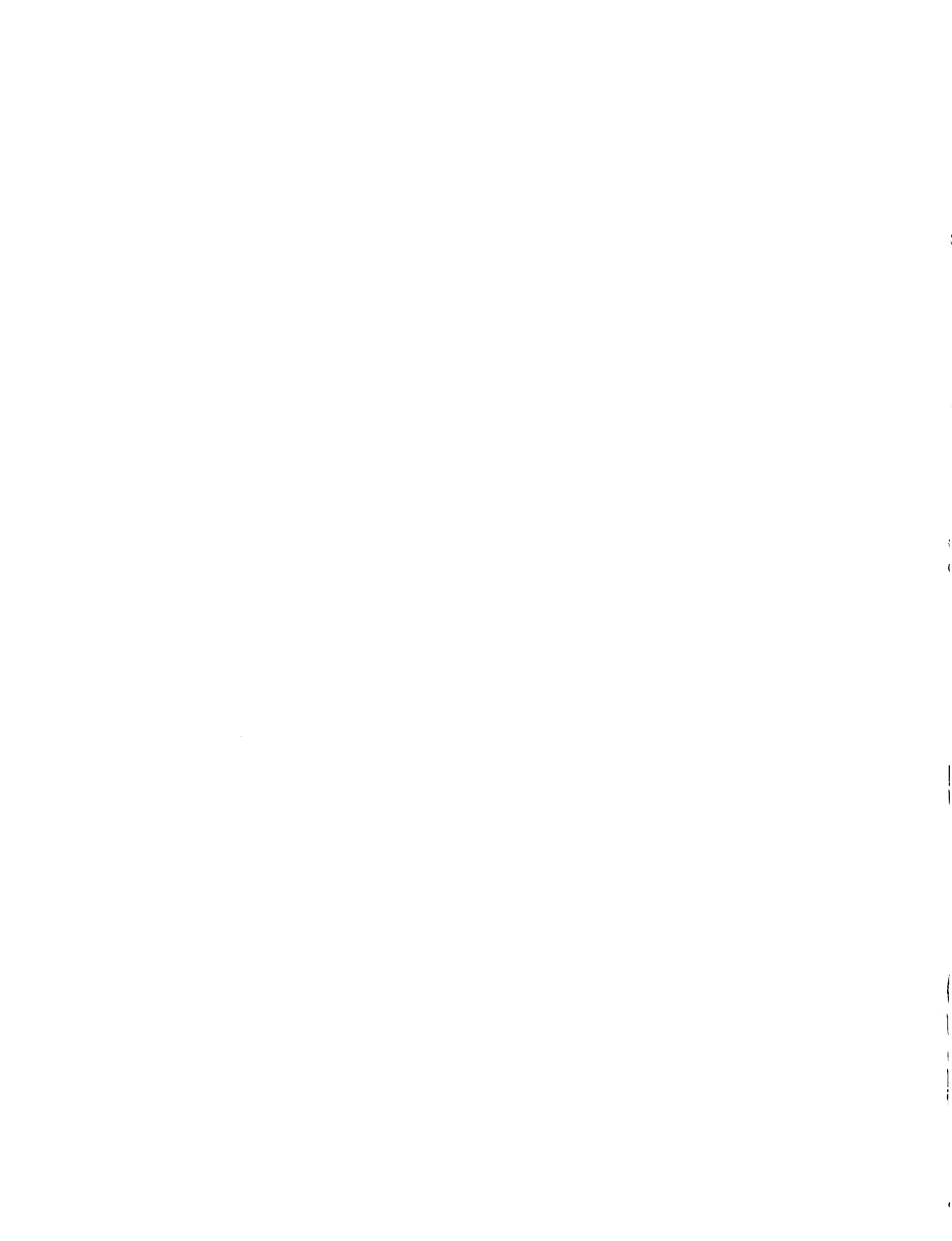
⁷²Ibid., 58.

She wrote that her main purpose in going to Vietnam was to try to know the people, and she traveled throughout South Vietnam to meet and interview the Vietnamese. She felt a close affinity with the Vietnamese whose skin color, she wrote, was close to her own, allowing her to mingle freely in crowds without seeming a stranger. She was strongly critical of America's lack of understanding of the Vietnamese culture, claiming that such ignorance and insensitivity were to a large extent responsible for the failure of American policy. Her criticism was directed against those who were critical of the puppet government of Ngo Dinh Diem and who insisted that the South Vietnamese government be democratic. Most of her writing focused on supporting her belief that the war had to be aggressively fought until it was won. Schuyler died in a helicopter crash while helping evacuate orphans from Hue. She was 34 years old.

Women who were sent to Vietnam as special or resident correspondents were generally older and had far more journalism experience than the freelancers. Georgie Anne Geyer was 32 and an established foreign correspondent when the *Chicago Daily News* sent her to Vietnam for six months in 1968. She had declined an earlier offer to be sent to Vietnam (rather than to the Dominican Republic as she had requested because she would be safer "staying in Saigon"), but by 1968, she was eager to go to Vietnam, partly because the story was by then such a big story. By the time she went, women correspondents in the field were not such a rarity, and she did not "stay in Saigon." She was most proud of a series she did on the U.S. Army that focused on the evolution in the U.S. soldier toward a more autonomous individual.⁷³

Ann Bryan Mariano was 34 when the *Overseas Weekly* sent her to Vietnam in January 1966 as the first woman resident correspondent in Vietnam. Mariano had been reporting for the *Overseas Weekly*, an independently owned newspaper

⁷³Telephone interview with Georgie Anne Geyer, 17 July 1985.



published in Germany for American soldiers in Europe, for six years, and was managing editor of the paper's family magazine when she was offered the position as Vietnam correspondent. Before that she had been a reporter for several years for a medium sized daily newspaper in Texas. She reported for the *Overseas Weekly* in Vietnam for five years, quitting when it was sold at the end of 1970 to a publisher who changed editorial policy. She did free-lance work after that, mostly for the AP, and was in Saigon in 1975 when it was occupied by the North Vietnamese.

Because her paper was published for soldiers, most of her reporting was about them, but had she been with another paper, she said, she would still have written about "soldiers and how they felt about what was happening to them, what their war was like." If she could go back today and cover the war again, she "would have tried to ask more, learn more about the Vietnamese."⁷⁴

Some reporters were sent on special assignment to cover specific stories. Ethel Payne, a reporter for the *Chicago Defender*, was sent to cover the war in Vietnam "particularly for Negro communities," to try to explain "why we are in Vietnam." She was also to explain the "role of Negro soldiers in the conflict."⁷⁵ She was 55 and had been a reporter for the *Defender* since 1952, most of the time covering Washington D.C.⁷⁶

The television networks had very few women reporters in Vietnam. Marlene Sanders, who was sent by ABC on special assignment in 1966, did a variety of stories but not about combat because she did not think that was the most interesting nor the most revealing story to do. Sanders said she was most interested

⁷⁴Telephone interview with Ann Bryan Mariano, 12 July 1985.

⁷⁵Letter from Ethel Payne to MACV explaining why she was requesting accreditation, 24 Dec. 1966. From accreditation file 334- 73-3413, Box 6, Federal Records Center, GSA.

⁷⁶Roland Wolseley, *The Black Press, USA* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1971), 206-207.

in how daily life in Saigon was affected by the war.⁷⁷ Liz Trotta, as a special correspondent for NBC, did her first tour in 1968 and made other brief trips over the next five years. She was a traditional combat reporter, spending most of her time in the combat zones filing daily stories on the fighting. Both Sanders, 35, and Trotta, 31, were experienced television correspondents before being sent to Vietnam. Another experienced television correspondent was Hilary Brown, who had been a London-based ABC foreign correspondent for two years when ABC sent her to Saigon in 1973. The importance of the story as “one of the major stories of the decades” had prompted her to volunteer for the assignment, and ABC took her up on it. Brown was there for a shorter time than she or anyone had planned, and she was evacuated by helicopter from the roof of the American Embassy 30 April 1975.⁷⁸

Gloria Emerson is the only woman to have been sent on a permanent assignment to Vietnam by a major American newspaper. Elizabeth Pond had been sent for six months in 1967 by *The Christian Science Monitor* as a special correspondent, but it was not until *The New York Times* assigned Emerson to Saigon in 1970 that a woman was sent by a major paper as a resident correspondent. Emerson was 40 at the time and was one of the few women correspondents in Vietnam who had had previous experience as a foreign correspondent and some experience in limited wars in Northern Ireland and in Nigeria. She had been in the Paris news bureau since 1965, with assignments in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and West and East Africa. In 1969 she was assigned to the London news bureau, where she was working when she was assigned to Vietnam. She had originally joined *The New York Times* in 1957 to write women’s news. She was the first woman to be on the *Times* foreign staff and in 1972 was still the

⁷⁷Telephone interview with Marlene Sanders, 22 July 1985.

⁷⁸Telephone interview with Hilary Brown, 29 July 1985.

only one.⁷⁹

Emerson had been in South Vietnam in 1956 and had long wanted to return there to write about the Vietnamese.⁸⁰ After being refused by several editors, she was at last sent and her stories about the Vietnamese have been highly praised. She won the 1971 George Polk Award in the foreign-reporting category for her reporting about the effects of the war on the South Vietnamese as individuals. Of her work, Peter Arnett, AP correspondent in Vietnam eleven years, wrote:

[in the early 1970s] the Vietnamese people were finally discovered as news subjects, mainly by Gloria Emerson, whose dispatches were the first I ever saw that captured the humanity of a people engulfed for years in war.⁸¹

These are just a few of the women who reported from Vietnam, but they are typical of the many who did go as correspondents. The reporting of these as well as several others who were in Vietnam will be discussed in the next three chapters. The focus of their reporting is markedly similar and in a tradition of the reporting done by their female precursors and colleagues. By far, the majority of women correspondents wrote about the people who were involved in the war: the American soldier, who little understood the war he was fighting, and the Vietnamese people, whose lives were profoundly affected by a war that violently disrupted their society and nearly destroyed their country "in order to save it."

⁷⁹Barbaralee Diamonstein, *Open Secrets* (New York: Viking, 1972), 112-116.

⁸⁰Gloria Emerson, *Winners and Losers: Battles, Retreats, Gains, Losses and Ruins from the Vietnam War* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), ix.

⁸¹Peter Arnett, "The Last Years and the Aftermath," in *Vietnam Reconsidered: Lessons from a War*, ed. Harrison E. Salisbury (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 134.

CHAPTER IV

THE FREELANCER

The great majority of women correspondents in Vietnam, especially during the first half of the war, were freelancers—reporters not employed full-time by one employer and “free” to submit their stories to any news organization. Their independent status made for a certain financial insecurity but at the same time allowed them greater freedom to choose the subjects of their stories. They wrote primarily for the magazines, both the prestigious public-affairs and opinion journals as well as the popular general-interest magazines. Most women freelancers wrote about the Vietnamese people, though many did write about the American soldier. Many took strong positions against American involvement in a war that was devastating Vietnamese society; even those who supported American policy wrote a great deal about the suffering of the Vietnamese people. An analysis of their reporting shows clearly that it chronicled not just the events of the war but the issues that underlay the struggle: their reporting revealed a crucial understanding that the war was fundamentally a Vietnamese struggle for independence, not an American war as it was generally reported by the American press.

The life of the freelancer could be difficult because of the lack of the backing of a news organization and a regular salary to cover expenses and support her between stories, although freelancer Jurate Kazickas said that in Vietnam a

freelancer could earn a fairly decent income, considering the minimum material needs of a correspondent in Vietnam. Newspapers generally paid between \$50 to \$100 for a "hometown," and the Associated Press paid an average of \$100 for a story. The AP also paid \$50 per photo, usually accepting three to four from the same story. Magazines paid anywhere from \$500 to \$5,000 for a story, depending on the magazine and story length. Kazickas was paid \$500 for a four-column story in *Mademoiselle*. *Ladies Home Journal* would pay \$2,000 and *Life* \$5,000 for an average length story.¹ Sometimes a freelancer had a contract with an organization to do certain stories, and sometimes she signed a contract to "string," which could include her commitment to cover daily events.² Stringers were sometimes paid a small regular retainer with additional payment for stories, but most freelancers and stringers were paid only for stories accepted for publication.

Elizabeth Becker, who was a freelancer in Cambodia in 1973 to 1974, said that lack of money was a typical stringer problem:

One doesn't have much money, and you have to be very clever about it—it costs money to be a reporter—and you don't have anybody paying your bills, and it's hard. The only thing that would stop me was money. You could go just so far without the financial support of an institution.³

Even when a magazine signed a contract and agreed to pay a sizable fee and expenses for a story, these did not include benefits, and the money came after the work was done and the story approved by the publisher. The following contract between Dickey Chapelle and the National Geographic made before her second

¹Telephone interview with Jurate Kazickas, 27 Sept. 1986.

²The term "stringer" derived from the fact that payment for freelance stories was by story length originally measured by a piece of string. See Rodney Tiffen, *The News From Southeast Asia: The Sociology of Newsmaking* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1978), 48.

³Telephone interview with Elizabeth Becker, 14 July 1985.

trip to Vietnam in 1962 stated the terms of payment and also made clear that it had no additional responsibility to her beyond actual costs related to getting the story:

You will receive a minimum of \$3,000, plus expenses, for a satisfactory series of color photographs and a text of approximately 4,000 words on South Vietnam. If the material proves satisfactory you will be paid \$2,500 for the manuscript and a minimum of \$150 per page of color and \$75 per page of black and white. The minimum guarantee will be paid upon completion of the assignment. You will be working against a deadline of early July for both pictures and text. Acceptance of financial and other considerations outlined in this letter shall constitute an absolute release to the National Geographic Society of all responsibility for personal injury, and/or death, which may arise out of or result from this assignment.⁴

Dickey Chapelle was not covered by life insurance when she was killed in Vietnam.⁵ 10

This financial uncertainty would have made living in Vietnam virtually impossible for many freelancers had it not been in part for the liberal support facilities made available to accredited correspondents by the U.S. military. Of course, since U.S. troops were not fighting officially in the field in Cambodia in 1973, there was no military support for correspondents there.

Lack of affiliation with a regular news organization presented other problems for the freelancer. Their access to contacts and good sources for information, for example, was seriously limited without the backing of a well known news organization.⁶ Roxanna Brown, a freelancer in Vietnam in 1968, expressed her sense of frustration to MACV when she was denied access to a mission flight:

If I was a fulltime employee of a major organization, you know that the organization would be most concerned about this matter. Since I

⁴Quoted in Frederick R. Ellis, "Dickey Chapelle: A Reporter and her Work" (Master's thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1968), 73.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Guy Meiss, "Dynamics of Influence in the Foreign-Correspondence Process" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1977), 339- 345.

am a freelance correspondent and do not enjoy the backing of such an organization, I must appeal to your good office for an explanation.⁷

The MACV information officer replied that she was denied access because her presence would have jeopardized success of the mission, not because she was a freelancer.⁸ Still, her perception of the situation was not unlike that of male freelancers in the area, who said that of all correspondents, they exercised the least influence in seeing sources—third after the elite circle of correspondents from prestigious news organizations and a second tier of those representing minor publications.⁹

Lack of access to official sources was not, however, a complaint generally made by women correspondents in Vietnam, perhaps because their sources tended to be soldiers in the field and ordinary Vietnamese. On the contrary, many women felt their perceived lack of “official” status, including their female gender, which contributed to this impression, was often a distinct advantage to them in interviewing these persons. Many women expressed a sense that Vietnamese seemed to be less intimidated by them than by American men, who were physically much larger and closer in appearance to American officials. Frances FitzGerald found that being a woman helped in her reporting of the political background of the war: “For one thing people were less suspicious because you were less likely to be an agent, and then Vietnamese women have always played a role in politics and in government, so no one thinks you come from Mars.”¹⁰

On the other hand, their freelance status may have partly influenced women

⁷Letter to Information Officer, MACV, from Roxanna Brown, March 1969. Accreditation file for Roxanna Brown, Box 28/33. Accession number 73A3413. Washington National Records Center.

⁸Copy of letter to Roxanna Brown from Information Officer, MACV, March 1969. Accreditation file for Roxanna Brown.

⁹Meiss, 342.

¹⁰“Obsessed with the Background to a War,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 Jan. 1973.

correspondents' choice to write about the Vietnamese, a story that the regular press overlooked until late in the war. Freelancers often avoided competing with regular foreign correspondents in the coverage of breaking news or elite officials, and attempted instead to cover supplementary or counterpoint stories.¹¹ Editors, in fact, sometimes cautioned freelancers and special correspondents against reporting the day's fighting in Vietnam because it was already being covered by the news agencies and the major news organizations: "To attempt to compete with these sources, unless one is the rarest of rare journalistic geniuses, is both foolhardy and unnecessary."¹²

Magazines were natural media for the human interest and analytical background story many freelancers wrote. Magazines, except for the news magazines, published longer articles rather than spot news about daily breaking events that newspapers were more interested in. Magazines allowed the correspondent more time for research, analysis, and preparation, which was conducive to developing the kind of stories women wrote. Some freelancers had signed contracts with magazines before they went to Vietnam; others submitted stories and published where they could.

Many women freelancers had definite opinions about the war and American policy and wrote for the magazines most compatible with their views. Those who wrote for the opinion and public-affairs magazines tended to be critical of American policy, sometimes frankly opposing America's involvement. Those who wrote for the more popular, general-interest magazines tended to be supportive of America's goal of fighting Communism in Vietnam, although some wrote that a stronger military effort should be made. Freelancers who wrote for newspapers,

¹¹Meiss, 345.

¹²Letter from McLendon Corporation to Ursula Schweitzer for Leslie Mayes, 23 May 1967. Accreditation file of Leslie Mayes; Box 5/33. Accession number 73A3413; Washington National Records Center.

news agencies, or broadcast companies held to a stricter traditional journalistic objectivity. Like most American correspondents, they generally subscribed to the consensus supporting the American presence in Vietnam, but did not express opinions in their writing beyond this consensus. Of course, these were not firm lines, and there were exceptions.

Frances FitzGerald, the most distinguished woman freelancer (and perhaps the most financially independent), chose to write about the political background of the war and the effect of the war on the people of Vietnam. Of FitzGerald's reporting, British correspondent Murray Sayle wrote that apart from the work of Bernard Fall, FitzGerald was the first to "explain to her countrymen something about the people they have been fighting." Most correspondents in Vietnam, wrote Sayle, were fascinated by the military side, "the way the Americans made war," but FitzGerald showed no interest in the soldier; she concerned herself with the people of Saigon, the Vietnamese themselves, "not, at the time, a subject of much interest to Americans."¹³

While the quality of freelancers and their work varied, some of the best known and outstanding women correspondents were freelancers for all or part of their stay in Vietnam. Peggy Durdin, Dickey Chapelle, and Martha Gellhorn had been working as successful freelance foreign correspondents since World War II. Both Beverly Deepe and Kate Webb began their careers as war correspondents in Vietnam as freelancers. Ann Bryan Mariano was resident correspondent and bureau chief in Vietnam for the *Overseas Weekly* for five years before she quit and became a freelance correspondent. Among outstanding photojournalists in Vietnam were freelancers Dickey Chapelle, Cathy Leroy, and Jill Krementz, and among those who received important journalism awards for their reporting were freelancers Frances FitzGerald, Cathy Leroy, Dickey Chapelle, Linda Grant

¹³Murray Sayle, "Trapped in a War," *The Sunday Times*, 14 Jan. 1973.

Martin, and Ruth Ann Burns.

The reporting of Susan and Neil Sheehan typified both the different journalism of men and women and of resident and freelance correspondents. The Sheehans went to Vietnam in August 1965, he as a resident correspondent for *The New York Times* (he had been there earlier with UPI) and she as a freelancer with a commitment from *The New Yorker* to use her stories. He covered the daily breaking news of the fighting and military tactics; she wrote about the "ordinary" people of Vietnam, the "ninety-five per cent that don't count."¹⁴ She felt fortunate that she did not have to cover daily stories and could roam the countryside, seeking out persons she wanted to interview.

Sheehan's stories, first published in *McCall's*, *The Sign*, and *The New Yorker* and later in the book *Ten Vietnamese*, humanized the Vietnamese in contrast to the daily dispatches, which reported "body counts" of an impersonal war that America sought to win by attrition. She wrote about customs, culture, living conditions, attitudes, politics, not as a matter of statistics but as dynamic circumstances in the lives of real individuals.

This interest in the Vietnamese people especially as they influenced and were affected by the war dominated the reporting of the freelance woman correspondent in Vietnam. They believed and tried to convey through their writing that the war could not be separated from the historical, cultural, political, and economic issues of the Vietnamese people. They called for American policy makers to consider these factors in dealing with Indochina. Many focused on the tragedy of the victims of a war that drove them from their homes, broke up their families and killed their loved ones, destroyed their lands, tore apart their culture, breaking down the very foundations of their society. Others wrote about the effect of the war on the young American soldiers, also victims of a war that for many

¹⁴Susan Sheehan, *Ten Vietnamese* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), xii.

seemed to have no meaning.

Freelancers for The Public Affairs and Opinion Magazines

Many freelancers wrote for the public-affairs and opinion magazines frequently associated with “liberals” or even the “liberal left,” such as *The New Yorker*, *Atlantic*, *Nation*, *Harper’s*, the *New York Review of Books*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and the *Village Voice*. Women correspondents, both old and young, who wrote for these magazines were almost all critical of American policy, and some were actively opposed to the war. Almost all of them later used their reporting to write books on Vietnam.

Peggy Durdin covered Indochina during the years between 1946—the beginning of the first Indochina War during which the Viet Minh struggled for independence from France—and 1961—the year designated by the United States as the official beginning of the second Indochina war.¹⁵ Durdin brought her broad understanding of Indochina to her reporting of the political and social issues, and her reporting provided shrewd analysis of the underlying issues that would eventually lead to the so-called second Indochina war. She was born and spent her childhood in Northern China, where her father was an American missionary. She and her husband, Tillman Durdin of *The New York Times* foreign staff, had lived and reported in Southeast Asia from the early 1940s. She reported from most countries of Southeast Asia, with her work appearing in the *Nation*, *The New Yorker*, the *Reporter*, and *The New York Times Magazine*, among others.

In 1950, she accurately predicted that the Viet Minh revolutionary movement would win against the French in the end, barring American troop assistance to French forces. Even with such aid, she wrote, a French victory was clearly

¹⁵Francis Donald Faulkner, “Bao Chi: The American News Media in Vietnam,” (Ph.D. diss., The University of Massachusetts, 1981), 32.

not certain because of the lack of popular support for the French-backed government of Bao Dai, with many Vietnamese supporting Ho Chi Minh. Durdin wrote that the great majority of Vietnamese saw the war as a conflict between nationalism and colonialism and believed that only an independent nationalist government could effectively draw support away from Ho, who was perceived by the Indochinese to be a nationalist more than a Communist.¹⁶

In this same early report, Durdin pointed out the danger of a policy that failed to realistically assess the military and political situation in Vietnam and that insisted on making Vietnam's national war of independence an American war against communism "whether or not the effort has a good chance of success." She prophetically warned that the United States might "find itself involved in another debacle on the China pattern."¹⁷

Her stories consistently reported the strength of the nationalist feelings among the people of Indochina, who did not necessarily support Communist-led government, but preferred it to colonialism. She wrote that throughout the countries of Indochina, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, a similar nationalistic desire for independence united peoples who otherwise held long-standing animosities. Traditionally gentle, peaceful, and easygoing Laos, for example, turned to its feared enemy Vietnam, choosing "liberation" by the Viet Minh over French colonial rule.¹⁸

Durdin identified Ho Chi Minh as having emerged as the unifying force between the countries of Indochina. As independence from France became a reality, eventual domination of Vietnam by the Communists grew more apparent because it was the only organized political party, and Ho Chi Minh was the

¹⁶Peggy Durdin, "Why Ho Chi Minh Can Win," *Nation*, 11 Nov.1950, 436-437.

¹⁷Ibid., 437.

¹⁸Peggy Durdin, "Laos: Paradise on the Edge of War," *The New York Times Magazine*, 4 April 1954, 17.

only leader who was respected and trusted by almost every Vietnamese, not just by the Viet Minh. He represented "moral man" to the Vietnamese and was the "living symbol of a tradition deeply rooted in centuries of Vietnamese history—the fight for national independence." Most Vietnamese thought of Ho as a nationalist and had little understanding or concern for the fact that he was also a Communist. To the average Asian, Durdin wrote, communism was simply a word that neither repelled nor frightened them. Most Vietnamese, both North and South, believed that Ho would win the 1956 elections provided for by the 1954 Geneva agreements.¹⁹

The Communists were not yet securely in control as of December 1954, Durdin wrote, and reforms could counter the Viet Minh's thrust for dominance over all of Vietnam. At the time, the only alternative to Ho and the Communists, however, was the deeply corrupt and chaotic Bao Dai government in Saigon, supported by few groups other than the Catholics and the French. Bao Dai attempted to regain some control and power in 1954 by naming Ngo Dinh Diem to be the new prime minister. Diem was honest, conscientious, and politically courageous, but inept and ineffective and perceived to be a puppet of the United States, which many Vietnamese suspected of having the same imperialistic motives as the French.²⁰

Durdin warned that Washington could provide aid for the new government, but without good, honest, and effective government by the Vietnamese themselves, "no amount of American support will 'save' South Vietnam." American meddling in the internal affairs of Asian countries would only convince the people, both Communists and anti-Communists alike, that the United States was

¹⁹Peggy Durdin, "The Shadowy Leader of the Vietminh," *The New York Times Magazine*, 9 May 1954, 12.

²⁰Peggy Durdin, "There Is No Truce in Vietnam," *The Reporter*, 30 Dec. 1954, 23-27.

indeed attempting to establish a new kind of white domination or imperialism, and would turn them away from Washington.²¹

She pointed to the failure of the United States to consider the people themselves in its policies, resulting again and again in the mishandling of American aid and in the loss of the trust of Asian peoples. In Laos, for example, ninety percent of American aid went to the armed forces. In contrast, the Viet Minh won the support of the Laotian peasants by treating them with respect and providing aid directly to the people. By the time Americans began to use the aid to help the people, the situation had already been successfully exploited by the Communists.²²

In Cambodia, King Norodom Sihanouk remained friendly with the United States although resentful of its heavy-handed support of France rather than Cambodia. Cambodia was “of strategic importance to the security of all the various nations of Southeast Asia,” and Durdin believed that the United States still could help the young king and an independent Cambodia “achieve relative stability and maintain freedom from Communist domination.”²³

Susan Sheehan focused her reporting on the individual Vietnamese, whose personal lives and attitudes reinforced the generalizations about the social and political situation made earlier by Peggy Durdin. Sheehan traveled for seven months from October 1965 to May 1966 throughout South Vietnam (she could not get a visa to Hanoi) interviewing the Vietnamese and writing stories about ten of them: a peasant, a landlord, a refugee, a politician, a Montagnard, an orphan, a Buddhist monk, a South Vietnamese soldier, a Viet Cong, and a North

²¹Peggy Durdin, “On Trial—The White Man in Asia,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 5 June 1955, 7.

²²Peggy Durdin, “Gentle Laos Is Caught in the Cold War,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 23 April 1961, 14.

²³Peggy Durdin, “A New Act in Cambodia’s Drama,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 8 Nov. 1953, 18.

Vietnamese prisoner.²⁴

Her stories form somewhat of a composite of the typical Vietnamese, even though there are marked differences in education, political sophistication, and financial circumstances among the interviewees. Except for the politician, who was very knowledgeable about the political affairs and history of Vietnam, most persons told her they were quite ignorant of politics and the details of government. Some, like a fifty-six-year-old peasant woman, said they did not take sides; others said they joined "the government side when the government troops were in the area and seemed able to protect them, and the Viet Cong when the government troops weren't around."²⁵

Some were awed by the powerful Americans and believed their aid would bring victory to the South. The politician, who supported democracy and opposed the Communists, admitted that many peasants chose the Communists over the corrupt, dictatorial Diem regime. He believed that none of the governments to succeed Diem were any improvement and that South Vietnam's only hope was for America to take control of the government.²⁶

Even though the war was to go on for nearly ten more years, most South Vietnamese were already worn out by the years of fighting. To Sheehan, they expressed despair, fatigue, frustration, and disillusionment with the war and general unhappiness with the policies of the South Vietnamese government. Pacification, for example, had disrupted many of their lives without achieving significant reduction of Viet Cong influence in the villages. Pacification involved clearing a hamlet or village of the Viet Cong, installing government personnel to destroy any Communist cells and to win the people's support, and recruiting militiamen from the local population to defend against Viet Cong attacks. If not successful,

²⁴Susan Sheehan, *Ten Vietnamese* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967).

²⁵Sheehan, "A Refugee," in *Ten Vietnamese*, 45-46.

²⁶Sheehan, "A Politician," in *Ten Vietnamese*, 67.

and pacification was generally unsuccessful, the inhabitants of the hamlet were relocated, and the hamlet could then become a "free fire" zone, meaning that government forces could bomb it without warning the local people.²⁷ Pacification was responsible for a great many of the refugees who swarmed into the cities and provincial capitals from the countryside throughout the war.

Sheehan's interviews showed that the Viet Cong achieved considerable success with the peasants by simply befriending them, and living and working with them. In this way, the Communists made significant inroads into Montagnard society despite the mountain people's liking for the Americans. Widespread dissatisfaction with the policies and village administrators imposed upon them by the South Vietnamese government helped to turn the people's support to the Communists. Still, the majority of the people favored neither side, remaining suspicious of all Vietnamese, their historical enemy. "Above all, the tribesmen simply endure as best they can the agony of the war that has become a part of daily life in the highlands."²⁸

Most Vietnamese told Sheehan that they simply wanted the war to end and to be reunited with their families in their native villages. A 13-year-old orphan refugee, who lived on the streets of DaNang and supported himself selling ice cream, longed to return to his native hamlet.²⁹ A South Vietnamese soldier,

²⁷For one of the most moving and comprehensive accounts of such a village pacification, see Jonathan Schell, *The Village of Ben Suc* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1967). Nearly 10,000 people from four villages were moved to new refugee camps in order to rid the area of Viet Cong. No preparation at the new camp had been made because the Americans didn't inform the Vietnamese officials of the relocation until twenty hours before it happened. After the villagers were evacuated, everything in the "iron triangle" was destroyed to make a "free-fire" zone—where no warning was required before artillery was fired. Meagre quarters and facilities were provided, and propaganda was broadcast fourteen hours a day from loud speakers throughout the camps.

²⁸Sheehan, "A Montagnard," in *Ten Vietnamese*, 101.

²⁹Sheehan, "An Orphan," in *Ten Vietnamese*, 115.

who was not quite sure exactly why he was fighting but accepted the fact he must fight the Viet Cong and the Communists, was weary of the war and wanted simply to return to his family. The young South Vietnamese who fought with the Viet Cong was eager for reunification with the North because of his many relatives there, but he defected from the Viet Cong because he had grown to believe that American aid would mean victory for South Vietnam and the end to hopes of reunification. The North Vietnamese prisoner was eager to return to his wife and baby, but he continued to believe the goals of the Communists were in the best interest of the country and that the North would eventually win the war.³⁰

Martha Gellhorn also went to Vietnam to find out what was happening to the people. She wrote a series of articles for the *Guardian*, some of which were also published with some modification in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and all were eventually collected in a booklet entitled *A New Kind of War*.³¹ She believed American policy amounted to genocide and supported immediate withdrawal and payment of reparations.³² Her stories described the ravages of war inflicted by the United States on the Vietnamese people. The title of her first article and eventually of the booklet came from an indoctrination lecture given to new U.S. troops upon arrival in South Vietnam:

...it should be plain to see that we're in a new kind of war... We've got to kill VC [Viet Cong] all right; but there's a lot more to it than that. To really and truly and finally win this war, we must help the Government of South Vietnam win the hearts and minds of the *people* of South Vietnam.³³

³⁰Sheehan, "A South Vietnamese Soldier," "A Viet Cong," and "A North Vietnamese Prisoner," in *Ten Vietnamese*, 133-169.

³¹Martha Gellhorn, *A New Kind of War* (Manchester: Manchester Guardian and Evening News, 1966).

³²Ward S. Just, *To What End: Report From Vietnam* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968), 24.

³³Quoted in Gellhorn, 2.

Gellhorn added that indeed it was a new kind of war, which called for a new kind of fighting that would not destroy the people it was intended to save: "Hearts and minds, after all, live in bodies."³⁴

Her stories portrayed a people caught in the middle. Exploited by both the Viet Cong and the Government of South Vietnam (GVN), the peasants liked neither side and cared little for which side won, hoping only for peace so they could work in safety.³⁵ Life had been difficult and often terrifying with the Viet Cong, but not until the American bombs threatened them physically did they leave their ancient homes. They escaped to the cities and urban centers where they just barely survived in the wretched, filthy, crowded refugee camps, but they could at least be physically safe from the Viet Cong and the bombs.

It is amazing that the refugees stay sane. First the bombs, perhaps the "battle" around them, their casualties, their naked helplessness; then the flight, leaving behind everything they have worked for all their lives; then the semi-starvation and ugly hardship of the camps or the slums; and as a final cruelty, the killing diseases which only strike at them.³⁶

Gellhorn was critical of American policy, which she said appeared to be formed and implemented with little regard for the wishes of the Vietnamese people or understanding of its effect on them. She wrote that the Americans were waging a "peculiar" surreal war measured by "body count" and "kill ratio" and were dangerously removed from reality and the people.³⁷

No American newspaper would publish the series in 1966. Gellhorn was told "they were too tough for American readers."³⁸ Only three of the mildest

³⁴Ibid., 7.

³⁵Ibid., 20-21.

³⁶Ibid., p. 27.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Quoted in Jacqueline Elizabeth Orsagh, "A Critical Biography of Martha Gellhorn." (Ph.D. diss., Michigan State University, 1977), 363.

of Gellhorn's six articles were eventually printed in the United States, in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and the *Ladies Home Journal*. Gellhorn was particularly anguished that she could not get her message to the readers she wished to reach.³⁹ Her memories of the horrors suffered by the people of Vietnam interrupted her sleep for a month after she returned to her home in London. Her many efforts over the next several years to secure a visa to return to Vietnam were refused: "It appears I am on some sort of black list and I will not be allowed to report from South Vietnam again."⁴⁰

The great majority of women correspondents went to Vietnam in 1966 and 1967, the years of the rapid buildup of American forces. President Eisenhower had first sent advisers to train the South Vietnamese army in 1955, President Kennedy increased their numbers to 16,000, and President Johnson committed the first combat troops to South Vietnam in March 1965. By November 1966, U.S. military strength had reached 350,000, and by 1967, a million tons of supplies arrived each month in Vietnam to support the approximate 470,000 armed forces there.⁴¹ The number of American servicemen in Vietnam peaked at 543,000 in April 1969 and began to decrease steadily thereafter.⁴²

Frances FitzGerald stayed with the story of Vietnam from 1966 until the North Vietnamese occupied Saigon in April 1975. A profound sense of the tragedy of the war for the Vietnamese, not only in the suffering and deaths of individuals but in the destruction of the culture and society of Vietnam, informs her writing on the war. On her first visit to Saigon for ten months in 1966, she wrote that war had changed the demography of Vietnam, with millions of

³⁹Ibid., 365.

⁴⁰Quoted in Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 390.

⁴¹See Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam* (New York: Viking Press, 1983), 417-473.

⁴²Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 147.

refugees “washing” into the cities and towns—“the real strategic hamlets”—creating a myriad of social welfare problems and destroying the village, the basis of society in Vietnam.⁴³ Upon her return five years later in 1972 for a stay of six months, she was shocked to see how the situation had deteriorated even further:

It broke my heart to see what had taken place. Everything is a shambles and everybody a refugee. The ugliness is stunning. The parts that were so beautiful in '66 are now a wasteland of cast off American equipment and barbed wire.⁴⁴

She searched always for the larger explanations behind the reality of the daily war, looking to history as the foundation for understanding contemporary events. She, in turn, became the historian—the tragic poet—of contemporary Vietnam and the war. In her earliest articles appeared the themes that recur throughout her writing on the war: the war as insane, brutal, and tragic; the failure of a rigid and self-interested U.S. policy because of its irrelevance to the reality of Vietnamese culture and politics; the village as the traditional basis for Vietnamese identity and society and its crucial importance in the formation of any stable society; the traditional Vietnamese concept of a unified universe with one way of life for all with the government as the authority that maintained social harmony.

FitzGerald's earliest reporting revealed her broad grasp of the complexities of Vietnamese politics and culture that she claimed were largely ignored by American policy makers. A month after she arrived in Saigon, she referred in an article in the *Village Voice* to Vietnam as a “country deranged” in which one existed in a “state of persistent abnormality.” She asserted that American officials had little understanding of the country or even of the war (which one Embassy

⁴³Frances FitzGerald, “The Tragedy of Saigon,” *Atlantic*, Dec. 1966, 59-67.

⁴⁴Fern Marja Eckman, “Hooked on Vietnam,” *New York Post*, 21 July 1972.

official called “an existential phenomenon”). The war, she wrote, dissolved in a “vapor of semi-accurate information,” and the press’s reports, bearing little relation to a comprehensible reality (the situation was always “still/more grave and/or/still/more fluid”) were like a “Looking Glass” through which Vietnam disappeared “beyond the vanishing point.”⁴⁵

Her reporting went beyond description of the refugee camps to an interpretation of the displacement of the peasants as the actual destruction of Vietnamese society. In *The New York Times Magazine*, she wrote that relocation of the Vietnamese into “Strategic Hamlets” (small concentrated settlements barricaded by barbed wire against the Viet Cong) or to refugee camps ultimately deprived them of their identity. “For a villager to leave his land, his family and his ancestral tombs meant forsaking part of himself and his capacity to deal with other people.”⁴⁶

The total lack of American understanding of the Vietnamese culture and society, wrote FitzGerald, prevented the United States from forming any viable policy to attain its goals in Vietnam. Far worse for the Vietnamese, U.S. policy threatened to destroy the fabric of Vietnam society. “Americans have created Viet Nam anew,. . .a country which bears no simple relation to the country that the Vietnamese live in.”⁴⁷

She became obsessed with Vietnam and continued to write about it after she returned to the United States, expanding upon the ideas of her earlier articles. In August 1967, *Atlantic* published an important article by FitzGerald that suggested an essential theme of her later book: the fundamental importance of

⁴⁵Frances FitzGerald, “Background of Crisis: The Trivia in Truth,” *Village Voice*, 28 April 1966, 7.

⁴⁶Frances Fitzgerald, “Life and Death of a Vietnamese Village,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 4 Sept. 1966, 4.

⁴⁷Frances FitzGerald, “Viet Nam—The People,” *Vogue*, May 1967, 174, 260-3.

Vietnamese culture in any political solution to its problems. The United States, FitzGerald argued, was fighting the war based on assumptions that did not correspond to the pattern of political forces in Vietnam. Further, solutions to Vietnamese problems required understanding the problems from the perspective of the Vietnamese (an echo of Peggy Durdin's earlier warning). Vietnam, Fitzgerald wrote, was as far from the United States culturally as it was geographically: "an American travels to Vietnam only through a vast effort of translation."⁴⁸

Many of her ideas in the *Atlantic* article sprang from the work of Paul Mus, a French historian and anthropologist born in Vietnam, and with whom she had studied Vietnam and its history. According to her thesis, at the base of Vietnam was the village, the "archetype" of the community. Society was in a sense a large "village," a unified entity within which all members lived one way of life, depending on, and responsible to, the community. Any government that did not understand this relationship and did not possess the authority to maintain harmony within this society could not long remain in power. Inevitably it would be displaced by a government that would restore social harmony and spontaneously command the loyalty of the people. Thus, she reasoned, the American vision of a popular, non-Communist government remained improbable throughout the war. "...the American design for a democratic government tends to look somewhat surreal when placed in a Vietnamese context."⁴⁹

FitzGerald continued to write about the war while she also researched and wrote her book. In 1970 she wrote in *The New York Review* that President Nixon's justification for the buildup of the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) and for continuing the American presence as necessary to protect the non-Communist Vietnamese from a Viet Cong massacre was not supported by history or evidence.

⁴⁸Frances Fitzgerald, "The Struggle and the War," *Atlantic*, August 1967, 72-82.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 86.

The Vietnamese expected periodic revolution as a necessary transition in their lives, a necessary period of cleansing, a "fire in the lake." To forestall this transition, as the United States was doing, was to extend the struggle, which, ironically, would extend the suffering.⁵⁰

Furthermore, FitzGerald continued, extensive evidence did not indicate that a massacre was likely. Reports even by the American mission in Saigon had consistently shown that the Communists in South Vietnam had always behaved irreproachably toward the mass of the population and had used terror selectively and purposefully. The National Liberation Front generally used reeducation to cope with hostile persons. (The NLF was first formed in South Vietnam in 1960 to resist the Diem regime. It was named, intentionally derogatorily, the "Viet Cong" by the Americans.) FitzGerald called upon the Nixon administration to return politics to the Vietnamese if it sincerely wanted peace for the people.

Fire in the Lake was published in August 1972 to wide acclaim.⁵¹ FitzGerald took a stand against the war and accused American policy of destroying Vietnamese society. A large part of the book had already been published in five parts in *The New Yorker* and had received great praise. It was applauded as the first clearly reasoned analysis of the historical, political, and cultural aspects of the Vietnamese society. It was praised for providing the Vietnamese perspective, for having a concern for things Vietnamese, and for offering a solution to the war.

Fire in the Lake was not only highly praised in the East by the major papers and the prestigious opinion and academic journals but also throughout the country by papers such as *The [Memphis] Commercial Appeal*⁵² and the

⁵⁰Frances Fitzgerald, "Vietnam: The Future," *The New York Review*, 26 March 1970, 4-10.

⁵¹Frances Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1972). Further references to this work appear in the text.

⁵²Richard Lentz, *The Commercial Appeal*, 1 Oct. 1972.

Chicago Daily News,⁵³ and throughout the world by papers such as *The Daily Telegraph* of London⁵⁴ and the *Times of India*, which said she possessed the “fearlessness of a freelance journalist not committed to the establishment media and therefore relatively free to make value judgments and take sides.”⁵⁵

In addition to the Pulitzer, she received many important national awards, including the National Institute of Arts and Letters Award, the National Book Award, the Sidney Hillman Award, the George Polk Award, and the Bancroft award for history, and she received honorary degrees from Skidmore and Middlebury colleges. FitzGerald was 32 when *Fire in the Lake* was published; she had been only 26 when she had first gone to Vietnam. In 1967, she had also received an Overseas Press Club award “for interpretative reporting” for her reporting about Vietnam.

In an interview about the book, FitzGerald said she thought she was writing a history of a war that would have long been over, but that *Fire in the Lake* turned out to be “only a midterm report,” and she was becoming more than ever disillusioned with U.S. policy.⁵⁶ She stated in the book that U.S. policy was never meant to help the Vietnamese in its great effort to develop into an independent modern country but to hold the line against communism at the 17th parallel (p. 121). After 1968, American goals changed from containing communism to saving American “prestige.” The Nixon administration expanded and intensified the air war and doubled the total tonnage of bombs dropped, “so that after two years and a few months of his administration the United States had dropped more bombs on Indochina than it had in both the European and the Pacific theatres

⁵³Betty Flynn, “Frankie FitzGerald, the Beautiful Blueblood Who Wrote ‘the Best Book Ever on Vietnam,’” *Chicago Daily News*, 21-22 Oct. 1972, 13.

⁵⁴“Obsessed with the Background to a War,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 Jan. 1973.

⁵⁵“Know Thine Enemy as Thyself,” *The Times of India*, 8 April 1973.

⁵⁶Quoted in “Frances FitzGerald,” *Vogue*, 15 Aug. 1972, 93.

during World War II" (p. 417). As the bombing and fighting intensified, millions of refugees swarmed into the cities, where prostitution, drugs, disease, and crime signaled the destruction of the society. In the end, the United States did not win the war, but it succeeded in changing Vietnam beyond recognition even to the Vietnamese (p. 432).

FitzGerald returned to Vietnam after the 1973 Paris peace settlement, and she wrote a series of articles for the *Atlantic* about the impact of the peace accords on the South Vietnamese. In January 1973, she had written that two questions had not been answered by the agreement: "Is the Vietnam war over, and if so, who has won it?"⁵⁷ At the time of the treaty, the North Vietnamese and the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) controlled about two-thirds of the territory of South Vietnam, but that included a very small percentage of the population. The war had driven most of the population into the cities, towns, and roadside settlements, which were controlled by the GVN.⁵⁸

FitzGerald visited the liberated zones under the control of the PRG and a PRG military base in the Mekong Delta. She found a continued determination and hope among the NLF soldiers for eventual liberation of South Vietnam from the Thieu government. She also found a more restrictive and secretive GVN, which no longer allowed American journalists to travel freely. As she was returning to her car from the NLF military base, FitzGerald and reporter David Greenway of the *Washington Post* were apprehended by GVN troops and taken to province headquarters, searched, and questioned for some hours before an American Foreign Service officer arrived to free them.⁵⁹ She also visited villages still under the control of the GVN, one of which was Duc Lap, a pacified village

⁵⁷Frances Fitzgerald, "Vietnam: A Long Way From Peace," *Washington Post*, 28 Jan. 1973, Sec. B, 1.

⁵⁸Frances Fitzgerald, "Vietnam: The Cadres and the Villagers," *Atlantic*, May 1974, 4-16.

⁵⁹Frances Fitzgerald, "Vietnam," *Atlantic*, April 1974, 4-18.

that had been torn by war since 1962. Amazingly, the people had done much to restore village society and to rebuild their homes, but they displayed a determination to resist the GVN, which continued to harass them, and to support liberation under the NLF.⁶⁰

In 1975, FitzGerald visited Hanoi with several other journalists. She found the city to be "lively and disorderly" with a "relaxed, slightly dilapidated" look, retaining some of its European atmosphere. The people were friendly, and beneath a surface discipline that obliged them to offer the usual "boring propaganda," they revealed a spontaneity and an undercurrent of irony about their Communist slogans. She and the journalists were free to travel in most places other than areas of military affairs. She found the country still mostly undeveloped, agricultural, decentralized, and not very socialist. American bombing had destroyed seventy percent of the industry of North Vietnam, and the problem of capital remained its most acute. The North Vietnamese were seeking outside investments to spark economic development, and leaders spoke of a desire for reestablishing relations with the United States.⁶¹

FitzGerald gradually came to believe that American policy was more reprehensible than simply a mistake based on a misunderstanding of Indochina. American presidents, she wrote, cared little about what happened to the Indochinese, and were concerned only about proving themselves right and retaining "their old authority with the American public." Detente with China negated the original goal in Vietnam to stop communism: "All of a sudden the United States was actually helping China by continuing the war." President Nixon and Secretary Kissinger now explained the war as questions of "face" and "credibility" of the American image. Kissinger and President Ford returned to the domino theory,

⁶⁰Frances Fitzgerald, "Vietnam: Reconciliation," *Atlantic*, June 1974, 21.

⁶¹Frances Fitzgerald, "A Reporter at Large," *The New Yorker*, 28 April 1975, 96-119.

saying the war was “linked” to almost every American foreign policy objective, which would all be threatened by a loss of Vietnam. In the end, what was clear, FitzGerald insisted, was that the “theories were but another kind of cover-up.”⁶²

FitzGerald has continued to speak and write about Vietnam. At the four-day conference on Vietnam in Los Angeles in February 1983, she spoke about the crucial importance of historical memory, admonishing Americans to learn and remember everything about the war, including the central fact that the “United States created the war.” Remembering, FitzGerald said, would help prevent the United States from again intervening “in the internal affairs of small third world countries, particularly ones of no economic or strategic importance to the United States.” The Vietnamese taught Americans an old lesson, that “nothing is more precious than independence and freedom.”⁶³

In a review of Mary McCarthy’s book about her trip to North Vietnam, *Hanoi*, and of Susan Sontag’s book about her visit to Hanoi at that same time, *Trip to Hanoi*, Frances Fitzgerald noted that the visits of McCarthy and Sontag were the first attempts made by Americans to find out what the North Vietnamese were like. “The Vietnamese themselves had never been the subject of American journalism.” Others who went to North Vietnam, such as Harrison Salisbury and Tom Hayden, looked at the “hard news” of bombing damage and peace proposals, but not at the people themselves. According to FitzGerald, what McCarthy and Sontag found—“what perhaps never occurred to Secretary Rusk”—was that the Vietnamese were “absolutely foreign.”⁶⁴

⁶²Frances Fitzgerald, “The End is the Beginning,” *New Republic*, 3 May 1975, 7-8.

⁶³Frances Fitzgerald, “How Does America Avoid Future Vietnams?” in *Vietnam Reconsidered: Lessons From a War*, ed. Harrison E. Salisbury (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 305.

⁶⁴Frances Fitzgerald, “A Nice Place to Visit,” *The New York Review of Books*, 13 March 1969, 28-31.

Mary McCarthy went to South Vietnam and to Hanoi in 1967 to write for the *New York Review of Books*, which had taken an anti-war position editorially. Her reports were later collected in two books, *Vietnam* and *Hanoi*.⁶⁵ McCarthy wrote that her major purpose in going to Vietnam was to find out what had happened to the people. She was frankly opposed to the war and tried to communicate to her readers the importance of opposing the war to bring about its end. She did not see the front lines: "The meaning of a war," she wrote, "ought to be discernible in the rear, where the values being defended are situated; at the front, war itself appears senseless, a confused butchery that only the gods can understand" (p. 235).

McCarthy was most struck by the overpowering American presence everywhere in Vietnam. She wrote that downtown Saigon looked like a "very shoddy" American city, where the "civilian take-over was even more astonishing than the military" (p. 65). The city had smog, garbage, and traffic problems, power failures, inflation, and juvenile delinquency, just like a "modern Western city." Even the vice had a *Playboy* flavor.

Most American soldiers preferred the countryside, where the "Americanization process smells better...even when perfumed with napalm" (p. 69). Yet the blight had spread to the country as well. Houses in the hamlets and villages were clean and neat inside but were surrounded outside by the same "filthy jetsam" that characterized the refugee camps. Everywhere the American-made trash—Coke bottles, rusty beer cans, empty whiskey bottles, "indestructible mass-production garbage"—disfigured the countryside (p. 110).

In contrast, in Hanoi she found everything to be clean, and although life was austere and the people poor, the children and young people were radiant

⁶⁵Mary McCarthy, *The Seventeenth Degree: How it Went, Vietnam, Hanoi, Medina, Sons of the Morning* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1974). Further references to this work appear in the text.

with health (p. 238). She admired the North for holding its society together in the midst of the bombing and providing at least the necessities to maintain reasonably good health of both mind and body of most of the population, but she was disturbed by a single-minded nationalism. A sameness everywhere among the people, even to a uniform cheerfulness and friendliness, struck her as somehow abnormal. Their sober commitment to resisting "American imperialism" and preparing for new independence seemed to create a self-consciousness, an impenetrable wall, between her and the people. She thought this a response to the American presence, which in this way made itself felt everywhere in North Vietnam just as it had in South.

Linda Grant Martin was another freelancer in Vietnam with her husband, Everett Martin, who was chief of *Newsweek's* bureau in Saigon. She had been on the staff of the *Saturday Evening Post* and a researcher for *Newsweek* before going to Vietnam in 1967 at the age of 27 to write for *The New York Times Magazine*, *Mademoiselle*, and *Today's Health*, among others. Her stories described the lives of the Vietnamese in the throes of continuous crisis, and the adjustments they made in order to survive in crowded refugee camps of the cities and towns or in villages that had been pacified several times, only to be reoccupied the same number of times by the Viet Cong.⁶⁶ Martin received the Overseas Press Club award in 1968 for magazine reporting from a foreign country.

A few women correspondents wrote for the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, an important English-language weekly public-affairs magazine published in Hong Kong mostly for an informed elite of diplomats, civil servants, journalists, and persons in business and academics. It has often relied on part-time correspondents, and during the Indochina War provided a regular outlet for freelance

⁶⁶See for example: Linda Grant Martin, "Keeping up with the Tran Quan Lacs," *The New York Times Magazine*, 20 Aug. 1967, 22; "Thirty-seven Year War of the Village of Tananhoi," *The New York Times Magazine*, 29 Oct. 1967, 30; and "When Crisis is a Way of Life," *Mademoiselle*, November 1966, 172-3.

western journalists, who tended to be critical of U.S. policy in Indochina.⁶⁷ It continues to be highly respected by journalists.⁶⁸

Dr. Frances L. Starner was a professor of political science who reported on Indochina periodically between 1962 and 1975 mostly for the *Review* but also for other opinion magazines such as the *Nation*. Her reporting focused on political issues. She wrote, for example, about the impact on the Vietnamese of GVN policies and programs such as President Thieu's "Land-to-the-Tiller" land reform of 1970, which seemed to be dying for lack of funding,⁶⁹ pacification in the southern Delta, which, Dr. Starner wrote, would be more accurately called "occupation" because little cooperation and support came for the people,⁷⁰ and the severe inflation of a wartime economy.⁷¹ Perhaps, she wrote, the most serious threat to government efforts to win support of the population were corrupt officials who siphoned off American funds for themselves.⁷²

Judith Coburn made several trips to Indochina between 1970 and 1973, contributing articles regularly to the *Review* and the *Village Voice*, and writing for Pacifica Foundation, which owned and operated four FM radio stations in the Southwest. At one time she stayed for a year, reporting on Cambodia in 1971-1972. Her dispatches openly expressed her anti-war position, and she was once denied a visa into Vietnam because of her hostile reporting about the

⁶⁷Rodney Tiffen, *The News From Southeast Asia: The Sociology of News-making* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1978), 73-74.

⁶⁸Faulkner, 453.

⁶⁹Frances Starner, "Bowling to Revolution," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 2 July 1970, 75-77.

⁷⁰Frances Starner, "Any Umbrellas," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 9 July 1970, 19-20.

⁷¹Frances Starner, "A Need to Devalue," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 16 July, 1970, 22-27.

⁷²Frances Starner, "Aid and 'Squeeze' in Asia," *Nation*, 27 May, 1968, 696-700.

American and South Vietnamese war policy. Before going to Indochina she had been a reporter in the Washington bureau of Newhouse Newspapers, had written freelance articles for the *Village Voice*, and had worked with the Institute for Policy Studies. She is writing a book based on her experiences and reporting in Indochina.⁷³

Coburn's reports covered a range of subjects, including combat, the South Vietnamese and Cambodian governments, President Nixon's Indochina policy, American G.I.'s, the effect of the widening Indochina war on the people, and the press itself. She was deeply critical of Nixon's invasion of Cambodian sanctuaries—"Operation Total Victory," expressing disbelief that any administration in 1970 could continue to believe that the war was "winnable."⁷⁴

Coburn experienced the "destructive might" of American air power herself when South Vietnamese troops she was accompanying on their way to Laos were accidentally bombed by American planes with CBUs—cluster bombs. They hadn't protected themselves against the attack, and the casualties were extensive, fifty to sixty wounded and seven killed on impact. Later one of the Vietnamese officers told her that his squadron "had lost more men in the accidental bombing than it had ever lost in battle."⁷⁵

She also wrote about the growing disillusionment with the war among the American soldiers in Vietnam in 1971. Soldiers at the 23rd Division's base at Chu Lai organized a peace demonstration to celebrate the Fourth of July. Leaflets advertising the demonstration parodied President Kennedy's inaugural challenge: "Look what my country has done for me." Despite Army prohibition against attendance at the rally, the soldiers went anyway—"So they throw me in jail

⁷³Telephone interview with Judith Coburn, 15 Aug. 1985.

⁷⁴Judith Coburn, "Seven Days in April," *Village Voice*, 7 May 1970, 29-30.

⁷⁵Judith Coburn, "Nightmare on Route 9: The Target Was Us," *Village Voice*, 18 March 1971, 26.

for demonstrating, at least I'll be out of the field." They continued to express growing opposition to the war and hostility to superior officers. Soldiers, Coburn wrote, "stay stoned, don't ask questions, avoid hassles and wait."⁷⁶

Her reports of the slow retreat toward the south of the South Vietnamese forces in 1972 described the chaos and terror of thousands of fleeing refugees and soldiers. Just south of the demilitarized zone at the 17th parallel, the once lovely city of Hue, the old imperial capital, was overrun by waves of panic-stricken civilians and even soldiers fleeing the fighting and bombing in the northern province of Quang Tri. As the people swept through the city, the ravages of retreating armies accompanied them, and anarchy reigned, with looting, fighting, rape, and fires destroying the city and the people left behind.⁷⁷

She reported that the situation in Cambodia in December 1971 was deteriorating at tragic proportions. The Lon Nol forces grew continually more difficult to command in face of the almost impossible conditions they were forced to endure, which often included days without food. Soldiers and civilians alike were retreating toward the capital, Phnom Penh, with Communist forces within striking distance of the city. At the same time, Cambodians were further threatened by the attack on sanctuaries in the eastern provinces by American-backed South Vietnamese forces. Cambodians feared that the Vietnamese would try to "save" Phnom Penh by taking it over.⁷⁸

By 1973, Coburn reported, the Khmer Rouge (Cambodian Communists) had advanced steadily toward Phnom Penh. The continuing chaos in Cambodia served to the advantage of the Khmer Rouge. Since 1970, three million

⁷⁶Judith Coburn, "GIs' Independence Day: the Fourth of Chu Lai, *Village Voice*, 5 Aug. 1971, 26-28.

⁷⁷Judith Coburn, "Time to Abandon Hue," *Village Voice*, 20 July 1972, 6.

⁷⁸Judith Coburn, "The Army Nurses its Wounds," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 Dec. 1971, 16.

Cambodian peasants had become refugees from the countryside to the cities, mainly to escape American bombs. No American aid programs assisted them as they had the Vietnamese refugees; American aid went instead to salaries for the Lon Nol army. The Cambodian economy was almost bankrupt, and the fall of Phnom Penh and Cambodia to the Khmer Rouge was virtually certain.⁷⁹

Because so few American journalists were covering the war in Cambodia, Elizabeth Becker quickly gained stringer contracts with the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, *Newsweek*, NBC, and the *Washington Post*. Becker had been a graduate student in Asian studies at the University of Washington, when she quit to go to Cambodia to cover the war. The focus of her reporting was more political than military, but her stories were a mix of political, economic and human interest, and she did cover combat. She followed the Cambodian army in its civil war with the Khmer Rouge, and some of her earliest stories were about the growing American air war, the 1973 bombing.⁸⁰ Her investigative stories that reported the selling of American-supplied, brass artillery shell cases abroad by Cambodian officers led the American embassy to take action against corruption in the Cambodian army.⁸¹

The war in Cambodia was the first story she had ever covered, and in spite of some feelings that she could have done more, she is proud of the reporting she

⁷⁹Judith Coburn, "Cambodia: The War at the End of the Tunnel," *Ramparts*, July 1973, 40-44.

⁸⁰See for example: Elizabeth Becker, "Three Ghosts," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 12 Feb. 1973, 17-18; "The Return of the Phantom Brigades," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 12 March 1973, 12; "Ah...Over Here, Dick," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 19 March 1973, 12-13; "A City Under Siege," 16 April, 1973, 11-12; "Another POW Drama?" *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 19; "A Long, Long Way to Go," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 7 May 1973, 14-16; "More Bombs for Little People," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 28 May, 1973, 12.

⁸¹William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979, 313-314.

did:

It's emotionally extremely difficult to cover a war. I wish I'd been more clever, or I wish I'd been more able.... It was just such a monumental thing. On the other hand, I think it was just such a terribly difficult story to cover, and when I look at other people's work, I don't feel quite so bad. But I really wish I had been a better writer.⁸²

Becker left Cambodia before the fall of Phnom Penh because she couldn't bear the emotional strain any longer. "It was just awful to watch a country die the way it was, and I couldn't stand to see death, to watch the people dying." Cambodia was different from the war in Vietnam, where one could avoid the war totally, but in Cambodia, the war was all around. "It was just awful what happened to that country, and I just couldn't stand it, and I thought if I didn't leave before the end, I would go nuts." She had reported on the war for two years in 1973 and 1974.

Becker did return to Cambodia though. Back in the United States in 1974, she was hired as a staff reporter by the *Washington Post*. She returned to Cambodia in 1978 during the Pol Pot era, when Vietnam invaded the country, one of two American correspondents who received visas to get back into the country. She has returned several times since. She left the *Post* in 1980 to devote her time to a book on the political history of Cambodia, *When the War is Over*.⁸³

Freelancers for General-Interest and News Magazines and Other News Organizations

Several freelancers wrote for popular newsstand magazines such as *Reader's Digest*, *Coronet*, and *Newsweek*. Photojournalists found outlets for their work in

⁸²Telephone interview with Elizabeth Becker, 14 July 1985.

⁸³Elizabeth Becker, *When the War is Over* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986).

Life, *Look*, and the *National Geographic*. A few were stringers for newspapers, and many others sold stories about the “hometown boy at war” to newspapers throughout the country. These reporters were more supportive of the American war effort and focused their reporting more on the American soldiers than the women who wrote for opinion magazines, although many did write about the Vietnamese and a few were critical of American policy in Vietnam.

Among the best of these reporters were the freelance photographers. Photographers were often at considerably greater physical risk in the field than other correspondents because of their need to get close to the battle and to hold a position to shoot the picture.⁸⁴ Freelance photographer Dickey Chapelle, admired for her correspondence and courage in the field, stepped on a land mine and was killed while covering a marine patrol near Chu Lai 4 Nov. 1965. She was 45 and the fourth correspondent to be killed in the war; two of the other three had also been photographers.

Chapelle was a traditional combat reporter, determined to be as brave and as good “as a man”: “I knew I had to take more steps than the men did since my woman’s stride was shorter than theirs.”⁸⁵ She was committed to excellence and frequently took great risks, for which she was sometimes criticized for having foolishly placed herself in unnecessary danger. On her first combat assignment in World War II, she remained standing in the battlefield in full view of the enemy for some minutes. “I honestly don’t know any other reporter who is as fussy as I am about not reporting anything they haven’t eyewitnessed...”⁸⁶

Chapelle had grown increasingly more anti-Communist as she covered

⁸⁴Jorge Lewinski, *The Camera at War* (London: W & J Mackay Limited, 1978), 207.

⁸⁵Dickey Chapelle, *What’s a Woman Doing Here?* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1962), 9.

⁸⁶Quoted in Frederick R. Ellis, “Dickey Chapelle: A Reporter and Her Work. (Master’s thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1968), 41.

revolutions in Hungary (where she was captured by the Communist secret police and imprisoned and interrogated for fifty-two days), Algeria, Lebanon, and Cuba, which she described in her autobiography, *What's a Woman Doing Here?* She strongly supported U.S. involvement in the war in Vietnam as a necessary stand by the "Free World" against communism. The alternative, she believed, would lead inevitably to the "domino" effect, with all Southeast Asia falling to communism. She early criticized what she called America's "no win" policy of not fighting an all-out war. "Soldiers in Vietnam get confused because nobody's told them to go ahead and win (our soldiers, I mean). They've just been told to get their service over without risking anything—no pattern of even remotely possible victory there."⁸⁷

She reported for the *National Observer* and WOR-RKO radio in New York. Her stories, which also appeared in *Reader's Digest*, *National Geographic*, and other publications, reflected her great admiration for the American soldier. Most of her work was early in the war before American ground troops were officially involved in combat, and much of her reporting was about the American special forces and the non-communist Indochinese forces they were sent to advise. In 1960 she accompanied 200 American advisers for five weeks on a mission into Laos to help the Royal Lao Army defeat communist insurgents. She praised the Americans as brave, dedicated, highly trained professionals, who were at the same time sensitive, kind human beings with "old-fashioned" American virtues of perfectionism, self-discipline, self-reliance, and commitment to do the job.⁸⁸

She flew on military helicopters ferrying South Vietnamese troops into battle, evacuating wounded, delivering food and ammunition, and airlifting artillery

⁸⁷Letter to Aunt Lutie, 7 Feb. 1962. Quoted in Ellis, p. 129.

⁸⁸Dickey Chapelle, "The Unconventional Americans," in Overseas Press Club, *I Can Tell It Now*, edited by David Brown and W. Richard Bruner (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1964), 295-302.

to outposts. On one flight, she watched what were presumably soldiers of the NLF run from the burning homes of a village, but, she reported, their helmets and packs identified them as North Vietnamese conventional forces. She also visited soldiers at strategic hamlets, which she supported as necessary to defend the Vietnamese from the Viet Cong. Her relationship with the marines became personal, and they sought her out as a friend; some told her their fathers knew her in Iwo Jima and Okinawa during World War II.⁸⁹

In December 1964, she followed ground troops—the “junk force”—in their patrols of the rivers and canals of the rich, populous Mekong Delta region of the south, searching for Viet Cong and sweeping the waters for mines. At the time, Viet Cong strength in the region was growing rapidly, and the patrols were dangerous, with casualty rates high. Chapelle noted that she had begun to carry a gun for her safety since she had been reporting on the Vietnam war.⁹⁰ She wrote that she reported on the war to tell Americans “what our allies against communism are doing, what they are able to do.”⁹¹

During her five visits to Vietnam from 1961 to 1965, she established a deep personal commitment to the Vietnamese people. Although many of her photographs reflected her major interest in soldiers and combat, they also pictured the lovely villages and houses of Vietnam as they still were early in the war, as well as the pain of people victimized by war. She spent five weeks among the people of a small village led by a Catholic priest to resist the Viet Cong and to enlarge the area of freedom in the world. “Who can serve a greater cause?” she asked.⁹²

⁸⁹Dickey Chapelle, “Helicopter War in South Viet Nam,” *National Geographic*, Nov. 1962, 723-754.

⁹⁰Dickey Chapelle, “Water War in Vietnam,” *National Geographic*, Feb. 1966. (published posthumously)

⁹¹Ellis, 37.

⁹²Ellis, 73.

For her Vietnam reporting, Chapelle received the Overseas Press Club's George Polk Memorial Award in 1962 for "best reporting in any medium requiring exceptional courage and enterprise abroad." In 1963, she received the highest award given by the U.S. Marines Combat Correspondents Association.⁹³

Photographers, more than other journalists, often become legends within their profession. Both Dickey Chapelle and French photojournalist Catherine Leroy fit this description. Leroy was a photojournalist in the same combat tradition as Chapelle, and like Chapelle, she took great personal risks to photograph at the line of battle. Hilary Brown, in Vietnam for ABC, said Leroy was the bravest person she knew. "She sort of dances when she works. She's a truly remarkable woman."⁹⁴ Horst Faas, photographer for the AP, said she was one of the best freelancers in Vietnam.⁹⁵ Jurate Kazickas simply said she was "legendary."⁹⁶ She received a citation in 1968 from the Overseas Press Club for her Vietnam reporting. Leroy was 20 when she arrived in Vietnam—without reporting experience—in February 1966 to freelance for UPI and the AP. Unlike Chapelle, Leroy opposed the American presence.

Her photographs of marines at the twelve-day battle of Hill 881 at Khe Sanh Valley in May 1967, one of the fiercest battles of the war to that date, appeared in *Life* magazine. The marines suffered 900 casualties, and the North Vietnamese suffered 764 dead and many more wounded.⁹⁷ Leroy was herself wounded two weeks later with the Marines near the Demilitarized Zone on 19 May, but after a month of recovering, she returned to photograph more of the war.

The following year, Leroy and French correspondent Francois Mazure were

⁹³Chapelle, "The Unconventional American," 295.

⁹⁴Telephone interview with Hilary Brown, 29 July 1985.

⁹⁵"Gnat of Hill 881," *Time*, 12 May 1967, 42.

⁹⁶Telephone interview with Jurate Kazickas, 30 July 1985.

⁹⁷Catherine Leroy, "Up Hill 881 with the Marines," *Life*, 19 May 1967, 40-44A.

apprehended as they tried to pass through the North Vietnamese lines to enter the embattled city of Hue shortly after the Tet Offensive of 1968. They were held for a brief time by the Northern soldiers, who told them they had taken control of the city, that they were liberating all of Vietnam. The soldiers allowed Leroy to photograph them, and “what was probably the most impressive photo scoop of the whole Vietnam War”⁹⁸ was published in *Life*. Included in the same article were her photographs that showed the devastation of the besieged city of Hue and the confusion and despair of the people.⁹⁹

In May 1968, *Look* magazine published a stark series of Leroy’s photographs of young American and Vietnamese soldiers, some dead, some wounded. *Look* accompanied the photos with an editorial that said the Vietnam war had been a mistake. It called for America’s withdrawal from the war “as quickly and as honorably as possible” and for the United States to use its efforts instead in the cause of world peace.¹⁰⁰

Photojournalist Jill Krementz said she went to Vietnam to photograph Vietnam behind the lines, to show the “effects of the war on people.”¹⁰¹ Although some of her pictures were of soldiers in action, she was not a combat photographer: “the fighting isn’t really the essence of war.”¹⁰² She photographed the South Vietnamese and American soldiers as they carried on with their lives in the midst of war. She published her photographs in her first book, *The Face of South Vietnam*, on which she collaborated with NBC correspondent Dean Brelis, who wrote the text.¹⁰³ Of her work, photographer Edward Steichen said:

⁹⁸Edward Behr, *Bearings* (New York: The Viking Press, 1978), 271.

⁹⁹Catherine Leroy, “Soldiers of North Vietnam Strike a Pose for Her Camera,” *Life* 16 Feb. 1968, 22-29.

¹⁰⁰“This is that War,” *Look*, 14 May 1968, 25-32.

¹⁰¹“Eye on Vietnam,” *Newsweek*, 5 Feb. 1968, 78.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*

¹⁰³Jill Krementz, *The Face of South Vietnam* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin

"She's a pretty damn good photographer. Good sharp penetration.... When she presses the button, it's happening."¹⁰⁴ Before going to Vietnam, she had worked as a reporter and columnist for *Show* magazine from 1962 to 1964 and as a staff photographer for the New York *Herald Tribune* from 1964 to 1965. She was in Vietnam from 1965 to 1966.

Other women freelance photographers in Vietnam were Mary Jane Abare, Judith Aronson, Nathalie Kuhn, Barbara Gluck Treaster, and Camilla Wilson. Philippa Schuyler was not primarily a photographer, but she often shot her own pictures for her stories, as many reporters did. She made two trips to Vietnam to report on the war, but mostly to find out about the people of Vietnam. She was helping people leave Hue for Danang when she was killed in a helicopter crash 6 May 1967.

Among the many freelancers who wrote "hometowners" were Jurate Kazickas and Ruth Ann Burns. These popular stories about the hometown boy at war were always in demand by local newspapers and provided the freelancer with a sure source of income. The news agencies regularly supplied hometowners to newspapers, and the U.S. Marine Corps produced them as part of the Defense Department's large media campaign for public opinion favorable to the war.¹⁰⁵ Not all stories about soldiers were hometowners, of course, and feature stories written by women correspondents for magazines often were about the effect of the war on the soldiers and how the soldier "felt" about and adjusted to the war rather than about the soldier in combat like the traditional "Ernie-Pyle" hometowner.

Jurate Kazickas focused her reporting on the American G.I.'s and wrote

Company, 1968).

¹⁰⁴Lawrence Mahoney, "Jill Krementz," *Authors in the News* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1976), 169.

¹⁰⁵Faulkner, 128-129.

many hometowners for North American News Alliance (NANA), a feature syndicate, which distributed them to papers throughout the country. Sometimes she would send the story directly to the local paper:

I would go out in the field, and I would wander around and meet somebody who had a great story to tell about—you know, the classic one is about the bullet that hit the Bible in the breast pocket and saved his life. The guy was from... , say Buffalo, and I wrote up his story and sent it to the Buffalo paper and the local paper was delighted to have a story about one of their people. And I loved doing those because it really humanized it, personalized this war, and I really cared about every single soldier there. I wanted to make other people proud of what they were doing even though the war itself was a source of great controversy at that time.¹⁰⁶

She also wrote longer features about soldiers, such as a story in *Mademoiselle* about the effect of war on the young boy, his first time far from home.¹⁰⁷ The first story she wrote from Vietnam was a feature about the effect on soldiers' morale of "Dear John" letters from wives and girl friends. She was aware that she was a woman reporting a man's war, and she did not understand why young men would kill each other, why they would die when "they had no idealism" about the war. She tried to find out how they felt about fighting a war where they couldn't even spell the names of the places at which they were fighting. Soldiers—the "Grunts"—were always willing to talk with her, although officers would have preferred that she stay out of the field.¹⁰⁸

Kazickas had been working for a year as a researcher at *Look* magazine, her first job out of college (Trinity College and Columbia University), when she decided to go to Vietnam because "it was the biggest thing happening in the world." *Look* wouldn't send her, so she quit her job, won \$500 on the quiz show "Password," and bought a one-way ticket to Saigon. She secured letters from

¹⁰⁶Telephone interview with Jurate Kazickas, 30 July 1985.

¹⁰⁷Jurate Kazickas, "An Opinion: Jurate Kazickas on Men at War," *Mademoiselle*, March 1967, 124-6, 217.

¹⁰⁸Kazickas interview.

five news organizations to get credentials as a freelancer. Supporting herself was never a problem. In addition to the hometowners and features, she did some stringing for major periodicals, and she carried a camera and was always able to sell a few pictures to the Associated Press everytime she came back to Saigon from the field.

Although she concentrated on American soldiers, she did many stories about the Vietnamese, including, for example, stories about the Viet Cong women and about the poetry that the Vietnamese regularly wrote, mostly about the hardship of war. She lived with a Vietnamese family and became well acquainted with the people of Vietnam.¹⁰⁹ She found that human-interest stories were ignored by her male colleagues, and decided to write them because they “rounded out and humanized” the coverage.¹¹⁰

Kazickas was wounded at Khe San during the height of the Tet Offensive in March 1968. A rocket exploded about thirty feet from her, lodging shrapnel in her legs, arms, face, and back. She was hospitalized for a week, and could not walk well for nearly a month. For the first time since she had been in Vietnam, she could not overcome her fear. Tet was such a “cataclysmic disaster,” and the war was shifting, becoming more intense. Kazickas began to feel that she was not doing the kind of reporting that was now really needed, and that there were people “much more learned and scholarly and experienced” than she to do the political reporting of “what was the reality of our presence and our involvement there.” After eighteen months in Vietnam, from February 1967 to November 1968, she decided to go home.¹¹¹

Ruth Ann Burns followed her soldier husband to Vietnam for a six-week

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰Marion Marzolf, *Up From the Footnote: A History of Women Journalists* (New York: Hastings House, 1977), 90.

¹¹¹Ibid.

stay in August and September 1966 to freelance for NANA, several newspapers in New Jersey and New York, and *Parade* magazine. She had finished her third year in journalism school, and when she arrived in Vietnam was the youngest correspondent there. She did cover combat but found these stories—so often about “body counts”—monotonous: “the guts of the stories were always the same; you were just putting different numbers at the end.” She was more interested in the “human side of the war”: what it was doing to the villagers and to the soldiers, the “youngest fighting troops ever.” Many of her stories were hometowners, which she sold to NANA and sometimes directly to the local papers. For her Vietnam reporting, Burns received three William Randolph Hearst Awards for excellence in feature writing and several awards from the New Jersey Press Association.¹¹²

The news magazines never sent a woman as a resident correspondent to Vietnam, but Beverly Deepe and Sylvana Foa were both stringers for *Newsweek*, covering the military and political developments in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Deepe was *Newsweek's* only correspondent in Vietnam between October 1962 and January 1964 during the tumultuous events toward the end of the Ngo Dinh Diem regime. She covered the street demonstrations of Buddhist monks and supporters in the summer of 1963 that led finally to Diem's overthrow and assassination the following November.¹¹³ On assignment in Laos October 1962, she covered the supposed exfiltration of the Communist Pathet Lao from Laos in conformance with the newly drafted Geneva accord guaranteeing a neutralist and independent Laos. She reported that a deserted military headquarters from which neutralist Lao forces had fled a Communist offensive attested to the

¹¹²Telephone interview with Ruth Ann Burns, 19 Aug. 1985. See also Meyer L. Stein, *Under Fire: The Story of American War Correspondents* (New York: Julian Messner, 1968), 228.

¹¹³See, for example, “Vietnam's Future: ‘All Bets Are Off,’” *Newsweek*, 26 Aug. 1963, 35-6; “Defeat, Victory, and Pressure on Vietnam,” *Newsweek*, 4 Nov. 1963, 45-6; “The Fall of the House of Ngo,” *Newsweek*, 11 Nov. 1963, 27-31.

insurgents' disregard for the accords.¹¹⁴

There were few full-time correspondents in Cambodia. War correspondent William Shawcross wrote in *Sideshow*, a study of the war in Cambodia during the Nixon administration, that the media treated the war in Cambodia as peripheral to the war in Vietnam, as a "sideshow," as did the administration. Their Saigon correspondents would visit occasionally, but for the most part, young stringers covered the war in Cambodia, and they tended to oppose it. They received no help from the American embassy staff, who claimed they could do nothing because the war was run by the Khmer, but who privately urged the Khmers not to help the reporters. Reporters found their own way to war—sometimes taking taxis—which was extremely dangerous. During the war in Cambodia, twenty-one journalists were lost.¹¹⁵

Sylvana Foa was a stringer in Cambodia for UPI and *Newsweek* between 1971 and 1973, and according to Shawcross, "one of the most dogged of the American journalists in Phnom Penh."¹¹⁶ At one time, Thomas Enders, the deputy chief of the U.S. mission in Cambodia, made a considerable effort to get the Cambodians to expel her from the country. One of her stories in particular infuriated the embassy. She reported that the military was winning out in the debate over the militarization of the mission and suggested that American troops were directly advising Cambodian troops, a violation of Congressional prohibition against such involvement. In spite of angry denials from the White House, *Newsweek* stood behind the story, and the State Department never rebutted Foa's story.¹¹⁷

Several freelancers reported for the newspapers, news agencies, and

¹¹⁴Telephone interview with Beverly Deepe Kever, 11 Aug. 1985. See also "Laos," *Newsweek*, 22 Oct. 1962, 48-49.

¹¹⁵Shawcross, 198.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 270.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, 198-9.

broadcasting companies in addition to the magazines. Gay Andrews Dillin wrote features about the Vietnamese people for *The Christian Science Monitor*,¹¹⁸ and Helen Musgrove made many trips to Vietnam between 1962 and 1970 as a contract stringer for the *Jacksonville Journal*.

Strongly committed to American goals in Vietnam, Musgrove wrote in August 1968, after Tet and public opinion against the war had long since convinced President Johnson not to seek reelection: "It is vital to preserve the freedom of America and the world from Communist takeover. If we walk out now on the war in Vietnam, we are selling out America."¹¹⁹ Over the course of the many years she traveled to Vietnam, she covered all aspects of the war, including combat and human interest. In one story, she wrote that Vietnamese teenagers were not much different from American teenagers "as far as thinking and growing up and having dreams," but war had torn their lives apart, and they had grown up "as old people" with responsibilities beyond their years.¹²⁰

Among the newspaper freelancers were two black women correspondents, Mary Frances Berry and Marion Williams. At the time, Dr. Berry, currently a member of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, was a university history professor, who went to Vietnam for Panax newspapers and the University of Michigan student newspaper, the *Daily*, for approximately one month to cover the war although more as a historian than as a journalist.¹²¹ Williams went

¹¹⁸See for example: Gay Andrews Dillin, "Teaching English in Vietnam," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 15 July 1967, 7; "Schooling: A Vietnam Dilemma," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 22 July 1967, 11; "Volunteer 'Army' Fights Viet Poverty," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 31 July 1967, 5.

¹¹⁹Musgrove, Helen. "A Woman in Vietnam," *Jacksonville Journal*, 10 Aug. 1968, 8.

¹²⁰Musgrove, Helen. "Growing up With War," *Jacksonville Journal*, 16 Aug. 1968.

¹²¹Accreditation file for Mary Berry, Box 1/33. Accession number 73A3413, Washington National Records Center.

specifically to report the problems of black soldiers for several Kansas papers, including the *Call* and the *Kansas City Times*. She wrote that Negro soldiers spoke more frankly with her than with white correspondents about “where the shoe pinches”:

Though the Negro at war is more equal than at home, it is not true that there is not a racial problem in the armed forces. The Negro sometimes feels that he is here as a second-class citizen, and that because he is poor he is forced to be here and is doing more than his share.¹²²

Among the broadcast freelancers besides Dickey Chapelle were Karen Peterson, who reported for ABC News, Elaine Shepard, who reported from Vietnam in 1965 for the Mutual Broadcasting Network, and Ann Allen of ABC.

Shepard was the first woman in Vietnam for a radio network, and she reported mainly about the fighter pilots, whose professionalism and courage she admired. These became the subject of her book, *The Doom Pussy*, the nickname the pilots gave to the “cat of death,” the dark void into which they flew their nighttime missions over North Vietnam.¹²³

Shepard felt she had to prove she was as hard and tough as one of the regular guys, and she often used the rough language and idiom of soldiers in her book. She did accompany the pilots on missions, but much of what she wrote was what flyers described to her when they returned from their flights. In the Foreword of her book, she admitted that not everything happened as she wrote it, “but it could have.” She dwelt at length on Viet Cong atrocities and excused U.S. atrocities as necessary retaliation. A professed hawk, she was extremely critical of the anti-war protestors, whom she accused of being Communist sympathizers, if not Communists. She wrote that the South Vietnam and U.S. forces were

¹²²Accreditation file for Marion Williams, Box 15/33. Accession number 73A3413, Washington National Records Center.

¹²³Elaine Shepard, *The Doom Pussy* (New York: Trident Press, 1967).

winning the war, and it was just a matter of time before the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong would capitulate.

Shepard focused most of her reporting on the pilots, but she also interviewed officials such as Ambassador Lodge and Marshal Ky. She was a friend of Dickey Chapelle's, whose integrity as a reporter and patriotism she greatly admired. Her book is dedicated to her: "For Dickey Chapelle: Killed in action at Chu Lai in the sweat and gunpowder of Battle on patrol with her beloved Marines." Shepard was one of the few reporters to lose her accreditation and to be barred from military facilities in Southeast Asia, not for any violation of the ground rules for reporting combat but because of her "abuse of U.S. military postal privileges."¹²⁴

Ann Allen was another freelancer in Vietnam with her husband, George Allen of ABC News. She worked for ABC and also wrote features for NANA in 1967-1968. Deeply impressed with the vast differences between the Vietnamese and American cultures and how little she knew about the Vietnamese and their traditions and society, she decided to focus her reporting on the people of Vietnam. She wrote about the crowded hospitals and the massive injuries suffered by the people, and the courage with which they endured their sufferings. She wrote about refugee camps, where she found one of the two Vietnamese children she and her husband eventually adopted. She reported on the terrorism and poverty of Saigon, where several families lived off the garbage of one restaurant and women and children lived on the sidewalks.¹²⁵

¹²⁴Letter to Elaine Shepard from Col. E.D. Bryson, 8 June 1966. Accreditation file, Box 14/22. Accession number 334-74-0593, Washington National Records Center. For further discussion of Shepard and her reporting see: Virginia Edythe Elwood-Akers, "Women Correspondents in the Vietnam War 1961-1975," (M.A. thesis, California State University Northridge, 1981), 91. See also: Glenn MacDonald, *Report or Distort?* (New York: Exposition Press, 1973), 73-78.

¹²⁵Telephone interview with Anne Allen, 14 July 1985.

Ann Crawford was in Vietnam for two years before 1966 with her husband William Crawford, who was a major in the U.S. Army. She was accredited as a freelancer with Copley News Service and Charles E. Tuttle Company, who published her book, *Customs and Culture of Vietnam*. In the preface, she wrote that she had decided to publish the book because although news of the war in Vietnam was heard daily, little was heard about "the people, their heritage, and their daily life."¹²⁶

Women freelancers reflected a wide range of ability and interests. Their status allowed them freedom to choose what they would write about and where they would market what they wrote—to a certain extent. Ultimately editors decided what would be published, which in turn influenced what was written. Although liberal military support facilities for accredited correspondents were of major assistance, freelancers could not survive on this alone. Many wrote hometowners, usually a dependable source of income.

Women freelancers seemed to take quite definite stands on the war. In general, those critical of or opposed to the war wrote for the opinion and public affairs magazines, which tended to profess those views. Those supporting the war and American policy wrote for the general-interest magazines, which also tended to support government policy on the war and to subscribe to majority opinion. At least one general-interest magazine, *Look*, changed its position on the war after the Tet offensive, using the photographs of Catherine Leroy to document its statement of opposition.

Almost all women freelancers wrote about the Vietnamese, from analysis of the political, economic, and historical issues to the war's effect on everyday lives of ordinary persons. Many freelancers wrote about the American soldiers. Although almost all reported on combat, few cared to devote much of their time

¹²⁶Ann Caddell Crawford, *Customs and Culture of Vietnam* (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1966), 11.

to covering that story.

That they were freelancers without major news organizational backing most certainly limited the impact of their reporting on public opinion and official policy. They were relatively few in number, considering the long duration of the war. Their major outlets, magazines—and especially the public affairs and opinion magazines, did not reach the wide audience served by newspapers and television, although the readers they did reach were among the most intellectual and influential Americans. The form of their work—features and human-interest—was considered less important than breaking daily news. Considering that the most serious criticism that continues to be made of the media coverage of the Vietnam War is its failure to cover the underlying historical and political issues and to report the Vietnamese perspective, more women correspondents publishing in major news outlets could have significantly reduced that failure.

Yet their reporting did appear in important publications. The reportage of women freelancers chronicled the major events of the war, the political and social issues of Vietnam, the perspective of the American soldiers, and most of all the suffering of the Vietnamese people. Clearly U.S. policy makers and many Americans for a long time knew about the war and its effects; they were aware of what they were doing and they went ahead anyway.

CHAPTER V

THE SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Many women journalists were sent to Vietnam on special assignments, some for visits as brief as one week, others for tours of six months or more. These "special correspondents" were employed full time usually by newspapers and broadcasting companies, but a few worked for news services. They were typically more experienced than most of the freelancers, and a few had had extensive experience covering revolutions and wars.

Women special correspondents reported on all aspects of the war, but most concentrated on the Vietnamese people and the American soldiers. A few regular foreign correspondents were sent to cover Vietnam as part of their foreign beat. Many staff reporters of papers and broadcast stations throughout the country were sent on special assignment for a week or two to write feature stories, typically about local servicemen and Americans in Vietnam. Women special correspondents generally did not cover the fighting regularly, but two became outstanding combat reporters.

Special correspondents can bring a fresh point of view to a story, but sometimes because of the brevity of their visits can be limited in their ability to gain the confidence of sources or to acquire the background knowledge necessary for thorough investigation and analysis.¹ David Halberstam wrote that early press

¹Rodney Tiffen, *The News From Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of

critics such as Marguerite Higgins and other special correspondents were not in Vietnam long enough to know what was really happening. These journalists, he claimed, made brief visits to Vietnam on which they based their criticism of correspondents who had been reporting in the field for more than a year and a half.²

Higgins, however, had acquired considerable experience in Vietnam from several previous visits. Like Higgins, other experienced foreign correspondents, such as Flora Lewis, Georgie Anne Geyer, Elizabeth Pond, and Liz Trotta, kept up with the story of Vietnam over the years with several visits, one of which was usually for six months or longer. These correspondents and a few others, such as Marlene Sanders and Kelly Smith Tunney, also covered the story in Washington, where American policy on Vietnam was formed.

These women were still pioneers as women in foreign and war correspondence between the 1940s and 1960s, when they began their careers, and they frequently reflected on their situation as women in a man's profession. Many actually felt that being women gave them a certain advantage in Vietnam. Some suggested that their cultural conditioning may have encouraged them to look at the people and the broader implications of the war rather than at combat and military strategy.

Elizabeth Pond thought that some qualities traditionally associated with women are important to journalism. She described them as qualities of "nurturing or compassion, of really trying to see things from the point of view of the people who are experiencing them rather than bringing a preconceived framework and then interpreting them in that line." Furthermore, women have traditionally

Southeast Asian Studies, 1978), 29.

²David Halberstam, *The Making of a Quagmire*, (New York: Random House, 1964), 265-276. See also "Dateline, Saigon: War of Words," *Newsweek*, 7 Oct. 1963, 98-99.

been encouraged to think in terms of “synthesis,” which she explained as “the kind of building up and the construction, of trying to see things as an organic whole, as distinct from the breaking down” or “analysis.” Pond stressed that, of course, there are men who see the whole picture and who are outstandingly compassionate and sensitive and women who are “analytical.” In general, however, in American society, compassion and thinking in terms of synthesis rather than analysis have been considered female characteristics, and society has traditionally encouraged girls and women to develop them. Pond thought this may possibly be a factor in the frequent choice women made to write about the Vietnamese perspective and the war’s effect on the Vietnamese people.³

Journalists with Newspapers and News Agencies

Even though the Vietnam war was as much a political war (“winning the hearts and minds”) as a military war, few correspondents wrote about Vietnamese politics. An important political correspondent was Elizabeth Pond, whose reportage almost always included analysis of the political implications of events and policies. She concluded, for example, that reaction of the ordinary Vietnamese to the newly elected (1967) Thieu government’s intended policies—expanded revolutionary development (pacification), land redistribution, housing aid, education improvement, elimination of corruption, price control, and tax reform—was “a shrug of the shoulders” indicating they had heard it all before.⁴ Pond concluded that American bombing (to the end of 1967) brought the war home to Hanoi but did not reduce North Vietnam’s military effectiveness in the war in the South, and politically it strengthened Hanoi’s resolve, did not bring

³Telephone interview with Elizabeth Pond, 31 July 1985.

⁴Elizabeth Pond, “Saigon Seeks to Lift Troop Morale and Civilian Standards,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 18 Nov. 1967, 7.

China in to the war, and drove Moscow and Peking together in a united front to back North Vietnam.⁵ Pond reported that Vice President Humphrey's visit to Vietnam in November was important politically because it boosted the morale of the U.S. Embassy by confirming Washington's commitment to continue its support for South Vietnam in spite of declining American public support for the war.⁶ Pond wrote that the political fallout of the American defoliation program was to make farmers increasingly more resentful of the Americans, which in turn jeopardized the generally successful American agricultural development programs and any positive political benefits for the Americans.⁷ The new pacification program in 1967—the Revolutionary Development training program—which depended on full participation of all villagers for its success, seemed to be working at last and gaining new popular commitment for the GVN. Pond believed that the ultimate success or failure of the program would be a deciding factor in how South Vietnam would come out of the war.⁸

Pond made two trips to Vietnam, the first for six months as a special correspondent for *The Christian Science Monitor* in 1967, and the second for a year in 1969 on a grant from the Alicia Patterson Fund. She had completed her graduate work in Soviet studies at Harvard in 1964 and then had spent a year in Eastern Europe as a freelancer. Upon her return from Europe in 1965, she rejoined the *Monitor* staff, having earlier been a copy girl and clerk for the paper.⁹ Pond said

⁵Elizabeth Pond, "Viet Bombing Argued," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 2 Nov. 1967, 1.

⁶Elizabeth Pond, "Humphrey Visit Props Viet Policy," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 9 Nov. 1967, 7.

⁷Elizabeth Pond, "Viet Defoliation Called 'Setback' to Farm Programs," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 25 Nov. 1967, 16.; "U.S. Officials Review Viet Defoliation," CSM, 27 Dec. 1967, 4.

⁸Elizabeth Pond, "Bootstrap," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 30 Nov. 1967, 6.

⁹Marion Marzolf, *Up From the Footnote* (New York: Hastings House, 1977), 88.

she wanted to go to Vietnam because she couldn't figure out what was going on from what she was reading, and she felt she had to be there herself in order to "get some sense of it."¹⁰

Among Pond's first stories for the *Monitor* was a series of reports about the Vietnamese elections of September 1967. Being the only military candidates for President and Vice President, generals Thieu and Ky were practically assured victory against ten different civilian slates. They ran on the slogan, "Democracy, Peace, and Welfare," with Thieu calling for greater military force and rejecting the Geneva agreements, insisting there were two Vietnams with two sovereign governments.¹¹ The leading civilian candidate was Tran Van Huong, the symbol of "unambiguous honesty to many South Vietnamese." He rejected Thieu and Ky's call for increased military force, saying the war must be won politically by winning popular support for the government, and he said he would not participate in a Thieu-Ky government if he lost.¹² Other civilian candidates agreed that peace must come through political and social measures, especially land reform.¹³ When Nguyen Van Thieu was sworn in as president, he called upon the people to make greater sacrifices to finish the war and upon members of the NLF to join with the efforts of the GVN. He promised an attack on corruption, a rise in living standards in the cities, and continued "vigor in rural development."¹⁴

Her last story of the 1967 tour was an interview with a National Liberation Front cadreman. He repeated the same terms for peace that had already

¹⁰Telephone interview with Elizabeth Pond, 31 July 1985.

¹¹Elizabeth Pond, "Thieu-Ky Ticket Stresses Social Changes for Vietnam," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 10 Aug. 1967, 7.

¹²Elizabeth Pond, "Huong Builds Appeal to Viet Voters," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 25 Aug. 1967, 1.

¹³Elizabeth Pond, "Civilian Tickets Attract Viet Voters," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 28 Aug. 1967, 2.

¹⁴Elizabeth Pond, "Thieu Voices Appeal for Sacrifices and Unity," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 1 Nov. 1967, 7.

been stated before as the position of the NLF, which depended above all on the condition that the United States recognized the NLF as the only legitimate government of the South Vietnamese. A political solution to the war was possible if America accepted NLF terms; otherwise the solution would have to be military. The terms demanded United States withdrawal of forces and participation in Vietnamese affairs. The cadreman also told Pond that the effect of the American bombing was on the innocent people in the villages, not on soldiers in the field.¹⁵

When Pond returned to Vietnam in 1969, she wrote monthly newsletters for the Alicia Patterson Fund about Vietnamese politics, wartime life in Saigon, the important Tran Ngoc Chau trial, student protest, and also about the revolutionary captor who guarded her as she was held prisoner in Cambodia for five and a half weeks in May-June 1970.¹⁶ Although she was on leave from the *Monitor*, she occasionally sent them stories, among them the series on her days in captivity (see Chapter II).

Among Pond's most important stories was her coverage of the trial of Tran Ngoc Chau in March 1970 and her interpretation of the political implications of Chau's arrest and eventual imprisonment.¹⁷ Chau was a nationalist who had been arrested by President Nguyen Van Thieu, officially for carrying on

¹⁵Elizabeth Pond, "Cadreman Echoes Cong Terms," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 4 Jan. 1968, 1.

¹⁶Elizabeth Pond, "Portrait of a Revolutionary, Parts I and II," *Newsletter From Southeast Asia: Vietnamese Politics*, (New York: Alicia Patterson Fund, 1970), Newsletters 9 and 10.

¹⁷See Elizabeth Pond, "The Chau Trial I: Prologue," "The Chau Trial II: Denouement," "The Chau Trial III," *Newsletter From Southeast Asia: Vietnamese Politics*, Newsletters 6,7, and 11. See also: Elizabeth Pond, "South Vietnam: The Tran Ngoc Chau Affair," *Atlantic*, May 1971, pp. 19-29; and Elizabeth Pond, "South Vietnamese Politics and the American Withdrawal," in *Indochina in Conflict: A Political Assessment*, ed. Joseph Heath and Company, 1972), pp. 1-24.

conversations with a North Vietnamese spy, but in reality for his support for bringing non-Communist opposition groups into political power. Thieu was concerned that such a coalition would ultimately weaken his control of the government of South Vietnam. Thieu was also suspicious of what he believed was Chau's friendship with the Americans. Chau was found guilty by a military field court and sentenced to ten years in prison.¹⁸

Pond saw the important political implication of the Chau affair as a move by Thieu to seize total power, but she was also critical of the role of the Americans in the case. Thieu punished Chau as a warning to other rivals, but he was successful partly because of the weak American efforts to secure Chau's freedom. "Politically, the outcome of the Chau case confirmed, for the present, Thieu's supremacy in Saigon. But perhaps more significantly, it revealed the U.S. preference for stability over legality in South Vietnam."¹⁹

In the long run, public concern over Thieu's role in the affair led to a series of demonstrations in Saigon against the government over several issues, indicating a decline in Thieu's popular support and his authority. "Stated in more traditional terms, it appears that something of Thieu's claim to the mandate of heaven slipped in the excesses of the Chau trial."²⁰ Pond speculated that a gradual deterioration of Thieu's authority would continue, beginning in 1972 with an accelerated decline as America withdrew. The National Liberation Front would inevitably benefit from the general malaise in Saigon, the war weariness and longing for peace, anti-Americanism, and a resentment of corruption and privilege. In other words, to Pond, the Chau affair marked the beginning of the

¹⁸Elizabeth Pond, "The Chau Trial I: Prologue," and "The Chau Trial II: Denouement."

¹⁹Ibid., 20.

²⁰Elizabeth Pond, "The Chau Trial III," *Newsletter From Southeast Asia*, Newsletter 11, p. 4.

end of Thieu.²¹

Another important political reporter was Flora Lewis (Gruson). Lewis had been an accredited war correspondent during World War II, covering Europe for the Associated Press and the New York Times News Service, the largest of American news syndicates.²² She was a Phi Beta Kappa from UCLA, graduating *summa cum laude* in 1941. The following year she received her master's degree from the Columbia School of Journalism.

Lewis began her distinguished career in journalism as a reporter with the *Los Angeles Times* in 1941. After World War II, she did freelance foreign correspondence for several publications until 1954, reporting from London, Warsaw, Berlin, Hague, Mexico City, and Tel Aviv. She was in Poland for three years beginning in 1946, returning for two years from 1956-1958 to cover the revolt, which she described in her book, *A Case of Hope*.²³ She also reported on the Hungarian revolt of the same year. Between 1958 and 1966, Lewis was bureau chief for the *Washington Post* in Bonn, London, and New York City. Two other books based on her reporting written during this time were *Red Pawn*²⁴ and *One of Our H-Bombs is Missing*.²⁵ By the time she went to Vietnam as a special correspondent in 1968, she had received two awards from the Overseas Press Club: for best interpretation of foreign affairs in 1956 and for best reporting of foreign

²¹Ibid., 10. See also: Elizabeth Pond, "South Vietnamese Politics and the American Withdrawal," in *Indochina in Conflict: A Political Assessment*, ed. Joseph J. Zasloff and Allan E. Goodman, (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Company, 1972), 1-24.

²²Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, *The Press and America*, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1984), 442.

²³Flora Lewis, *A Case History of Hope: The Story of Poland's Peaceful Revolutions* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1958).

²⁴Flora Lewis, *Red Pawn* (New York: Doubleday, 1965).

²⁵Flora Lewis, *One of Our H-Bombs is Missing* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967).

affairs in 1960.²⁶

In 1967, Lewis became a syndicated political columnist for *Newsday*, where her correspondence on Vietnam subsequently appeared. *Newsday*, a Long Island tabloid founded in 1940, was one of the country's outstanding papers by the 1960s. Marguerite Higgins had left the *Herald Tribune* in 1963 to write a column for *Newsday*.²⁷ Bill Moyers, disaffected with the Johnson administration and its policy on Vietnam, had resigned as Johnson's press secretary in February 1967 to become its publisher.²⁸ In 1974 *Time* listed *Newsday* as one of the top ten U.S. newspapers.²⁹

Lewis went to Indochina every year for one to two months beginning in 1968, covering politics and strategy. She did go into the field whenever possible, but she was "more interested in the conduct of a war and its impact than in the sights and sounds of battle."³⁰ She had full freedom to choose the subjects and places she wanted to cover.³¹

Lewis was in Vietnam during the Tet offensive of 1968 and filed a series of columns analyzing the impact of the offensive on the political situation as well as on life in Saigon and in the countryside. She called upon policy makers to consider the culture of the Vietnamese when forming policy for Vietnam. The American hopes for democracy in Vietnam, Lewis wrote, had little relevance to the Vietnamese, who were accustomed to "precise and clear rules." In fact, she

²⁶ *Who's Who of American Women* (Marquis Who's Who, Inc., 1984). See also: "Flora Lewis," in Barbaralee Diamonstein, *Open Secrets* (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), 278-283.

²⁷ Antoinette May, *Witness to War: A Biography of Marguerite Higgins* (New York/Toronto: Beaufort Books, Inc., 1983), 231.

²⁸ Kathleen J. Turner, *Lyndon Johnson's Dual War: Vietnam and the Press* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 173- 174.

²⁹ Emery and Emery, 652.

³⁰ Letter to the author from Flora Lewis, 18 July 1985.

³¹ Diamanstein, 279.

warned, Americans who insisted upon evidence of democratic procedures may be insuring the fall of any non-Communist government that attempted to reestablish order in Saigon through firm government.³²

The Tet offensive brought war to Saigon for the first time, Lewis wrote, but still the sympathies of the people remained uncertain. There was no popular uprising during Tet in the cities for the Viet Cong, but there was no resistance either. The people of Saigon had little faith in the Government of South Vietnam and many suspected America's role, a suspicion that some believed President Thieu encouraged to strengthen his personal authority.³³ American power remained strong in Saigon, but the only real hope for winning the war depended on a coherent, working government in Saigon that had popular support.³⁴ In the meantime, Hanoi continued to call for the withdrawal of American forces, and the war went on "with its death, its gore, every kind of pain and loss that humans know."³⁵

Outside Saigon, disillusionment characterized the mood.³⁶ Military strategy seemed uncertain and uninformed. The American stand at Khe Sanh seemed based more on a mythical determination not to allow a repeat of Dien Bien Phu than a realistic assessment of North Vietnamese strategy; while the North Vietnamese continued to filter soldiers and weapons south and fought a ferocious battle at Hue, almost directly east of Khe Sanh.³⁷ American morale dropped to

³²Flora Lewis, "Viet Democracy Wounded, Some Hope Fatally," *Newsday*, 12 Feb. 1968, 26.

³³Flora Lewis, "Saigon Credibility Gap Is Grand Canyon Size," *Newsday*, 16 Feb. 1968, 34.

³⁴Flora Lewis, "Can South Vietnam's Capital City Reform in Time?" *Newsday*, 19 Feb. 1968, 30.

³⁵Flora Lewis, "Red Gains, Losses in Tet Fighting Still Obscure," *Newsday*, 14 Feb. 1968, 22.

³⁶Flora Lewis, "3 Men With a Single Goal: To Improve Viet Life," *Newsday*, 23 Feb. 1968, 30.

³⁷Flora Lewis, "Red Delay at Khe Sanh Increases U.S. Anxiety," *Newsday*,

its lowest ever: soldiers marked time until their tours ended, and American civilians resigned their posts in growing numbers.³⁸ More than 140,000 new refugees fled their homes for the cities, which were no longer safe either. Pessimism, bewilderment, and fear spread throughout South Vietnam, as people urgently wished that the war would end.³⁹

Lewis, as had Elizabeth Pond, saw the arrest and imprisonment of Chau as part of Thieu's plan to destroy any political opposition. She, too, concluded that ironically, however, the Chau affair became the turning point toward the decline of Thieu's regime.⁴⁰ Lewis described a manipulative President Thieu, who took a series of steps to strengthen his autocratic hold on the GVN and to delay American withdrawal. Contributing to Thieu's considerable success in achieving these goals was the lack of a unified American policy for Indochina combined with disagreement over policy among American officials.⁴¹

This absence of a cohesive political policy was also at the bottom of the stalled peace negotiations. Lewis wrote early in 1971 that U.S. policy had never been purposefully formulated but rather had resulted from "morning-after" justification for crisis decisions. U.S. policy, Lewis wrote, had been variously defined at different times over the course of the war as containing China, rebuffing Russia, demonstrating the futility of wars of liberation, resisting the "yellow menace," and finally, showing the world that the United States was not a "pitiful, helpless giant." Now in 1971, Lewis continued, Washington officials privately agreed that

21 Feb. 1968, 34.

³⁸Flora Lewis, "GI Morale Ebbs as Viet Cynicism Increases," *Newsday*, 26 Feb. 1968, 28.

³⁹Flora Lewis, "Viets Haven't Fully Tallied Effect of Red Drive," *Newsday*, 28 Feb. 1968, 28.

⁴⁰Flora Lewis, "Vietnam Lawmaker's Jailing Causes U.S. Government Rift," *Los Angeles Times*, 16 March 1970, Part II, 9; and "Ambassador Linked to Saigon Intrigue," *Los Angeles Times*, 25 March 1970, Part II, 7.

⁴¹Ibid.

the war would go on after the United States withdrew, leaving the Vietnamese to work out some compromise for themselves. U.S. policy was now to get out in a way to leave Saigon with the upper hand for making a deal.⁴²

Late in 1971, Lewis wrote that the fraudulent presidential elections of that year fundamentally damaged Vietnam's sense of legality and constitutional order and further illustrated President Thieu's determination to rule Vietnam autocratically and ignore the United States in policy decisions. The arrest and imprisonment of Tran Ngoc Chau had been the first step in Thieu's maneuver to set aside constitutional law and assume total power in ruling South Vietnam.⁴³

Although Marguerite Higgins made her fame as a traditional combat reporter, her reporting on Vietnam focused on political issues rather than on the fighting. Higgins was among the first women to cover Vietnam, beginning in 1950 as part of her responsibilities as chief Asian correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune*, calling the Vietnam conflict "another front of the same struggle" of the Korean War. She was in North Vietnam in 1954 to write about the last days of the battle of Dien Bien Phu. Her first assignment specifically to Vietnam was to cover the 1963 Buddhist crisis.⁴⁴

From her perspective during the early half of the war, Higgins believed that the South Vietnamese were winning with American backing. A fervent supporter of Diem, Higgins condemned the United States' role in his overthrow and assassination as "meddlesome, and unforgivable intervention in the affairs of another country."⁴⁵ She enthusiastically supported the anti-Communist goals of American policy in Vietnam and strongly criticized American journalists who, she

⁴²Flora Lewis, "The U.S. and Indochina," *Atlantic*, , March 1971, 6-18.

⁴³Flora Lewis, "Law's Erosion in Vietnam," *Los Angeles Times*, 19 Oct. 1971, Part II, 6.

⁴⁴Margueritte Higgins, *Our Vietnam Nightmare* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 1-2.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 295.

claimed, described at length the “shortcomings” of “our friends” in the Government of South Vietnam while overlooking greater failures and terrorist tactics of Ho Chi Minh in the North.⁴⁶

Because Higgins had been a pioneer woman war correspondent, she was frequently defensive about her competence and professionalism. She was not only willing to take great personal risks to get a story,⁴⁷ she was also determined to show her paper and the world that she was as capable as any man and that her gender was not a handicap in reporting at the line of battle.⁴⁸ The controversy over her reporting on Vietnam made her more than ever determined to vindicate her accuracy and judgment as a journalist, which was one of her major objectives in writing *Our Vietnam Nightmare*.⁴⁹

On her last visit to Vietnam in October 1965, she contracted a rare tropical disease, leishmaniasis, which in itself was not necessarily fatal, but her refusal to slow her work pace fatally complicated the illness. She pushed herself relentlessly to finish the book on Vietnam while continuing to write her *Newsday* column three times a week. She kept up her driving schedule of foreign correspondence, which had taken her to Russia, Africa, and Latin America in addition to Vietnam, and managed to fit in some time for her husband and two children. Eventually, overworked and weakened by the disease, she became seriously ill and was taken to Walter Reed Hospital. A few days after being admitted to the hospital, in pain and weak, with the help of a friend she secretly left the hospital to fly to New York to appear on the *Today* show to talk about her book. “Marguerite did her show, trying desperately and feverishly to sum up everything that she believed

⁴⁶Ibid., 300.

⁴⁷Quoted in May, 103.

⁴⁸Ibid., 143.

⁴⁹Ibid., 257. See also Higgins, “Prologue,” *Our Vietnam Nightmare*, 1-15 and 287-314.

about Vietnam and sought to encompass in her book. Then she returned to the hospital.”⁵⁰ She died there 3 January 1966.

By the time Georgie Anne Geyer went to Vietnam, she was an experienced foreign correspondent. She made several trips to Vietnam for the *Chicago Daily News*, the first for a month in the fall of 1967 and the longest for six months in 1968, with brief visits in the spring of 1969 and the spring of 1970. Geyer was a 1956 graduate of Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism, and had studied history in Vienna on a Fulbright scholarship. In 1960, she joined the *Chicago Daily News* as a reporter on the city desk.

In her autobiography, *Buying the Night Flight*, Geyer described her profession as a foreign correspondent as more than a job or even “the most exhilarating and satisfying and doggedly difficult profession in the world.”⁵¹ By “being there” and reporting from first hand experience what is happening, the foreign correspondent plays an essential role in helping people fulfill what she believes is everyone’s moral responsibility—to know and understand the world. “Nothing out there is ever what you thought it was or would be before you got there! It is always, always different from what you had supposed” (p. 73). Essential is an understanding of the history and the culture of the country. To Geyer, foreign correspondence was “a kind of loving involvement with history,” and it meant inserting oneself “lovingly into another culture” (p. 106).

Vietnam was the one area that Geyer felt she never “mastered,” but she didn’t believe anyone else did either (p. 276). She was critical of Vietnam correspondent Keyes Beech, an “old Asian hand” colleague from the *Chicago Daily News*, who ignored the Vietnamese perspective—“the intrinsic quality of the

⁵⁰May, 265.

⁵¹Georgie Anne Geyer, *Buying the Night Flight: The Autobiography of a Woman Foreign Correspondent* (New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1983), 276. Further references to this work are in the text.

country, the government, the politics, the fighting.” She believed that without considering these qualities, there could be “no workable denouement” (p. 280). She was convinced at the time that Vietnam was a strategic absurdity— “and when you do things that are unpragmatic, unwinnable, unstrategic, then really evil consequences follow” (p. 280).

Geyer found Vietnam difficult to cover. The war was fought in so many different places at the same time, and arranging transportation for the right spot at the right time was always a problem. She had no special problems because she was a woman, in contrast to her early days in Latin America, where she was so unusual that no one took her seriously. The only real problem she experienced as a woman reporter in Vietnam was staying in a remote camp overnight where someone had to take her out to the toilet and stay with her, and then she said the problem was really the other person’s embarrassment.⁵²

Geyer did not feel that her work in Vietnam was her best. She did not enjoy covering the war, not because of the horror and the violence, but because it was not interesting to her. She liked Cambodia and enjoyed doing her interview with Prince Sihanouk, and she was most proud of her series on the American G.I., which she said was years ahead of later analyses of the changes in the military. The series was based on her observations as she traveled around the country talking to the soldiers.⁵³

The series was somewhat controversial, prompting at least one congressional representative to complain to MACV, inquiring into Geyer’s background and her motivation for writing the series. In reply, Colonel William Schabacker, the chief public information officer wrote a long defense of the American soldier but said little about Geyer:

I regret that we have no background on Miss Geyer other than

⁵²Telephone interview with Georgie Anne Geyer, 17 July 1985.

⁵³Ibid.

confirmation that she writes for the Chicago Daily News and has spent some time in Vietnam. As to Miss Geyer's motivation I'm afraid I cannot speculate. May I say however that the Army believes its soldiers in Vietnam are products of our society of whom the American people are properly proud. On the whole they are intelligent, highly motivated, patriotic individuals capable of classic and unselfish response of soldiers in crisis who are defending freedom.⁵⁴

Geyer wrote that a new kind of soldier had appeared in Vietnam, one who was professional and at the same time skeptical, who asked "Why?" rather than obeyed an order without question. She reported that an amazing number of soldiers frankly admitted that they did not believe in the war they were fighting.⁵⁵ A new democratic relationship between officers and soldiers was just part of the revolution in the U.S. armed forces, and a new professionalism replaced patriotism as the motivation for doing the job well.⁵⁶ The new training recognized that soldiers were individuals, not animals, and emphasized military instruction.⁵⁷

The professional soldiers looked at the war as a job to be done, but as many as half the men had difficulty rationalizing the war that they believed to be wrong, Geyer wrote. Some opposed the war on moral grounds, others did not see the sense to it, and many hated the war because they despised their Vietnamese colleagues. One of the strangest attitudes Geyer found was the admiration of the American soldiers for the Viet Cong or the North Vietnamese: "It is certainly one of the first times in history that soldiers have admired the enemy more than

⁵⁴Letter to the Hon. Edward J. Derwinski, House of Representatives, from William Schabacker, Col. GS Chief of public information, 24 Feb. 1969. Accreditation file, Georgie Anne Geyer. Box 23/33, Accession no. 73A3413. Washington National Records Center.

⁵⁵Georgie Anne Geyer, "Our New GI: He Asks Why," *Chicago Daily News*, 13 Jan. 1969, 1.

⁵⁶Georgie Anne Geyer, "'Revolution' in the Armed forces: Persuading, not just Commanding," *Chicago Daily News*, 14 Jan. 1969, 1.

⁵⁷Georgie Anne Geyer, "'Revolution in training' Puts the Emphasis on 'Building a Guy Up, Not Tearing Him down,'" *Chicago Daily News*, 15 Jan. 1969, 7.

they admire their allies.” Soldiers told Geyer that one of the hard things about the war was that there was no one to hate. “Who can hate Ho Chi Minh?”⁵⁸

On the other hand, soldiers and officers expressed dislike for the South Vietnamese army because of the widespread corruption and laziness, especially among officials. Many Americans were upset to find that so many of the South Vietnamese people seemed to support the Viet Cong and North Vietnam, but some soldiers told Geyer they actually felt that communism may perhaps be the best solution for the Vietnamese. Many of the men said their experience of Vietnam led them to be cynical and skeptical about America’s motives and actions.⁵⁹

Most of Geyer’s reportage has been about revolutions throughout the world, with her series about the American soldier in Vietnam another aspect of that story, but she wrote that the most important revolution she had covered was the “revolution” taking place within herself as she grew to independence and knowledge of herself as a full person. In her autobiography, she wrote that she watched worldwide movements for independence with “such singular fascination,” perhaps more than male correspondents, because she, too, “was deeply involved in these questions of independence and dependence” (p. 192.). She could empathize with these people and their goals, and she treated them with respect because, in truth, she was one of them: “The revolution within me and within women had many of the same components of the revolution that they were going through” (p. 103).

Geyer, whose career in foreign correspondence began before Vietnam and continues today, agrees that Vietnam was in a real sense a turning point for women: “A lot of changes already coming underneath came to a head in Vietnam,

⁵⁸Georgie Anne Geyer, “Viet Foe ‘Hard to Hate,’ Troops Say,” *Chicago Daily News*, 16 Jan. 1969, 6.

⁵⁹Georgie Anne Geyer, “Graft, Corruption in Saigon Disgusting to Many Yanks,” *Chicago Daily News*, 17 Jan. 1969, 2.

and they were clarified and defined in Vietnam.” In Vietnam, she could see that everything was different; there came to be a place for women.⁶⁰ Today, after Vietnam, women make up a sizable portion of the press corps in Latin America so that their “total number is impossible to tally,” with some correspondents believing that women continue to “see things differently than men.”⁶¹

Not only did prejudices against women correspondents at war begin to change during Vietnam, but women’s attitudes about themselves changed; they became pleased to be women and felt less compelled to prove they were just like men. Women who in effect become men in their work and who value only work that men do, Geyer believes, degrade women and the work they do, as men have done to women through the centuries. Geyer sees herself somewhat as an “interim woman journalist”—between the earlier, harder, antifeminine women journalists before her and the more fully liberated and very female reporters of today (p. 66).

In her autobiography, Geyer wrote that the development of her full potential as a correspondent could not be separated from the growth to her full self as a woman. She wanted above all to be intellectually free, and she realized that to do this in the world of the fifties and sixties where the sexes remained unequal, she would have to make her way by herself (pp. 35-36). She was determined to “be there,” to “live things” and to know and understand them as well (p. 270). In the end, she knew the joy of having done what few women had only begun to do: she had created herself and her world, and only she “could pull the strings together” (p. 330).

Another correspondent for whom her experiences covering war were a means to self-knowledge was Oriana Fallaci, whose interviews and book on Vietnam were

⁶⁰Geyer interview.

⁶¹June Carolyn Erlick, “Women As the New War Correspondents,” *Washington Journalism Review* 4 (June 1982): 42-44.

published widely in the United States. Fallaci was a reporter and editor for the Italian weekly magazine *L'Europeo* and had asked to be sent to Vietnam. Her reasons for going, she wrote, were to learn what life was and to understand the war—why men kill each other: “I’m here to prove something I believe: that war is useless and stupid, bestial proof of the idiocy of the human race.”⁶² Fallaci made three visits to Vietnam, in November 1967 and February and May 1968, staying approximately a month each time. She flew in helicopters and bombers and witnessed combat, but she was most interested in the people of war. Her weekly reports to *L'Europeo* comprised interviews with American soldiers, Vietnamese civilians, Viet Cong, Vietnamese officials, as well as with other journalists. When Barry Zorthian, public relations chief for the U.S. embassy, told her he didn’t like what she was writing about the war, Fallaci told him the Marine and the Viet Cong were the same to her, but the Viet Cong was in his homeland defending his country and the Marine was not.

Fallaci wrote about the three visits in her book, *Nothing and So Be It*. The book is an account of her quest to find out what life is by learning about war, first in Vietnam and later in Mexico City, where she was wounded covering the Mexican government’s armed suppression of the student protest against the Olympics. On another, more personal level, the book is a quest for self-understanding. It is written in the second person in the form of a diary; the “you” at first is her beloved younger sister but gradually becomes ambiguous, merging the reader, the young girl, and Fallaci. The denouement of the quest is an epiphany that occurs as Fallaci struggles alongside the students in Mexico, one of whom tells her to be strong. Although life, Fallaci tells her sister and the reader, is a death sentence, it must be filled up without wasting a moment. People are neither angels nor beasts, but must take risks without fear of mistakes. War is another experience,

⁶²Oriana Fallaci, *Nothing, and so Be It*, trans. Isabel Quigly (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1972), 9.

but one that may fill life too full and break it, making it “nothing, and so be it.”⁶³ The book earned Fallaci Italy’s Bancarella Prize in 1971 (awarded for the book that has sold the most copies on the stands of Italy’s book peddlers).

In February 1969, Fallaci went to Hanoi to interview Vo Nguyen Giap, minister of defense, commander in chief of the armed forces and deputy prime minister of North Vietnam. Giap refused to let her record the interview but allowed her to take notes. Angered by her questions, Giap demanded that she publish as the interview a typed manuscript that he provided. She agreed to publish it alongside the true text, infuriating the Communists, who accused her of being an agent for the CIA.⁶⁴ In January 1973, she interviewed Nguyen Van Thieu and wrote favorably about him. She later wrote that she was “bitterly sorry” for her positive assessment because in the end he proved to be “diabolical.”⁶⁵

Ethel Payne and Era Bell Thompson were the only known black women to be sent by news organizations to Vietnam as special correspondents. Thompson, an editor for the Johnson Publishing Company, spent three weeks in Vietnam for *Ebony* magazine. Payne, a reporter since 1951 for the *Chicago Defender*, went for ten weeks from January to March 1967.⁶⁶

Racial tension was a problem among some troops in Vietnam, although not usually among soldiers in combat. Contributing to the tension was a common perception that blacks made up a disproportionate part of the military forces. Martin Luther King, Jr., and others had charged that an extraordinarily high proportion of blacks fought and died in Vietnam.⁶⁷

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Oriana Fallaci, “General Giap,” in *Interview With History*, trans. John Shepley (New York: Liveright, 1976), 74-87.

⁶⁵Fallaci, “Nguyen Van Thieu,” in *Interview With History*, 45-73.

⁶⁶Roland Wolseley, *The Black Press, USA* (Ames: Iowa State University, 1971), 206-207.

⁶⁷Martin Luther King, quoted in Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam* (New

The actual proportion of blacks among American servicemen in Vietnam was never higher than 12.5 percent, and deaths among blacks accounted for 12.3 percent of all combat deaths. The common perception that they made up a high proportion of the troops in Vietnam was probably because a disproportionate number of blacks were in ground combat units, and paradoxically few blacks were officers. Blacks in Vietnam were encouraged by the civil-rights movement of the 1960s to seek equality in the military, which sometimes led to violence between the races, especially after 1969. Such tension after 1969 may also have been an aspect of the growing disillusionment with the war among all servicemen.⁶⁸

As part of Payne's assignment for the *Chicago Defender* to cover the role of black soldiers in the war, she examined the extent of integration in the services and looked for any special individual performances, including acts of heroism.⁶⁹ Her reporting was upbeat and portrayed a positive situation for black soldiers. In a series of articles entitled "Vietnam Diary," Payne reported that their position relative to other servicemen was improving considerably in all branches of the service. She interviewed a number of Chicago servicemen in various places in Vietnam, including Cu Chi, Cam Ranh Bay, Saigon, and Danang.⁷⁰

News agencies sent few women as special correspondents to Vietnam. The Associated Press sent Kelly Smith Tunney, its first woman correspondent in

York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 154.

⁶⁸Ibid., 154-155.

⁶⁹Letter to MACV from Ethel Lois Payne, 24 Dec. 1966. (Accreditation file, Ethel Payne. Box 6/33, Accession no. 334 73 3413. Washington National Records Center.)

⁷⁰Ethel Payne, "Vietnam: The History of An Abused People," *Chicago Defender*, 7 Jan. 1967, 28; "Mightiest Ship Afloat: We Visit the Enterprise," *Chicago Defender*, 14 Jan. 1967, 1; "The Puzzling Adventure of Mildred Harrison," *Chicago Defender*, 4 Feb. 1967, 1; "It's Big Job, Paying Troops," *Chicago Defender*, 11 Feb. 1967, 1; "Viet Exodus Like Noah's Ark," *Chicago Defender*, 25 Feb. 1967, 2; "Chicago GI's Doing Their Share in Vietnam Warfare," *Chicago Defender*, 18 March 1967, 1.

Vietnam, on a four-month assignment in 1967. She had been in the AP's Washington news bureau for four years and was an experienced political correspondent. Her special assignment probably had as much to do with the AP's response to sex discrimination suits and the 1964 Civil Rights Act as it did with sending her to cover the war. She was free to choose the subject of her reporting, which became the Vietnamese civilians. One story she wrote with AP correspondent Peter Arnett described the schizophrenic quality of the war during which people in Saigon tranquilly dined in fine French restaurants and leisurely played tennis at the Cercle Sportif while just miles from the city, soldiers were being wounded and some killed in the raging guerrilla warfare.⁷¹

Tunney thought that women did report the "broader" story: "Women wisely looked at the different story and broadened the public perspective on the war to include the effects of the war on civilians."⁷² Being a woman could be an advantage at times in getting this human story, Tunney found. Vietnamese women made the best interpreters, and they talked easily with her because she was a woman. She spent much time with the peasants, whom she found friendly and cooperative. She was comfortable with them, and they seemed to be equally at ease with her because, Tunney believed, as a woman she seemed less intimidating to them. To encourage this relaxed relationship, when she was in the countryside, she wore an *ao dai* given to her by the wife of a village official. The *ao dai* is the traditional Vietnamese dress, long-sleeved and form-fitting to the waist, with a skirt of front and back panels that fall gracefully over long satin trousers underneath.⁷³

In 1972, the AP sent Ann Blackman on a six-week special assignment with

⁷¹Peter Arnett and Kelly Smith, "Saigon (AP) (October 1967)," reprinted in Glenn MacDonald, *Report or Distort?* (New York: Exposition Press, 1973), 219-224.

⁷²Personal interview with Kelly Smith Tunney, 20 May 1985.

⁷³*Ibid.*

instructions to cover the "human" side of the war, to report the "woman's view."⁷⁴ Before Vietnam, she had been a general-assignment reporter for the *Boston Globe* and had worked for two years for the AP, in New York and Washington, covering social trends in the United States. She didn't cover the fighting in Vietnam because it was not her assignment, but she did interview soldiers and civilians in combat areas.

Blackman, too, felt that being a woman was an advantage in her work, especially for the kind of stories she covered. That she could speak fluent French was additionally helpful because it allowed her to interview many Vietnamese without an interpreter. She thought women spoke more freely and comfortably with her; as a woman, she thought she could understand their problems in a way that men could not. She could also ask them questions that she felt men may have been uncomfortable asking; for example, a story she wrote about Vietnamese women who had children by American men involved sensitive, personal information women might not have freely discussed with a man.⁷⁵

Local city newspapers throughout the country sent numerous women staff reporters for a look at the war, usually to interview servicemen from the area. Esther Clark went to Danang for three months in 1966 to report on the war for the *Phoenix Gazette*, spending most of her time with the troops.⁷⁶ Geraldine Appleby, the women's editor of the *Las Vegas Sun*, went for a week in August 1970 to look at a field hospital in Saigon and to interview soldiers from Nevada.⁷⁷ Dorothy Austin, of the *Milwaukee Journal*, went for two weeks in August 1967 to cover stories "of interest to women readers," such as Red Cross girls from

⁷⁴Telephone interview with Ann Blackman, 22 July 1985.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶"Femininity at the Front," *Time*, 28 Oct. 1966, 73-74.

⁷⁷Accreditation file for Geraldine Appleby. (Box 21/33, Accession no. 334 73 3413, Washington National Records Center.)

Wisconsin, hospitals and orphanages, and military personnel from Wisconsin.⁷⁸ Esther Tusty, who for thirty years had operated her own news service in Washington, D.C., servicing papers in Michigan and New York, went to cover the war for fifteen days in October 1966.⁷⁹

Broadcast Journalists

Television journalists were at special risk reporting the war; like photographers, they were vulnerable because they had to maintain a position in the field for an extended time. Reporting for television was much more complicated than writing for the print media. Producers, heavy equipment, and technical crews accompanied the correspondents in the field, where most of the television reporting was done in Vietnam. Television coverage focused overwhelmingly on American boys in action, and soldiers in the field were its most important sources.⁸⁰ There were few women television correspondents at the time, and only four were sent to Vietnam by the major networks. At least one woman producer was also sent.

Marlene Sanders was the first woman to be sent as a correspondent to Vietnam by American television networks. ABC News sent her for a month in March-April 1966 as part of its efforts to give all anchorpersons of news programs an opportunity to cover the most important stories. Sanders has been a pioneer as a woman in broadcasting, the first woman to break ground in many ways. She was the first woman newscaster on WNEW(AM) New York, the first woman to anchor a network evening newscast when she substituted for Ron Cochran

⁷⁸ Accreditation file for Dorothy Witte Austin. (Box 1/33, Accession no. 334 73 3413, Washington National Records Center.)

⁷⁹ Accreditation file for Esther Tusty. (Box 8/33, Accession no. 334 73 34137, Washington National Records Center.)

⁸⁰ Daniel C. Hallin, *The "Uncensored War"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 115, 134.

in 1964 on the *ABC Evening News*, and the first woman to be a network news vice president in 1976. At the time she went to Vietnam, Sanders had her own daytime television news program and had been working in broadcast news since 1955.⁸¹

Sanders said she covered the stories that were not being done by male television correspondents—the lives of Vietnamese civilians and of American troops in the field.⁸² She was there for a short time, but she did a variety of stories about: an American student delegation of “peaceniks” who visited Saigon, Americans working at a local orphanage trying to befriend Vietnamese children, civilian casualties at Danang surgical hospital, what the American military was doing about the injured and sick Montagnards at the Pleiku provincial hospital, conditions for the Vietnamese in the refugee camps, how life in Saigon was affected by the war.⁸³

Sanders was angry with the use that the network made of her coverage, which was broadcast mostly on the weekend news. The *Evening News* was basically interested in combat at that date, she said.

They wanted “shoot ’em up.” I was really mad as hell. Some of my stuff did get on my own afternoon news program, but I thought their judgment was very poor, simple-minded, and I was really very angry when I got back to find how little of it had been used.⁸⁴

In her view, combat was not the important story. “What do you learn about in ‘This unit gained this much ground, or didn’t’? I mean, what does this tell you about the country? It tells you absolutely nothing.”⁸⁵

⁸¹“Marlene Sanders: the Other Woman in Network News,” *Broadcasting*, 8 Nov. 1976, 105.

⁸²Meyer L. Stein, *Under Fire* (New York: Julian Messner, 1968), 243.

⁸³*Ibid.*

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

Also disappointed with the way her stories were overlooked by the evening news program was correspondent Anne Morrissy Merick, sent by ABC for a nine-month assignment from January to September 1967. Television at the time was interested in stories that were pictorially exciting, which did not include stories about the people affected by the war, Merick said. A correspondent, field producer, and on-camera reporter, Merick did not report combat but did “the story behind the story,” which often involved interviews with military personnel in the field. Merick believes that television coverage of the war today would include much more political analysis and more coverage about its impact. The “firefight” would still be shown, she said, but there would be the other side of the war, the Vietnamese people, that was not there during the war. Television correspondents and producers now realize the importance of that story to the overall reporting of the war.⁸⁶

Merick began her career overseas as a sports editor for the *International Herald Tribune*. After two and a half years with the *Herald Tribune* and some time as a freelancer in the Middle East, she returned to the United States and took a job with NBC, writing news releases and program promotions. She left NBC for ABC to be a writer and then a producer, and finally a correspondent on a daily news program for teenagers, *American Newsstand*. She had moved to “special events,” when she was sent to Vietnam.⁸⁷

The combat reporting of Liz Trotta was used on the evening network news. Trotta was in Vietnam with NBC News for six months in 1968 and for shorter visits through 1973, in the combat zones, “risking her life filing stories every day,” she said, “as a real war correspondent should be doing.”⁸⁸ Like Dickie Chapelle and Marguerite Higgins, whom she admires as “one of the bravest correspondents

⁸⁶Telephone interview with Anne Morrissy Merick, 18 July 1985.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Telephone interview with Liz Trotta, 17 July 1985.

of all," she is a woman very much in the tradition of male combat reporters. To Trotta, the story is the battle.

It is not in the cities, but in the mud of the Delta, the tangled jungles of the Central Highlands, and the treacherous mountains along the Demilitarized Zone. And the men in these lonely places—the men fighting this war, not just talking about it—make it possible for the reporters to stand the heat, the weariness, the terror.⁸⁹

Trotta described as a typical assignment the three-day coverage of an Army-Navy operation to engage the Viet Cong at a village in the Mekong Delta. The assignment began at 2 p.m. with Trotta and a television crew being flown by helicopter from Tan Son Nhut airport at Saigon to the USS Benewah. After spending the first night aboard the ship, they were flown by helicopters with the troops to a jungle from where they walked several hours through difficult terrain and swamp to the designated rendezvous. The march was without incident except for the gunfire of a lone sniper.⁹⁰

At the village, they found only women and children, and no Viet Cong. As they were preparing to board helicopters for the return trip, three running figures were seen near the tree line. Suddenly filling the air was the thunder of American mortar and machine gun fire tearing into the tree line and the village huts that lay in the line of fire, "And amid the deafening noise, the sound of an infant crying." The operation finished, the television crew flew back to the ship for the night, and the next morning flew to Saigon to send to New York the film and audio tapes, which ran two minutes and forty-five seconds on *The Huntley-Brinkley Report*.⁹¹

⁸⁹Liz Trotta, "Of Arms And the Woman," *The New York Times*, sec. D, 29.

⁹⁰Liz Trotta, "Hey, fellows, Chet and David have sent a woman," *TV Guide*, 19 April 1969, 6-10.

⁹¹Ibid.

Liz Trotta was an experienced reporter when she went to Vietnam. She graduated from Boston University with the B.A. degree in 1959 and from Columbia School of Journalism with the M.S. in 1961. Her first job was as a reporter with the *Chicago Tribune* from 1961 to 1962. She reported for the Miami bureau of the Associated Press from 1962 to 1963 and for *Newsday* from 1963 to 1965. In 1965 she became a correspondent for NBC. For her work in Vietnam, she received the Overseas Press Club award for best television foreign reporting of 1968.

Trotta does not agree that women contribute a different perspective to reporting, and resents distinctions between “women” and “men” correspondents: “I’m a reporter. Being a woman is beside the point.” Except for maybe two women (whom she did not name), Trotta said that the American women in Vietnam were not real correspondents. “Most were camp followers, phonies, trampy women, who left a trail of blood that made it harder for the real women correspondents.” She defines war correspondence narrowly as the reporting of combat and believes reporters have a responsibility to support American policy. Of Frances FitzGerald, Trotta said, she was a rich girl who did not need to support herself and ran around writing what a bad war Vietnam was. FitzGerald’s reporting, according to Trotta, was an intellectual’s, a “left-wing Gucci,” view of the war.⁹²

“Men,” Trotta said, “reported the Vietnam war, not women.” Of the quality of the reporting, Trotta thought the press did a “rotten job” and agrees with those who say the press was a large factor in the loss of the war. She was there, and she knows what really happened, and it has not been written, Trotta said.⁹³

Ironically, one reason NBC sent her to Vietnam was to report on the problems women had covering the war: “Tell them how you cover the war as a woman; tell them how it is different when you’re a woman and people are shooting at

⁹²Interview with Liz Trotta.

⁹³Ibid.

you.”⁹⁴ Trotta reported that covering the war was not easy for men or women. Being a woman had nothing to do with covering a war, Trotta wrote, and she disagreed with the assumption that “women reporters say and feel things that men do not when a war is being fought.”⁹⁵

A correspondent who covered both combat and the effect of the war on the lives of the Vietnamese was Hilary Brown, and her network did use her footage on the evening news. Brown was sent to Vietnam by ABC in March 1975, for what she thought would be a long tour, but as it turned out, two months after she arrived, Saigon “fell” to the Communists. No one, including the Vietnamese, she said, realized how quickly the final offensive would be.

The South Vietnamese army simply collapsed. I mean, the officers abandoned their men. There was virtually no resistance except for a place called Xuan Loc outside Saigon. The North Vietnamese forces just rolled southward. That final offensive—I think they told me later—had been planned as a two-year campaign. Later, much later, I interviewed the foreign minister of Vietnam for a documentary, and that is one of the things he told me, how they couldn’t believe it.⁹⁶

The most difficult aspect about reporting in Vietnam when she was there, Brown said, was “finding the war.” There was very little fighting; the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were just closing in on the capital. Her stories conveyed an impression of the impending collapse: a profile of a Vietnamese family who feared the occupation of the North Vietnamese because they had worked for the Americans, a feature about American doctors still working right up to the end, and a sketch about an American who was “rushing around adopting every single Vietnamese kid he could.”⁹⁷

The story ABC liked best was her report of the battle of Newport Bridge

⁹⁴Trotta, “Of Arms And the Woman.”

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Telephone interview with Hilary Brown, 29 July 1985.

⁹⁷Ibid.

at the entrance to Saigon. Brown was in great danger because she got caught in the crossfire while she was on the bridge filming the battle. From one side of the bridge to the other she had to roll the camera, and the camera was rolling too, using film. "ABC just lapped that up; they thought it was marvelous, my best report." The battle of Newport Bridge was fought just before the final assault on Tan Son Nhut Airport.

It was literally twelve hours before although I didn't know it at the time. We didn't quite realize just how close they were. I mean we knew they were very close, they seemed close. At the time I can remember thinking this was just an advance party, but in fact the army was literally surrounding the capital. They had it in a death grip, and in the end they decided to spare the capital. They did not shell it; they simply attacked the airport, the Tan Son Nhut airport, and that began twelve hours later.⁹⁸

Brown regrets that she did not stay in Saigon after the final assault, but ABC convinced her to leave. The Communists launched the final assault on Tan Son Nhut airport on the 29th of April, and on the 30th, she was evacuated by helicopter from the roof of the American embassy. The evacuation was hastily arranged almost at the last minute, and the final hours were filled with confusion and panic. Ambassador Graham Martin had delayed the evacuation, believing almost to the last that Saigon could be defended.⁹⁹ By the time the emergency evacuation was begun, the runways at the airport had been destroyed by the Communist assault, so helicopters landed on the roof of the embassy and the courtyard below to take people out.

There was complete panic on that morning. Everybody was trying to throw their things together and close up offices, and...people were running, everybody was in total panic. The U. S. embassy officials were busy burning all their documents, burning their money, shredding confidential papers,...complete and total panic.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹See Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam* (New York: Viking Press, 1983), 667-668.

¹⁰⁰Brown interview.

Brown deeply regrets—still feels guilty about—not having helped the Vietnamese family about whom she had written the story. They were desperate to get out, and begged her to help them.

And in this panic, this family turned up at the hotel, begging me to help them, and I didn't know what I could do to help them. I can remember at the time thinking, "This isn't what you want. It's better for you to stay. They haven't launched an all-out attack on the city. It's going to be a peaceful takeover. You'll be all right." And so I failed them. I feel very, very guilty about that because in retrospect probably I could have helped them. . . . If I had just said, 'OK, stick with me,' and shoved them in my car. . . . But then I don't know if I would have got them over the wall. . . . What they [marines] were doing is they were literally kicking away all the Orientals, all the Vietnamese. They had a couple of Marines who were using their feet, their boots and their rifle butts. They were helping the "round eyes" over, so quite possibly we would have been stopped right there. But at least I would have tried. I don't know. . . .¹⁰¹

Brown went to New York for a time after Vietnam, giving interviews on America's last days there. She then returned to London where she had been a foreign correspondent with ABC News for more than two years before being assigned to Vietnam. Before going with ABC in 1970, Brown had been a correspondent for the CBC and a news reporter for a Canadian station. She was ABC's first woman foreign correspondent.

In addition to these network correspondents, Judith Osgood was in Vietnam as a producer with CBS for six months in 1966.¹⁰² Several women went to Vietnam for local stations, mostly to do features on servicemen. Natalie Best, of KCFT-39-TV of San Diego, went for two months in 1969 for a special project to cover the "woman's angle."¹⁰³ Lenore Janet, of KPLC-TV in Lake Charles,

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²"Women War Correspondents—Vietnam Version," *Matrix* 58 (Winter, 1972-1973): 4-5, 19.

¹⁰³Accreditation file for Natalie Best. (Box 16/33, Accession number 334 73 3413, Washington National Records Center.)

Louisiana, spent ten days in September 1967 interviewing servicemen from Louisiana for her television program, *The Lee Janet Show*.¹⁰⁴ Barbara Connell was sent by the Public Broadcast Laboratory as a producer for three weeks in October 1967.¹⁰⁵ Janet Korver, Leslie Mayes, and Barbara Jean Sezna were sent in 1967 by the McLendon Corporation of Texas to do features for its broadcasting stations. Mayes was assigned in particular to do interviews with notable world personalities who visited Saigon regularly.¹⁰⁶

The first women to be assigned to Vietnam by news organizations were special correspondents. Some had been working as foreign correspondents and were sent to Vietnam as part of their regular foreign assignment, but many were staff reporters who gained their first foreign experience from brief assignments in Vietnam. The reporting by the experienced foreign correspondents was by far the superior and more significant, but the many features about servicemen written by reporters for local papers and radio and television stations partly addressed the question that soldiers and civilians alike began more and more to ask about the war: "Why?"

¹⁰⁴Accreditation file for Lenore S. Janet. (Box 4/33, Accession no. 334 73 3413, Washington National Records Center.)

¹⁰⁵Accreditation file for Barbara H. Connell. (Box 2/33, Accession no. 334 73 3413, Washington National Records Center.)

¹⁰⁶Accreditation files for Janet Korver, Leslie Mayes, and Barbara Jean Sezna. (Boxes 4/33, 5/33, and 7/33, Accession number 334 73 3413, Washington National Records Center.)

CHAPTER VI

THE RESIDENT CORRESPONDENT

American newspapers and news agencies sent at least seven American women to Vietnam as resident correspondents: Denby Fawcett, Ann Bryan Mariano, Margaret Kilgore, Gloria Emerson, Edith Lederer, Tracy Wood, and Tad Bartimus Wariner. Beverly Deepe and Kate Webb became resident correspondents after working for a time as freelancers. These correspondents were most like traditional journalists in the sense that they worked against deadlines and filed regular dispatches, usually two to three a week, about all aspects of the Vietnam story, although most tended to focus on the Vietnamese people rather than on the fighting. Gloria Emerson, the only woman to be sent as a resident correspondent by a major American newspaper, received the George Polk journalism award for her reporting in *The New York Times* on the effect of the war on the Vietnamese people.

Resident correspondents were usually assigned to Vietnam for eighteen months, but tours varied from one year to several. When their tour was finished, most moved on to new assignments, with few returning to Vietnam. Most women resident correspondents were sent late in the war when American ground forces were being withdrawn and many major correspondents had moved on to other assignments.

Resident correspondents are responsible for the continuous coverage of a

place or ongoing event, and they still remain the basis for good press coverage of Southeast Asia.¹

Newspaper Journalists

Beverly Deepe was a resident correspondent for the *Herald Tribune* from March 1964 until the newspaper ceased publication in 1966. In September 1967 she became resident correspondent for *The Christian Science Monitor* until she left Vietnam in January 1969. Deepe reported on a wide spectrum of events and issues, including an exclusive and controversial interview with South Vietnamese Premier Nguyen Khanh in 1964, military escalation of the war in 1965, numerous *coup d'etats* and the struggle by the Government of South Vietnam for stability and popular support, the final days of the battle for Hue in 1968, and the siege at Khe Sanh at that same time.²

Deepe's interviews with General Khanh, during which he harshly criticized U.S. Ambassador General Maxwell Taylor, put her byline on the *Herald Tribune's* front page but also put her on the U.S. Embassy's blacklist. She reported that General Khanh attacked General Taylor for not acting more "intelligently" and realistically about Vietnam and warned Taylor not to try to make Vietnam an "image of the United States, because the way of life and the people are entirely different."³ Ambassador Taylor responded to Khanh's attacks at his next briefing, and Deepe reported that he said the Vietnamese generals "are bordering on being nuts."⁴

¹Rodney Tiffen, *The News From Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1978), 33.

²Telephone interview with Beverly Deepe Kever, 11 Aug. 1985.

³Beverly Deepe, "Viet Strongman Defies U.S. on Civilian Rule: Khanh Assails Gen. Taylor," *Herald Tribune*, 23 Dec. 1964, 1.

⁴Beverly Deepe, "Taylor Rips Mask Off Khanh: Viet Press Briefing Expose," *Herald Tribune*, 25 Dec. 1964, 1.

The Embassy said Deepe had misquoted Taylor, claiming she based her story on leaks from the briefing session to which the "*Tribune's* correspondent was not invited." She was the only American correspondent from a major paper not to be included at the briefing. Deepe said that the Embassy personnel did not like her because she would not write what they wanted her to write: "They accuse me of giving the Vietnamese line, when in fact what I do is listen to them and then go out and find out for myself."⁵

Deepe's reporting regularly appeared on the front page of the *Herald Tribune*, often as the lead story. On the day of her story on Taylor, she had two stories on the front page; the second was a report about a terrorist bomb exploding Christmas Eve in the lobby of the American officers billet in Saigon.⁶ In yet another lead story on the front-page and another Saigon *coup*, Deepe reported that the downfall in June 1965 of the government of Premier Phan Huy Quat further contributed to the "sharp deterioration of anti-Communist morale and a diminishing of anti-Communist strength and influence."⁷

Frequently the *Herald Tribune* published Deepe's longer investigative pieces as series over several days. For one such series in May 1965, Deepe interviewed a variety of American and Vietnamese officials, soldiers, and civilians in an attempt to find out why American policy makers and Saigon government officials could not politically stop the Communist advance among the Vietnamese people. Most responses pointed to the lack of a realistic and relevant political policy by the Americans and South Vietnamese. In contrast, Deepe reported, the Viet Cong created a new reality, a new world for its young recruits to believe in and fight for; whereas, political uncertainty led South Vietnamese soldiers to question

⁵"Self-Reliance in Saigon," *Time*, 8 Jan. 1965, 38.

⁶Beverly Deepe, "Christmas Eve Bomb in Saigon," *Herald Tribune*, 25 Dec. 1964, 1.

⁷Beverly Deepe, "Viet Regime's Downfall—A Step to Losing the War," *Herald Tribune*, 13 June 1965, 1.

what they were fighting for.⁸ American policy was negative and concentrated on fighting communism; it did not offer a positive policy to rally South Vietnam efforts for post-colonial development.⁹ Rampant corruption among South Vietnamese officials further turned many Vietnamese away from the government and toward the Viet Cong, who were harsh but just.¹⁰ Political and land reform were urgently needed to seize the offensive from the Communists, but the only political program to date, the strategic hamlet program, had been an economic disaster.¹¹ The successful agricultural programs of the American Agency for International Development (AID) offered the one basis for hope in winning the support of the peasants.¹²

Deepe was the first to write about a topic that interested several women correspondents—the powerful women of Vietnam, who played a large role in Vietnamese history. Frances FitzGerald later wrote that the redoubtable Madame Nhu was the norm rather than the exception among Vietnamese women, whose stern, martial ancestors “ascend into legend.”¹³ In the first century A.D., the heroic Trung sisters were at the head of an army that turned back a Chinese invasion, and in the third century, the twenty-three-year-old heroine Trieu An led an army of a thousand against the Chinese.¹⁴ Maggie Higgins devoted a

⁸Beverly Deepe, “Our Girl in Viet—I: Why Guerrillas Fight So Hard,” *Herald Tribune*, 30 May 1965, 12.

⁹Beverly Deepe, “America’s Frozen Policy—Vital Political Power Unused,” *Herald Tribune*, 31 May 1965, 2.

¹⁰Beverly Deepe, “Corruption—Hottest Saigon Issue,” *Herald Tribune*, 1 June 1965, 12.

¹¹Beverly Deepe, “How the U.S. Built on the Quicksand of Asian Politics,” *Herald Tribune*, 2 June 1965, 8; “Land Reform: the Long Delay,” *Herald Tribune*, 3 June 1965, 18.

¹²Beverly Deepe, “The Program the Reds Can’t Fight,” *Herald Tribune*, 4 June 1965, 2.

¹³Frances FitzGerald, “The Power Set,” *Vogue*, 1 Feb. 1967, 154-155, 204-205.

¹⁴*Ibid.* See also Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Political History*, (New

chapter of her book to defending Mme. Nhu, whose many enterprises as sister-in-law of Premier Ngo Dinh Diem included forming her own women's army, the Paramilitary Women of Vietnam, to gain equal rights from "cruel and inhuman" Vietnamese men.¹⁵ The situation for women was not exactly as desperate as Madame Nhu described to Higgins; in reality Vietnam had always been a semi-matriarchy, and women privately exercised great power as unchallenged heads of the household. Linda Grant Martin asserted that the beautiful, strong, independent, and confident women of war-torn Vietnam of the 1960s were imbued with this same fierce spirit. They quietly continued to control and dominate their husbands with ease and charm. With the social disruptions brought about by the Indochina war, they had taken their skills beyond family and home to public activity, both legal and illegal. It was generally understood that wives managed the shady deals of corrupt public officials.¹⁶

Deepe's five-part series in the *Herald Tribune* about how the war had altered the lives of Vietnamese women described the activist role contemporary Vietnamese women performed in the government, with many joining the Women's Armed Forces Corps as medics and social workers, interpreters and clerk typists, and as fighters to defend their villages. Saigon housewives formed the Women's Association of Good Will to provide assistance to refugees flowing into the city.¹⁷ Far more women worked with the Viet Cong, having been at the highest levels of the National Liberation Front since its formation in 1960. They continued to participate in all activities of the NLF as guerrillas, terrorists, medical corps

York: Praeger Publishers, 1968), 30-34.

¹⁵Margueritte Higgins, "Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu: Dragon Lady or Joan of Arc?" in *Our Vietnam Nightmare* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 59-73.

¹⁶Linda Grant Martin, "When Crisis is a Way of Life," *Mademoiselle*, Nov. 1966, 172-173, 214-215, 223.

¹⁷Beverly Deepe, "Viet WACs: Too Many Volunteer," *Herald Tribune*, 23 Nov. 1965, 2.

women, and entertainers for the villagers and Viet Cong. As political cadres, they organized women's associations in the villages to further the cause of the Front.¹⁸

The effect of the war was far different for the poor than for the wealthy women of Saigon. The rich woman proceeded to get richer by taking advantage of opportunities—many involving corrupt business dealings—opened by the American presence. “The upper-class Saigon housewife is an expert in real estate, especially renting to Americans; the peasant woman is an expert on building underground bomb shelters.” The life of the peasant woman was increasingly more difficult, especially as she had to assume full responsibility for the family and home with her husband gone to the battlefields.¹⁹ For many young women, opportunities offered by war and a foreign army were jobs as prostitutes in the brothels, bars, and cheap hotels, and for the “lucky” few, as mistress to one American GI.²⁰

While Deepe reported for *The Christian Science Monitor*, she regularly filed two to three stories a week, which were almost always published on the front page. The *Monitor's* focus on interpretation of national and international events and issues and its policy of providing the broader view were reflected in Deepe's stories.²¹ At times analyses of the same event by Deepe and Elizabeth Pond were printed side-by-side, a rare occurrence of the bylines of two women Vietnam correspondents on the same front page of a major paper.

In one such series, Deepe's analysis of the political implications of the 1967

¹⁸Beverly Deepe, “Viet Women—Friends, Foes and Madame Nhu: Life of Conflict,” *Herald Tribune*, 21 Nov. 1965, 3; “Viet Cong Wedding in the Jungle,” *Herald Tribune*, 22 Nov. 1965.

¹⁹Beverly Deepe, “Rich Get Richer and Poor Get Poorer: Contrasts in Vietnamese Women,” *Herald Tribune*, 24 Nov. 1965.

²⁰Beverly Deepe, “Saigon's Precocious Pitfalls,” *Herald Tribune*, 25 Nov. 1965.

²¹Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, *The Press and America*, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1984), 661- 662.

Saigon elections complemented that of Pond. Uncertainty over U.S. policy contributed to the insecurity and skepticism of the Vietnamese people, especially concerning the effectiveness of the new constitution and the fairness of the elections. Results of the elections were thought to be important in determining whether the United States would continue the war or seek a negotiated settlement. Many believed that the Thieu-Ky military ticket was a "war party" ticket privately supported by the Americans. Most doubted that the rivalry between the two generals would end with their election to office and feared that their administration would continue to be unstable and without authority, with the difficulties of life in South Vietnam going on as before.²²

Deepe was the *Monitor's* resident correspondent during the Tet offensive of 1968. Among her various reports during that time were series on the battle for the city of Hue,²³ on the siege at Khe Sanh,²⁴ and an analysis of the failure of the Communists to launch an all-out assault on Khe Sanh for which General Westmoreland had made elaborate military fortifications and strategy.²⁵

In her analysis of the failure of the Khe Sanh assault to materialize, Deepe

²²Beverly Deepe, "U.S. Role in Vietnam Pivots on Election," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 31 July 1967, 1; "Skeptical of Viet Charter," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 1 Aug. 1967, 2; "Politics," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 2 Aug. 1967, 4; "Viet Campaign Bares Long-Standing Problems," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 17 Aug. 1967, 1.

²³See for example: Beverly Deepe, "Hue: Battle for a Walled City," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 28 Feb. 1968, 2; "Assault Ends With a Whimper," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 6; "Hue Struck Again—by Looting," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 4 March 1968, 1.

²⁴See: Beverly Deepe, "Encircled Khe Sanh," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 20 March 1968, London Edition, 1; "Khe Sanh—Cheese in U.S. 'trap,'" *The Christian Science Monitor*, 21 March 1968, London Edition, 1; "Khe Sanh Strategy Porous?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, London Edition, 1; "Khe Sanh: Legacy of Westmoreland," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 1.

²⁵Beverly Deepe, "Why Didn't Battle of Khe Sanh Ever Come Off?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, 1; "How B-52's Protected Khe Sanh," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 1; "How U.S. Intelligence Weighed Khe Sanh Opposition," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 11.

reported that American officials, led by General Westmoreland, believed (before the Tet offensive of January 1968) that the Communists would try for a major, impressive victory at the marine outpost at Khe Sanh to strengthen their position in preparation for peace talks. These same officials as of June 1968 were still uncertain as to why the attack was never launched, but settled on two theories: (1) the preferred explanation: Communists were put off by the enormous American firepower concentrated there, and (2) the less popular but the most plausible and more realistic theory: the Communist siege at Khe Sanh was always a diversionary tactic to protect the secrecy of the preparations for the planned major attack on the cities that did take place during Tet 1968.²⁶ Deepe also wrote that General Westmoreland's subsequent recall from Vietnam on 22 March as overall American military and pacification commander was an official rejection of his military search-and-destroy strategy—"the futility of his so-called forward strategy."²⁷

Although a major assault never took place at Khe Sanh, fighting there was fierce, with losses estimated at 10,000 for the Communist forces and 500 for the U.S. marines. The huge number of Communist casualties were attributed to the horrendous B-52 bombing raids on the area surrounding the marine encampment. Total bomb tonnage dropped during the 77 days of the siege was 96,000, roughly equivalent to five atomic bombs of Hiroshima vintage and more than was dropped on Europe during 1942 and 1943 combined. Deepe quoted "air advocates" as

²⁶Deepe, "How U.S. Intelligence weighed Khe Sanh Opposition." See also: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: The Viking Press, 1983), 539-42. Karnow supports the second theory, citing as sources Communist military officers, General S. L. A. Marshall, official American military history of the period, and Major General Lowell English, a U.S. marine commander at Khe Sanh.

²⁷Beverly Deepe, "Pressure for Khe Sanh Offensive," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 26 March 1968, 1; "Khe Sanh: Legacy of Westmoreland," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 27 March 1968, 1.

asserting that "Khe Sanh will probably go down as the first major ground action won entirely or almost entirely by air power. There never has been anything like it in the history of warfare."²⁸ The *Monitor* nominated Deepe's series for the Pulitzer Prize. Deepe was in Vietnam so long that she witnessed many changes, but to her the war remained a "hellish, dancing madness":

I live in a brown half-house made of teak, in a world made of tears, shattered dreams and everywhere the dead and the almost-dead, where the American men are lonely and the Vietnamese are sad. My major personal difficulty is to laugh—if only occasionally—for all of Vietnam cries.²⁹

Some changes that took place while Deepe was in Vietnam had to do with the status of women journalists. As the first resident woman correspondent in Vietnam in 1962, she seldom was able to stay in the field overnight during those early years. By the time she left Vietnam in 1969, women in the field were not commonplace, but they were not extraordinary either. When Denby Fawcett, of the *Honolulu Advertiser*, arrived in Vietnam in 1966, women were still having difficulty getting access to the front-line troops. Fawcett recalled that it was unusual for women journalists to act together as they did when they protested General Westmoreland's prohibition against women in the field. For one reason, there was little time for socializing. For another, many women had struggled hard to establish themselves as credible correspondents and tended to remain aloof from any identification with other women that might jeopardize their hard-won status as "one of the guys."³⁰

Fawcett served three tours in Vietnam: May 1966-December 1967, June-November 1969, and 1972-1973. She, too, stayed long enough to see women correspondents become more readily accepted in all areas of the war. She believes

²⁸Deepe, "How B-52's Protected Khe Sanh," 5.

²⁹Beverly Deepe, "The Woman Correspondent," *Dateline*, Jan. 1966, 95-97.

³⁰Telephone interview with Denby Fawcett, 31 July 1985.

that early women correspondents made the way easier for later women. As women proved they could do a credible job and “didn’t cause trouble in the field,” they came to be accepted and even taken for granted. Most of those women were outstanding persons, Fawcett said, “some of the finest people I’ve met.”³¹

During her earliest tour, her paper tended to play her as “our gal in Vietnam.” Her assignment was to do features, but within that genre, she was free to choose the subject of her stories, and she found unlimited material. Vietnam was a place rich with stories: “You just walked out your door and there was a story. Any place you turned, you stepped into a potential story. Nothing since has ever been as exciting journalistically.”

Fawcett left Vietnam in 1967 because she was ill with a severe strain of malaria, although she did not realize it at the time. She was depressed and thought she was mentally ill, actually symptoms of the disease. When she returned in 1969, she again became depressed—this time not clinically—hearing a new Embassy staff saying “the same old thing all over again about how we were winning the war—just around the corner.” In frustration, she left Vietnam this time after only a few months.³²

Another correspondent who stayed several years was Ann Bryan Mariano, the first American woman to be sent as a resident correspondent to Vietnam. She went to Vietnam in January 1966 with the *Overseas Weekly*, a controversial investigative tabloid. The *Weekly* was the most formidable media critic of the American military in Europe and in Vietnam. In the early 1960s, the paper had exposed General Walker’s ultra right classes on political ideology for army personnel in Europe, for which he was subsequently removed from the Army.³³

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Francis Donald Faulkner, “Bao Chi: The American News Media in Viet

According to correspondent Edward Behr, it conveyed the most accurate picture of how the war in Vietnam affected American GI's: *Overseas Weekly*...was a true underground tabloid which told of the seamy side of service life in Vietnam: the court-martials, the fragging of officers, the drug cases—and the occasional race riots. It's a measure of the freedom granted to reporters in Vietnam that *Overseas Weekly* existed at all or was allowed on sale anywhere in Vietnam.³⁴

Actually the Army had fought hard to keep the publication off the newsstands in Vietnam. The Department of Defense claimed it did not object to the editorial content or the cheesecake photographs, but said it just did not "have the facilities to distribute it in Vietnam by air." Eventually, the paper was distributed privately in Vietnam.³⁵

At the time, Ann Bryan Mariano was bureau chief and resident correspondent for the *Overseas Weekly* and in charge of convincing the military not to block its circulation in Vietnam. The only real distribution system in Vietnam was the military PX system, and according to Mariano, the military prevented the *Overseas Weekly* from using it for years. "They wouldn't put our newspaper into that PX system although they carried all other kinds of general newsstand non-military publications." In spite of this handicap, the paper was successful because readers loved the investigative format, even though the military hierarchy did not.³⁶

One of the initial difficulties for Mariano as a reporter was overcoming military officers' objection to women correspondents in the field. Hostility to her presence did not come from the young soldiers, who she said were generally cooperative, but from the higher ranking officers, who said they did not want to

Nam," (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1981), 201.

³⁴Edward Behr, *Bearings* (New York: The Viking Press, 1978), 241.

³⁵Faulkner, 202.

³⁶Telephone interview with Ann Bryan Mariano, 12 July 1985.

be responsible for her safety. Until women correspondents established their right in 1967 to be in the field, Mariano repeatedly had to argue with commanders to be allowed to accompany troops and to stay with them during battle. Except for this problem of access during the early years, she felt she was not held back because she was a woman.³⁷

One difficulty in reporting the war that always remained with Mariano was the pain of witnessing what was happening to the people.

Of course I had never seen a war before, and I had never seen so many people die. I think what bothered me the most was what happened to the Vietnamese, to the innocent victims of the war, the people in the countryside, the children, especially the children.

Mariano left the *Overseas Weekly* and Vietnam in 1970 when the paper changed publishers and abandoned its investigative editorial policy. She married Frank Mariano, a correspondent for ABC whom she had met in Vietnam, and returned to Vietnam with him in 1972. From 1972 to 1975, she did freelance work mostly for the Associated Press, now reporting more about the people in the villages and towns than about the military.

I think that a sense of outrage began to build all through those two years, when I saw how senseless and brutal and vicious that whole war—needless—that whole war was, how the people who suffered the most as always were the most defenseless. And especially the children, the orphans of families that were shattered, the mutilated kids in the streets, children begging. That experience was the most difficult, touched me the most ...³⁸

Mariano and her husband and their two adopted Vietnamese children left Vietnam with the American evacuation on 30 April 1975.

It was a kind of a sense of numbness, unreality, a sense of loss because I spent so much time there, and I had friends I was leaving behind, that I would never see. It was a real, personal pain. I didn't think

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

very much about the politics of it. What was going to happen was very clear for several weeks, and I guess I didn't care for that. It was just painful on that personal level.³⁹

Remembering about the war, and making sure others keep remembering, has remained Gloria Emerson's commitment since she left Vietnam in 1972. "I shan't *let* them forget Vietnam. I'll live to be 100, and I'll keep talking about it till I die."⁴⁰ When she was assigned to Vietnam in 1970 as *The New York Times's* first woman correspondent of the war, she was wholly caught up in the excitement of her assignment. "All I ever wanted to do in my whole life was work for *The New York Times*. It was the kingdom. I never wanted anything else."⁴¹ Her experiences in Vietnam changed all that, and her anguish over the horror of the war and the role of the United States caused her to quit the *Times* to devote her efforts to stopping the war rather than just reporting it.⁴²

Emerson's primary assignment was to report on the people of Vietnam,⁴³ and her coverage of the effects of the war on the lives of the Vietnamese has been widely acclaimed. Robert Shaplen of *The New Yorker*, who also reported on the war, praised her excellent feature writing and lamented the fact that reporters had not earlier looked at that aspect of the Vietnam story. "It has been as if, belatedly, we have realized what we have done not only *in* but *to* Vietnam and have looked in the mirror at our own faces as well as at those of the Vietnamese."⁴⁴

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰John F. Baker, "Gloria Emerson," *Publishers Weekly*, 10 Jan. 1977, 8.

⁴¹Thomas B. Morgan, "Reporters of the Lost War," *Esquire*, July 1984, 58.

⁴²Baker, 8.

⁴³"Women War Correspondents—Vietnam Version," *Matrix* 58 (Winter 1972-73): 19.

⁴⁴Robert Shaplen, "The Challenge Ahead," *Columbia Journalism Review* 9 (Winter, 1970-71): 46.

The devastation and destruction in South Vietnam, wrote Emerson, were so great that it was unimaginable that healing could be accomplished in her lifetime. The destruction extended beyond the physical to the psychological and spiritual.

The Vietnamese hell is in the South. And there it cannot be described by statistics that overwhelm and numb the mind—400,000 Vietnamese civilians killed and 900,000 wounded between 1965 and 1972; as many as eight million villagers uprooted from their homes.... Nothing is as it should be, and the war has seemed to be without an end. Perhaps what South Vietnam suffers from most—aside from grief for the wounded and the dead—is an emotional starvation. There is no sense of belonging to a history or even a country.... They have no sense of national esteem, no feeling of their own worth. There is fear of everything. The people, for example, fear their own soldiers, and the South Vietnamese Army fears itself.⁴⁵

She wrote about orphaned and abandoned children on the streets begging for themselves and sometimes for younger siblings,⁴⁶ about country girls who survived in the city as prostitutes for American soldiers,⁴⁷ about a man who lost his only son, his family farm and land, forced to move his wife, mother, and youngest daughter to a tiny house on stilts on the bank of a small canal in a city twenty-five miles from the village of his ancestors.⁴⁸ She wrote about one family who worked hard for the re-election of the father as deputy in the National

⁴⁵Gloria Emerson, "Each Day is a Separate Ordeal," *Saturday Review*, 18 Nov. 1972, 53-55. See also, Emerson, *Winners and Losers* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1977).

⁴⁶See Gloria Emerson, "Until They Found the Shelter, Their Home Was Danang's Streets," *The New York Times*, 3 Aug. 1970, Food Fashions Family Furnishings Section, 40; "Part Vietnamese, Part Black—And Orphans," *The New York Times*, Food Fashions Family Furnishings Section, 7 Feb. 1972, 26; "A Young Refugee Mourns His Lost Bicycle," *The New York Times*, 11 May 1970, 21.

⁴⁷Gloria Emerson, "A Vietnamese Prostitute Sees the Future as Lonely and Grim," *The New York Times*, 4 Aug. 1970, 3.

⁴⁸Gloria Emerson, "In Vietnam, a Weary Look Back at a Harsh Decade," *The New York Times*, 1 Jan. 1971, 3.

Assembly in Saigon and about the many others who were too occupied with daily survival to pay any attention to politics.⁴⁹ Even the long awaited American troop withdrawal created burdens of another kind for some Vietnamese who were left without the support of the wartime economy and the protection of the U.S. military that they had been forced to depend upon.⁵⁰

One media critic condemned Emerson's "bad news" reporting as bordering on treason, dubbing her "Gloomy Gloria" and identifying her with "Tokyo Rose" of World War II.⁵¹ Emerson's bad news was hardly a distortion of the realities of Vietnam during the late period she was there. American public opinion itself had become increasingly hostile toward continued involvement in the war, as one American policy after another failed to bring about its end. The controversial CIA Phoenix program, the invasion and secret bombing of Cambodia, the failure of Vietnamization, and severe morale problems among both disillusioned South Vietnamese and American troops occurred while Emerson was in Vietnam.⁵² At the same time, the long years of war had shattered Vietnam and Vietnamese society seemingly beyond recovery. In response to one interviewer who asked

⁴⁹Gloria Emerson, "Campaigning is a Family Affair for a Saigon Deputy," *The New York Times*, 23 Aug. 1971, 2; "To Vietnamese, Safety Before Politics," *The New York Times*, 25 June 1971, 2.

⁵⁰Gloria Emerson, "In Danang Area, Unemployment is the Enemy Also," *The New York Times*, 18 July 1971, 3; "U.S. Quits Base, Fear Moves In," *The New York Times*, 17 Oct. 1971, 3.

⁵¹Gerry Kirk, "All the News...As Seen by Gloomy Gloria," *National Review*, 20 April 1971, 426.

⁵²The Phoenix program (the identification and elimination of Communist cadres among the peasants) successfully damaged the NLF's political organization, but American antiwar activists labeled it "mass murder," and Americans involved in the program admitted it was riddled with inefficiency, corruption, and abuse (see Karnow, 601- 602). The great failure of Vietnamization was illustrated by the devastating rout of the South Vietnamese forces during the invasion of Laos in spite of tons of bombs from American air support (see Karnow, 629-631). Morale problems included racial strife, fragging of officers, and a serious increase in drug abuse by G.I.'s (see Karnow, 631-632).

her if she thought her view of the war was the truth, Emerson said: "I don't claim it's possible to write the truth; all you can do—all I've tried to do—is write truthfully."⁵³

Emerson was a newspaper journalist working under the pressure of deadlines, filing two to three stories a week about a variety of events and issues. Most of her stories ran on the news pages in the front section of the *Times*, but occasionally some of her longer features were printed in the "women's" section, "Food Fashions Family Furnishings." Emerson considered her stories in the news columns to be far more important than those in the women's section, to which she shipped several stories because it offered more space for longer features. She felt her major stories on Vietnam were those about the use of heroin by American troops,⁵⁴ the breakdown of morale among the South Vietnamese troops,⁵⁵ the corruption in Saigon, and the taking of a medal by a U.S. general for acts of valor he did not commit.⁵⁶

The latter story ran on page one and charged that the general was awarded the Silver Star based on a description of heroism that was invented by enlisted men under orders to do it. The men who fabricated the citation sent a letter describing the incident to Congressman L. Mendel Rivers, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, with a copy to *The New York Times*. Rivers never responded, but Emerson followed up the letter and wrote the story. The

⁵³Baker, 9.

⁵⁴See, for example, Gloria Emerson, "Allies in Vietnam Burn Marijuana," *The New York Times*, 22 March 1970, 19; "G.I.'s in Vietnam Get Heroin Easily," *The New York Times*, 25 Feb. 1971, 39; "A Major in Vietnam Gives All He's Got to the War on Heroin," *The New York Times*, 12 Sept. 1970, 2; and Emerson, *Winners and Losers*, 240-241.

⁵⁵See, for example, Gloria Emerson, "Copters Return From Loas With the Dead," *The New York Times*, 3 March 1971, 3; "South Vietnamese Wounded Jam Military Hospitals," *The New York Times*, 17 Nov. 1971, 1.

⁵⁶Telephone interview with Gloria Emerson, 29 July 1985.

servicemen told Emerson the incident was not exceptional, that they had frequently embellished such descriptions for other citations. Based on its investigation of the incident, the Army rescinded the medal.⁵⁷

Emerson also reported the discovery by an American of the existence of “tiger cages” in Con Son, South Vietnam’s largest civilian prison. Her story was about Don Luce, an American writer, who visited the island prison with two congressmen and a congressional aide, who photographed the worst areas of the prison. Luce said the five-by-nine feet, airless, hot, and filthy stone compartments were inhabited by three to four men or five women. Above each compartment was a bucket of white lime that the prisoners told Luce was thrown down on them when they asked for food. Some of the floors were covered with lime. He described the prisoners to be suffering from “malnutrition, physical abuse and filthy conditions.”⁵⁸ Emerson later interviewed a prisoner after his release from Con Son. He could no longer walk nor feel anything in his legs because he had been shackled in one of the cages from 1965 to 1966. “His calves were withered, no larger than my wrists, with deep rings around the ankles as if the skin had been sliced away.”⁵⁹

Luce told Emerson that the prison warden had tried to prevent the inspection by him and the congressmen and that the American head of the Public Safety Directorate, an advisory program in South Vietnam under the Civil Operations-Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS), later supported the warden’s actions. Several months after Luce’s report, the South Vietnamese government ordered him to leave the country for a “special reason.” Luce claimed the special

⁵⁷Gloria Emerson, “Facts Invented for a General’s Medal,” *The New York Times*, 21 Oct. 1970, 1; “Army to Conduct Inquiry on Medal,” 22 Oct. 1970, 6. See also Emerson, *Winners and Losers*, 246-255.

⁵⁸Gloria Emerson, “Americans Find Brutality in South Vietnamese Jail,” *The New York Times*, 7 July 1970, 3.

⁵⁹Emerson, *Winners and Losers*, p. 346.

reason was his role in exposing the tiger cages. The U.S. Embassy in Saigon was annoyed that Luce had taken U.S. congressmen to the prison; Americans in Saigon had previously said that the tiger cages were a thing of the past French administration and no longer existed.⁶⁰

When Emerson returned from South Vietnam, she spent five years writing *Winners and Losers*, a book about the war and its effect on both Vietnam and America. She traveled across the United States interviewing Americans, veterans, families and widows of soldiers, and combined the interviews with her reporting from Vietnam. The startling juxtapositions of the war experiences recalled by the Americans with her reports about the war and the Vietnamese victims evoke a profound sense of the devastating impact on both cultures and peoples and a deliberate ambiguity about who were the winners and who the losers, but a clear sense that the United States was responsible for the tragedy.

An Army captain once told her that the casualties of war loomed so large to her because she was a woman and did not really understand war, its tactics and weaponry, and that men could like "living in the bush."⁶¹ But Emerson never did grow to understand war or the officers as he had wanted her to; instead she "began to see them all as men who had shrunk a long time ago, whose simple-mindedness or stupidity was a protective mist that made it easier to operate in Cav [First Calvary Division] Country." She found officers to be small deceitful men who "lied about body counts, military targets, the war they insisted they were winning, and even the morale of their own troops." They needed a war "because promotions come faster."⁶²

⁶⁰Gloria Emerson, "Saigon Orders Ouster of Writer Who Reported on 'Tiger Cages,'" *The New York Times*, 28 April 1971, 15. See also Emerson, *Winners and Losers*, 343-349.

⁶¹Gloria Emerson, "Hey, Lady, What Are You Doing Here?" *McCall's*, Aug. 1971, 108.

⁶²Gloria Emerson, "Arms and the Woman," *Harper's*, April 1973, 35.

Emerson doesn't think that journalism of women and men are different.⁶³ Yet she wrote that most male reporters saw the war differently than she did. They were like men in the military, "testing themselves over and over again among other men, going out on combat assaults, humping the boonies to see if they could take it."⁶⁴ She wrote that they garnered small but deep pleasures from the war, loved much of the war, and were touched and stirred by things of war that did not affect her in the same way.⁶⁵

She considers the war to be a war of crime, a "huge, unrelenting tragedy." She said the war left her unfit to go on reporting.⁶⁶ "Being in Vietnam," Emerson told writer Thomas Morgan, "had changed her role in life from witness to participant."⁶⁷

The News Agency Journalists

Although the news agencies provide most of the daily coverage of international spot news⁶⁸ and employ the largest number of foreign correspondents, it was not until 1970 that an American wire service sent a woman—Margaret Kilgore—to Vietnam as a resident correspondent. Kate Webb was already there when Kilgore arrived in Vietnam in January 1970 and was actually the first woman to work as a resident correspondent for a wire service, but she was in Vietnam as a freelancer when she was hired by United Press International in 1967.

⁶³Interview with Emerson.

⁶⁴Emerson, "Arms and the Woman," 43.

⁶⁵Ibid., 34.

⁶⁶Interview with Emerson.

⁶⁷Quoted in Morgan, 58.

⁶⁸Tiffen, *The News From Southeast Asia*, 26.

The news agencies, according to media analyst Rodney Tiffen, exert a profound influence on American journalism. Because their reporting is intended for a variety of news publications, it is scrupulously objective, or as some critics complain, bland and superficial. The major focus is accurate spot news with emphasis on volume and speed. This leaves little room for investigative reporting and almost no analysis or punditry. News agencies are the principal— if not the only—source of foreign news for broadcasting stations other than the major networks and for most American newspapers other than *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and a few other large publications that can afford to support their own foreign staffs. For major stories like the Vietnam War, other newspapers and broadcasting stations may send special correspondents primarily to complement or to expand upon the basic coverage they rely upon the wire services to provide.⁶⁹

One of the best known and most highly respected of women correspondents of the Vietnam war is Kate Webb. She gained a reputation as an excellent combat reporter, who, according to Gloria Emerson, did the best military stories in Cambodia.⁷⁰ Tad Bartimus Wariner, resident correspondent for the Associated Press in Vietnam in 1973-1974, said she was inspired professionally by Webb, “a prime example of grace and courage in the field.”⁷¹ Working first in South Vietnam, Webb did most of her reporting in Cambodia and eventually became UPI bureau chief in Phnom Penh.

Perhaps her most important story—a four-part series written for UPI that ran on page one in many newspapers around the world—was about her twenty-three days, from 7 April to 1 May 1971, as a prisoner of the North Vietnamese

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Interview with Emerson.

⁷¹Letter to the author from Tad Bartimus Wariner, 5 April 1985.

Communists fighting in Cambodia.⁷² Webb, her Cambodian interpreter, and four other journalists and interpreters were captured in the fighting along Highway Four, the major route between Phnom Penh and the seaport of Kompong Som. Thought to have been killed by the Communists at one point during her captivity, Webb was erroneously reported dead by *The New York Times*, and her obituary was published in both *Newsweek* and *Time* as well as in other papers throughout the world.⁷³

Webb wrote about her experiences during captivity in the book, *On the Other Side*.⁷⁴ Webb attempted to turn the harrowing experience into an opportunity to report on the Liberation Armed Forces, or the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese as they were called by the Americans (p. 3). Few journalists had had an opportunity to report from the other side. At the same time, Webb was keenly aware that nine journalists had been killed and seventeen others were still missing in Cambodia, and her fear was sometimes so intense that she thought she would die of it (p. 32).

For some days following their capture, Webb and the others were marched painfully through the jungle. During rest periods, they were interrogated as spies. Eventually, one of her captors began to talk somewhat more freely with her and to tell her a little about the war from his view. She found him to be idealistically committed to the Communist cause, an idealism that frightened her, for she felt he could easily decide the cause would be better served by killing her and the others (p. 43-44). She did gain a respect for her captors, who, like her, were

⁷²Craig Tomkinson, "Kate Webb Prefers Anonymity to Fame," *Editor & Publisher* 104 (10 July 1971): 20, 34.

⁷³"Missing U.P.I. Correspondent is Reported Dead in Cambodia," *The New York Times*, 21 April 1971, 18; "Death Reported," *Newsweek*, 3 May 1971, 82; "And Now There Are Ten," *Time*, 3 May 1971, 33.

⁷⁴Kate Webb, *On the Other Side: 29 Days With the Viet Cong* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1972). All further references to this work appear in the text.

professionals and all aware they could die fulfilling their responsibilities (p. 49). Even though her feet grew steadily more painful and she was so exhausted she would fall asleep again and again during the long periods of walking, when they would pass through villages she became excited with the prospect of witnessing the townspeople with the LAF (p. 65). At last the prisoners and their guards settled for some days in one village.

Their daily routine in the camp consisted of two meals, Chinese exercises, and occasional trips to the "tree-sheltered squat-hole," fifty yards away from their hut. They were always hungry, but their diet was the same as that of the soldiers who guarded them. In the evenings, they listened to radio news from Hanoi before going to bed. The routine never changed, although their captors gradually provided them with soap, cigarettes, bananas, and mangoes, but still the days grew longer and emptier. Webb gradually grew weaker and feverish (pp. 75-79). A young North Vietnamese doctor treated her feet and gave her penicillin pills.

Although conversation between the captors and the captives never became familiar or relaxed, Webb gradually developed an appreciation for the plight of the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong as a people caught in a war. For the Vietnamese soldiers it was a lonely vigil, fighting in Cambodia, a place where no one spoke their language. Their plight reminded her of the similar circumstances of the American G.I. in Vietnam (p. 94). Throughout her captivity, she and the others continued to be interrogated, going over and over the same questions. At one time, she was told to write the answers to questions about the war, which she did with information she had already published as dispatches for the UPI.

In addition she wrote that she had been well treated by her captors, and that they had often answered her own questions about their own hopes and ideals in Vietnam and Indochina. She also wrote that she considered the

withdrawal of American troops from South Vietnam as an important step toward self-determination by the Indochinese people, and that she believed the LAF would fight until that withdrawal had been accomplished. When she finished with the questionnaire, she worried about the way the Communists might make use of her answers as propaganda (pp. 118-120).

From the first day of her capture, Webb wrote, she was "ridiculously" conscious of being a woman, "dressed in white jeans, a short-sleeved blue sweater, and carrying, of all things, a pocketbook" (p. 12). But she became even more uncomfortably aware of her sex when late in her captivity, she realized she needed a tampon. "Goddamn reality keeps intervening." She was embarrassed to find there was no woman in the camp to ask for help. Her captors finally understood her need and brought her a field dressing and an armful of white parachute silk. She heard gales of laughter from the command hut as she made her way red-faced to the squat-hole (p. 136).

When she and the others were finally released, Webb was ill with both cerebral and vivax malarias. As had Elizabeth Pond one year before, Webb agonized over why she had been released when so many earlier journalists had not. She thought perhaps one reason was that so many, including Prince Sihanouk, had worked so hard for the release of her and the others, and that perhaps another was that the prisoners had been cooperative and polite toward their captors, who in turn had been patient with them. She thought, too, that at that time perhaps the Vietnamese Communists were less concerned about journalists writing about their presence in Cambodia, which was now general knowledge. She did not consider her experience to have been an "ordeal," but rather an extraordinary and rewarding opportunity to gain a little insight into the army of the enemy. She remembered her captors with respect and some warmth, and wondered if at some future time she could sit and talk with them over beer, not

rifles (pp. 157- 160).

Webb thought there should have been more reporting about the “other side,” about North Vietnam and the Liberation Front in the South. She also keenly felt—as did many correspondents—the handicap of not being able to speak the Vietnamese language, getting by mostly with French. She thought at times her own shyness interfered with her work.⁷⁵

By the time Margaret Kilgore arrived in Saigon, the press corps had dropped to about 200 correspondents, who were responsible for the coverage of all of Indochina—South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Previous to her Indochina assignment, Kilgore had been a political reporter with UPI for seven years in Washington, D.C., covering Congress and the White House. She was a graduate of Stephens College and Syracuse University, and had been a reporter with UPI since 1959. Kilgore was sent to Vietnam as a political reporter, an assignment, she wrote, for which nothing in her past experience as a reporter had prepared her:

The correspondent assigned to this war must be a political reporter, an expert on tactics, more familiar than many soldiers with a vast assortment of weaponry, a linguist, diplomat, administrator, daredevil, and one of the most suspicious, cautious people on earth. Often, he is reporter, writer, photographer and broadcaster combined.⁷⁶

Neither was she prepared for the midnight rocket attacks, the children and soldiers crying and dying in the hospitals, the pretty bargirls from the provinces selling their bodies to the highest bidder, the Vietnamese dead stacked like cords of wood, or her first near hit in a helicopter skirmish.⁷⁷

She never felt “oppressed” because she was a woman, and she tried hard to fit into the regular press corps and not ask for any special favors. Her greatest

⁷⁵Letter to the author from Kate Webb, July 1985.

⁷⁶Margaret Ann Kilgore, “The Female War Correspondent in Vietnam,” *Quill* 60 (May 1972): 10.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 9.

difficulties as a woman was the lack of facilities and personal products for women.⁷⁸ She was sympathetic with the woman's movement that began in earnest while she was in Saigon, but being far removed from problems of the "outside world," she was "highly amused and detached from it."⁷⁹

Kilgore was in Vietnam for twenty-one months, during which the hardest time was the last year, when with "almost uncanny regularity" members of the press corps were being killed or captured. While she was there, nine correspondents were killed, seventeen were missing in Cambodia, and fifteen were captured, among them, her colleague Kate Webb.⁸⁰

When Kilgore's tour was over in September 1971, UPI was starting to pull people out because the war was rapidly winding down. Reporters were no longer being sent on regular tours, but when the Communists launched the "Easter" offensive 30 March 1972, UPI needed an additional correspondent in a hurry and Tracy Wood was the next on the list to go to Asia. Wood was surprised and excited about going because she had been told that no new resident correspondents were to be assigned. She stayed until May 1974.

At first, Wood's bureau chief tried to restrict her to "safe" zones for reporting, but she was fortunate to work with UPI correspondent Maurice Seibert, who not only taught her what he knew about war correspondence but also covered for her when she was reporting where she shouldn't have been. Eventually, in part because of Seibert's considerable help, she was able to establish her competence, and reported from everywhere in Vietnam, including Hanoi and Dong Ha, the southern headquarters of the North Vietnam Army.

Wood was just one of many women who said they were grateful for the help given them by male colleagues, especially during the early days of their tours in

⁷⁸Telephone interview with Margaret Kilgore, 17 July 1985.

⁷⁹Kilgore, "The Female War Correspondent in Vietnam," 12.

⁸⁰Ibid., 9-12.

Vietnam. Women correspondents complained that male military officers tried to hold them back, but not male reporters. Kelly Smith Tunney, who worked with Peter Arnett in Vietnam, said that male correspondents often acted as mentors to women reporters, taught them and helped them with stories and were not hostile to them as reporters.⁸¹ Mary McCarthy thought the newspapermen in Saigon were “angels”: “The newsmen showed me the ropes, let me in on any leads they had, invited me to meals, parties, drinks, drew up lists of people for me to see when I went to Hue, to Da Nang, put me in touch with some Quakers who were based near Nha Trang.”⁸²

A sense that the war was drawing to some sort of a conclusion determined the focus of Wood’s assignment from UPI. She was to investigate and report any movement toward peace negotiations made by officials of the Vietnamese government or the American Embassy in Saigon. On another level of reporting, she looked for interesting features. Two stories have remained her favorites, especially the one that came to her serendipitously while she was following up the other. After the cease-fire was signed in March 1973, she and another reporter had secretly arranged to travel to Dong Ha to interview people living in North Vietnamese territory. En route, they stayed overnight in Hue, where Wood met an American woman searching for the site near Quang Tri north of Hue, where her only son, a marine, had been killed about a year before.

The middle-aged woman, dressed for a Saturday morning in the United States but totally inappropriately for Vietnam, approached Wood for advice about the final leg of her journey. Wood said she was not exactly “thrilled” to see the woman or to get entangled with her because of her own apprehensions about her precarious journey north amidst the fighting that continued despite

⁸¹Interview with Kelly Tunney, 20 May 1985.

⁸²Mary McCarthy, *The Seventeenth Degree* (New York Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1974), 25.

the cease-fire. But the woman began to tell Wood about all the opposition she had run into just trying to go to the place where her son had died.

The woman was not bitter or maudlin, "she wasn't anything, except she wanted to see the place where he died." She had lost her job because her California employer would not give her the time off for the trip. The U.S. government had given her no encouragement. Still, she bought an airline ticket and flew to Saigon, with no idea what she would do once she got there. The U.S. Embassy was unsympathetic, told her to forget it, to go home, not to try it, but she made her way north "through whatever" to Hue, where she met Wood. At that time, she was trying to figure how to travel the remaining twenty miles up the road. She did it, and Wood wrote the story before she continued her own journey.

I honestly don't know if anybody ever used that story because I took off right after that and stayed in the North for a week. I'm sure there are all kinds of philosophical implications one could draw from what she was doing there in the middle of nowhere looking for this place so she could see for herself where her son had been killed. And she had so much dignity, that she was going to do it anyway, not angrily, not bitterly, not melancholic—she just did it. I've always had her in my head somewhere...but I don't know, I just like that story.⁸³

Wood and her reporter companion were the first American reporters to get to North Vietnam after the cease-fire. Dong Ha had been in North Vietnamese hands for a little over a year at that point, and it was her first real glimpse of the change in life that faced the South Vietnamese, like looking in a telescope at what all Vietnam might be like if North Vietnam took over. People were not being abused, beaten or tortured, as many had feared life under the Communists would bring. Life was actually very normal, even boring. It was the shortage of goods and the barren, spartan quality to life that, Wood said, in retrospect, accurately foreshadowed what might come in a reunified Vietnam.

Wood was also among the first group of news reporters (outside the reporters

⁸³Telephone interview with Tracy Wood, 27 June 1985.

who had traveled to Hanoi during the war as guests of the North Vietnamese government) to go to Hanoi after the cease-fire. She and a photographer from the AP and a cameraman from NBC went for a week to cover the prisoner releases. When she returned from that trip, she organized another for a large group of reporters to fly from Laos to Hanoi for one day. As it turned out, CBS's Walter Cronkite had chartered the only available plane, and he generously shared it with the other reporters. "He was super. He didn't need to take in anyone from ABC and NBC—I sure didn't want to take in AP, but we wound up taking in everybody. It was fun but crazy. I never want to get involved in anything like that again. It was like going with a tourist travel agency—nothing to do with reporting."⁸⁴

Wood had been a reporter for the UPI in Sacramento and New York before being assigned to Saigon. She attended the University of Missouri, "majored in everything," and finally quit to move with her family to California. Her first job in reporting—prior to joining UPI—was with City News Service of Los Angeles, a private news wire service that at that time covered only Los Angeles. Because she had covered the anti-war movement in Sacramento, she felt especially prepared to cover the war in Vietnam. "I was one of the lucky people who got to cover and to see both and to make up my mind first hand, which most people don't get to do about most issues."⁸⁵

Her greatest frustration as a reporter in Vietnam was not being able to convey to the American people that the so-called cease-fire was really a mechanism for bringing American prisoners of war home. According to Wood, there actually never was a real cease-fire; the United States just gave it that name and walked out of Vietnam. She was also disappointed that she could not remain in Vietnam until the end of the war, which came just about one year after she left.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid.

Her greatest memory of her experience is how much she loved Vietnam.

I read all the books. I tried to really be a prepared reporter, and the one thing it never even occurred to me to prepare myself for was liking Vietnam, liking the people, and I just really, really did, from the day I got there. I just couldn't believe how much I liked the place. I can say that as I say that I absolutely despised and feared the war and the refugees and the poverty and all the really awful things that you saw and that you never expected to see. And yet somehow through all that, I absolutely loved that country. And that was one advantage to being a reporter rather than a person with the military. The military for some reason or other came in contact only with people they had bad experiences with. They never got to see it as a Vietnamese country; they saw it as an American outpost.⁸⁶

The Associated Press sent only two women resident correspondents to Vietnam, Edith Lederer, who went in 1972 for approximately one year, and Tad Bartimus Wariner, who was there from May 1973 to May 1974. Bartimus Wariner would have stayed longer, but a tropical disease that has never been completely cured forced her return to the United States. She reported from Cambodia and Laos as well as South Vietnam. She had previously worked for the AP in Kansas and Florida.⁸⁷

Few women were sent by news organizations as resident correspondents to Vietnam, and most of those were assigned late in the war when the American troops were being withdrawn and the fighting was winding down. By that time, women correspondents, though still not large in number, were not a novelty, and few experienced open hostility from the military to their presence anywhere in South Vietnam. Women resident correspondents had all been regular reporters for newspapers and news agencies before being sent to the war, and they followed traditional journalistic routines, keeping regular deadlines and filing two to three stories a week. They covered a variety of events and issues, including battles, Vietnamese and American politics, soldiers, and the Vietnamese people. Women

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Letter from Wariner.

correspondents covered the Vietnam story to the day the Americans evacuated Saigon, 30 April 1975.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS AND EPILOGUE

The Vietnam War was a turning point—to some extent a watershed— for American women as war correspondents. More women reported that war more than any previous war, and for the first time, a significant number of women were sent by news organizations to report the war. During the Vietnam War, women established their competence and courage, and their right to report war under the same ground rules that applied to male journalists. Their reportage included all aspects of the war, but to a remarkable degree, focused on the effect of the war on those involved in the conflict, especially on Vietnam and on the lives of the Vietnamese people, rather than on the strategy and outcome of battle, the traditional focus of war reporting.

As was true of previous wars, most women got to the Vietnam war on their own as freelancers, especially in the early years of the war. As the war continued, more and more women journalists in Vietnam were full-time reporters sent by their news organizations to cover the war, some for a short time as special correspondents but some for regular tours as resident correspondents. This development came about to a great extent because women proved their competence and “grace and courage” in the field but also because women aggressively sought their legal rights to report at all levels of the news organization and to report from the field of battle, governed by the same ground rules of reporting war that

regulated male journalists.

Women reported on the war as early as 1950 and as late as April 1975, when the Americans evacuated Saigon. Their work appeared in such major papers as *The New York Times*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Washington Post*, *Herald Tribune*, *Chicago Daily News*, *Newsday*, and *Los Angeles Times*, on the three major television networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC, in prestigious magazines such as *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Nation*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Harper's*, *National Geographic* and *Newsweek* among others, and in countless other newspapers across the nation. They worked for both news agencies, the Associated Press and United Press International. They were front-page reporters, combat reporters, political reporters, feature writers, television and radio correspondents, correspondents for news agencies, news columnists, and photojournalists. Many women correspondents have written books about the war, both personal memoirs as well as histories and political analyses. Women correspondents received several journalism awards for the excellence of their reporting on Vietnam, including the Pulitzer Prize, the George Polk award, Overseas Press Club awards, and others. The Bancroft Prize for history and the National Book Award were awarded to one woman journalist for her history of the war.

Three women correspondents died because of the war: two were killed and one died from a disease contracted while covering the war. Two women were held prisoners for approximately five weeks by the Vietnamese Communists fighting in Cambodia. Several women contracted diseases, some of them incurable. Women reported from everywhere in the country, including the front lines of battles where their presence in every preceding American war was clearly unwelcome or actually banned. It was during the Vietnam war that women established their right to be anywhere in the field at any time as established by the ground rules

of war for journalists.

Before Vietnam, women had reported every American war since the Mexican War, but their participation was small and usually peripheral. In the war just previous to Vietnam, Marguerite Higgins appealed directly to General Douglas MacArthur as United Nations commander to overrule a military order barring women from South Korea, and she was the only woman correspondent to cover the war. In Vietnam, ten women correspondents organized a protest against a directive by General William Westmoreland banning women from the field overnight, and the ban was rescinded. This is the last known attempt by the American government to restrict women correspondents in their access to the field of war. From that time on, women have been officially regarded as correspondents with the same rights extended to any reporter in the field. Women make up a considerable number of the press corps covering Latin America, and they have contributed a major part of the coverage of the conflicts in that area.¹

There were outstanding women combat reporters in Vietnam, but a majority of women correspondents, whether freelancers, special correspondents, or resident correspondents, followed in a tradition of women war correspondence and wrote about underlying issues of the war and the point of view of the Vietnamese. Such a focus suggests that news values of women war correspondents swerve from traditional definitions of war correspondence, which focuses on "spot" or "breaking" news of battles. The difference may have implications for future war correspondence and news definitions in general. For example, because criticism of the reporting of the Vietnam War was that it focused on daily battles and ignored until late the Vietnamese perspective and its importance to a realistic and successful American policy, it is possible that had more women correspondents been reporting for major news organizations on a regular basis or had the regular

¹June Carolyn Erlick, "Dateline: El Salvador," *Washington Journalism Review* (June 1982): 42-44.

corps of war correspondents been reporting the war as women reported it, public opinion and official U.S. policy may have been altered. At the least, a substantial increase in women's reportage would have helped fill a gap for which the media has been highly criticized.

Why so many women so often focused on the effect of the war on the people is not definitively clear. Certain reasons are suggested by this study. Women were following a tradition of women war correspondence that focused on the people involved in war rather than the tactics of war. Women reporters have historically been assigned to cover the "human-interest" angle, and so many were sent by employers to report on the soldiers, American civilians, and the Vietnamese people because women reporters have stereotypically been considered best able to do that kind of reporting well. The major outlets for freelancers—a majority of women correspondents in Vietnam—were the magazines, whose formats lend themselves to longer features that could accommodate stories about political, cultural, and historical Vietnam as well as the lives of the Vietnamese people in the throes of war. Many opinion magazines took stands against the war, and many freelancers who opposed the war wrote stories for those magazines that focused on the failure of American policy especially as it neglected to consider the dire consequences of the war on the Vietnamese. Freelancers often chose or were requested to write feature stories about the people rather than spot news about the fighting to avoid competing with the myriad of regular correspondents who were covering the fighting for major news organizations. Some women suggested that centuries of cultural conditioning as compassionate nurturers of society naturally turned women's interest and concerns to what was happening to the civilian victims and to question the morality of war policy that seemed to regard these victims as irrelevant to the so-called transcending purposes of the war. Many correspondents, including freelancers and full-time reporters, said

they were simply not interested in the monotony of battle stories and considered the stories about persons affected by war to be more interesting and more important. Most significantly, women considered the story about the impact of the war on Vietnamese society, culture, politics, and the Vietnamese historical perspective to be crucially important stories that were being overlooked by the majority of the press.

Although the women correspondents said that journalism is not related to gender, a great many agreed that women do look at war and society in a special way. Several men expressed this same conviction; that is, women are impressed more by the casualties of war, men are interested more in the strategy, fighting, and outcome of battles won and lost.

Women correspondents did not feel that being women was a disadvantage in reporting the war. Many said that military officers, but not enlisted men, occasionally tried to restrict their movements in the field, but after women successfully protested against official restrictions, objections to their presence were usually quickly overcome. A few noted that some news employers attempted to restrict women correspondents to "safe" zones, but no woman correspondent complained of discrimination against them or obstacles placed in the way of their reporting from male colleagues; on the contrary, many were grateful for the considerable assistance given them by male reporters.

Many felt that being women actually may have been an advantage rather than a handicap. Women thought the Vietnamese were more comfortable with them because they were less intimidating in size and they were thought less likely to be government agents. Vietnamese women had always been active in public life, so women as reporters were not considered extraordinary. Besides the hardships of war in general, most women correspondents complained about the same difficulties that male correspondents complained about: inability to speak

the Vietnamese language, the far flung theater of war and the difficulty of getting to the right place at the right time, the duplicity of American and Vietnamese officials in daily briefings about the progress of the war and the obstacles placed in their way by these same officials, and the debilitating effect of witnessing the suffering and deterioration of Vietnamese society. Some women mentioned minor inconveniences from the lack of female facilities and products, but said these were usually more a problem for others than for themselves.

Women reporters did complain that their reporting was not taken as seriously as they could have hoped. With some important exceptions, few women wrote for the news sections of major newspapers or reported for the evening news on network television. The news agencies, which were the major source of news of the daily war for most but the major American newspapers and broadcasting stations, employed few women and then not until the late years when American involvement in the ground war and public interest in the war in general were rapidly diminishing.

After Vietnam

Most women correspondents stayed in journalism after the war ended. Some left to take up other professions, but few chose to limit their work to the home.

Most valued their reporting experiences in Vietnam, and all said their experiences there profoundly changed their lives. Most said they would cover another war if they were sent, but few sought such an assignment. Although a few of the women who covered Vietnam subsequently covered some of the conflicts in Central America and the Middle East on special assignment, none are now assigned to those areas. Through their work in Vietnam, they helped make way for the many women who are reporting from those troubled areas. Jurate Kazickas, who covered conflicts in both Vietnam and the Middle East, watched the change

take place. "The AP sent two women to cover the Israeli-Egypt war of 1973. In Central America, it's just amazing. Every network has a woman there, and *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the major papers all have women there."

Since the 1970s, women have moved into all areas of journalism, including foreign and war correspondence. During the Vietnam War they not only proved their competence in foreign correspondence but also their unique contribution to war correspondence. The current resident correspondent in Southeast Asia for *The New York Times* is Barbara Crossette.

Following are brief summaries of what has happened to some of these correspondents since Vietnam.

Anne Allen said Vietnam turned her life around. She and her husband, ABC correspondent George Allen, adopted two Vietnamese sons. She made life-long friendships there, she learned about a different culture, and she learned to be more understanding of people who are in pain. Vietnam influenced her decision to take up philanthropic work, and she has recently finished a book *Sports for the Handicapped*, which she said was an outgrowth of her Vietnam experiences.

Elizabeth Becker: Vietnam taught her to keep up with the story even though it ceased to be her assignment. She was a staff reporter for the *Washington Post* until 1980, when she left to research and write a political history of Cambodia, *When the War is Over*. She has also had two children since Cambodia.

Mary Frances Berry. Since Vietnam, Berry earned a law degree from the University of Michigan, taught history at Central Michigan and Eastern Michigan universities, was Director of Black Studies and then Provost at the University of Maryland, was Chancellor of the University of Colorado, and under President Carter, served as Assistant Secretary of Health,

Education, and Welfare. Currently she is a professor of history and law at Howard University and a member of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. She recently published an analysis of the fate of the equal rights amendment, *Why ERA Failed*.

Ann Blackman worked for the AP for thirteen years after Vietnam as a national news reporter covering breaking news in Washington. In February 1985, she was hired by *Time* as deputy bureau chief of its Washington news bureau. She said her experience in Vietnam helped her in her reporting of different stories all over the world, including the situations in the Middle East and Central America.

Hilary Brown: After Vietnam, Brown returned to foreign correspondence with the ABC London bureau until 1977, when she moved to NBC for four years, during which time she was the Tel Aviv correspondent for two years and the Pentagon correspondent in Washington D.C. for two more. In 1981 she returned to ABC for three years, and in 1984, she assumed her current position as anchor on the CBC Toronto 6 p.m. nightly news. In all, she was a foreign correspondent for eleven years, doing "the most wonderful job in the whole world." She feels lucky to have done such a job and to have worked with such colleagues, "the extraordinary people you met in some far-flung place, the trouble spots of the world—a traveling fraternity—the foreign press corps, the most interesting and entertaining people I know." Vietnam was exciting because she knew that she was writing a "very, very rough draft of history."

Ruth Ann Burns finished college and then covered state and county political news for the Woodbridge, New Jersey *News-Tribune*. She left her job to complete an M.A. and everything but her dissertation for a Ph.D. in political science at Rutgers University, where she also worked for the

Agency Institute of Politics. She entered broadcast journalism and is now senior vice president and station manager for WNET, Public Broadcasting Channel 13 in New York City.

Judith Coburn works at the Center for Investigative Reporting at San Francisco. She is writing a book—a memoir—about her reporting experiences in Cambodia.

Beverly Deepe Keever left Vietnam for Washington, D.C., where she continued freelance work. In 1974 she became a reporter for Capitol Hill News Service, which was founded with the support of Ralph Nader to provide more detailed coverage to small newspapers, radio, and television stations in the home areas of Congressional representatives. She has been a Professor of Journalism at the University of Hawaii at Manoa since 1982.

Gloria Emerson recently published *Some American Men*, a book about “a range of expressions of masculinity in this country.” She teaches journalism at Princeton and devotes time to the peace movement.

Denby Fawcett stayed “off and on” with the *Honolulu Advertiser*, where she is now on contract for freelance work. She also did television reporting for two years. She is working on a Ph.D. in anthropology at the University of Hawaii, and plans to return to fulltime reporting as a specialist in anthropology.

Frances FitzGerald: In addition to her continuing efforts to try to prevent the United States from getting involved in another conflict such as Vietnam, *FitzGerald* continues to write about American history and culture. She is the author of *America Revised*, a study and critique of the teaching of history in American public schools, and *Cities on a Hill: A Journey Through Contemporary American Cultures*.

Martha Gellhorn covered the Six-Day War in Israel in 1967, covered Spain in the

aftermath of Franco's death for *New York* magazine, wrote a novel, *The Lowest Trees Have Tops*, and a collection of short stories, *The Weather in Africa*, and spent much time in the peace movement of the sixties and seventies.

Georgie Anne Geyer left the *Chicago Daily News* in 1975, was with the Los Angeles Times Syndicate for five years, and is now with the Universal Syndicate. She writes three columns a week about foreign affairs all over the world—Poland, Turkey, Italy, China, Central America, Europe—"I just keep bouncing off different areas." When she's at home (Washington, D.C.), she occasionally appears on Public Broadcasting's *Week in Review*. She is also writing two books.

Betsy Halstead Doucet did public-relations work until 1968. Vietnam "politicized" her, and she decided if she really had an ax to grind, she should study law. During her last year in law school, she worked for a time as a general assignment reporter for the *New Orleans Picayune*. In the early 1970s, she worked for the New Orleans Legal Assistance Program, considered one of the radical legal assistance programs of the day. She worked with the Equal Opportunities Commission in Washington, D.C., and then in New Orleans for a few years. After that she worked for a labor law firm in New York City, and now is the employee relations counsel for Federated Department Stores.

Jurate Kazickas: After Vietnam, Kazickas became a staff correspondent for the AP, which sent her to cover yet another war, the October 1973 Egypt-Israeli war. Previous to that assignment, she had been covering the youth movement and alternative life styles of the early seventies. She left the AP in 1979 to join the staff of the *Washington Star* until it ceased publication in 1982. She is now a freelancer in New York and a regular contributor

to *Working Woman* and *Ms.* magazines.

Margaret Ann Kilgore returned to UPI's Washington, D.C., bureau when her assignment in Vietnam ended. She eventually left UPI to work as a reporter for five years for the *Los Angeles Times*. She now has her own public-relations firm and still occasionally does some freelance magazine work.

Edith Lederer stayed with the AP as a foreign correspondent and is based in the London bureau. She covered the October 1973 Egypt- Israeli from Israel for the AP.

Catherine Leroy covered Cyprus in 1974 and was in Lebanon to cover the civil war from 1975 to 1976.

Flora Lewis was the bureau chief of *The New York Times* Paris office and a European diplomatic correspondent from 1972 to 1980. Since 1980 she has been writing a foreign affairs column for the *Times* while continuing to live in Paris. Her foreign correspondence continues to be recognized for its excellence: she received a 50th Anniversary Honor award from the Columbia School of Journalism in 1963, an award for distinguished diplomatic reporting from George Washington University School of Foreign Service in 1978, and an academic award from the University of California at Los Angeles, 1984.

Ann Bryan Mariano's husband died sixteen months after they returned from Vietnam. She had left journalism temporarily to care for her two small children. Reporter friends from her years in Vietnam and Cambodia came to her assistance and helped her get a temporary job as an editor on the foreign desk of the *Washington Post*, where she worked for nearly a year. From the foreign desk she moved first to the metropolitan desk as an editor, and then, having requested to return to reporting, she moved to

her current assignment on the financial desk.

Anne Morrissy Merick continued to cover politics and special events in Washington, D.C., for ABC when she returned from Vietnam. She also spent two years in Australia with *U.S. News & World Report* and an Australia television station. Six years ago she organized the television operation of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and for more than four years was the producer of its public affairs program. She started the Chamber's television network, the American Business Network, for which she now does a live, daily show, "Ask Washington," for the network.

Karen Peterson: After Vietnam, Peterson worked for Features and News, a Chicago based news service. When it went out of business in 1979, she did freelance work until she joined the staff of *USA Today*, where she writes mostly features and some news for the "Living" section.

Elizabeth Pond was *The Christian Science Monitor's* Tokyo bureau chief from 1971 to 1974 and then its Moscow correspondent from 1974 to 1976. From 1976 to 1977, she had a sabbatical at the University of Michigan, and since 1977 she has been the *Monitor's* European correspondent in Bonn, Germany. She has written a book about the Soviet Union, *From the Yuroslavsky Station*.

Marlene Sanders stayed at ABC until 1978 and has been a correspondent with CBS ever since. During her last two years at ABC, she was a vice president in charge of television documentaries.

Liz Trotta continued as a correspondent for NBC until 1979 when she left to take a job as correspondent for CBS. CBS fired Trotta in September 1985 as part of its major staff reorganization, dubbed the "Thursday Massacre" by the press. As of November 1985, Trotta was suing CBS for reinstatement.

Kelly Smith Tunney is the Assistant General Manager and Director of Corporate

Communications at AP corporate headquarters in New York City.

Tad Bartimus Wariner: Since Vietnam, she has been in Alaska for the AP as the company's first woman bureau chief, in London as a foreign correspondent, in Central and South America as a roving correspondent, and currently in Colorado and the Midwest as a roving correspondent.

Kate Webb: Her long years of reporting on the war in Vietnam and Cambodia eventually caught up with Webb, and she said she suffered an attack of nerves. After a period of rest and "post-Indochina blues," she returned to reporting in Southeast Asia. She quit UPI in 1977 and did freelance work for McGraw-Hill, the London *Economist*, *The Times* of London, Reuters, and regional publications in Indonesia. In 1985, she joined the Agence France-Presse bureau in Indonesia.

Tracy Wood went from Vietnam to Hong Kong and then quit UPI to work for the *Los Angeles Times*, where she still is a reporter. She thinks her Vietnam experience was worthwhile, although she does not think it helped her career other than to make her a better reporter. While she regrets having seen some of the things she saw, she never regrets having been to Vietnam and hopes one day to return. "It doesn't really matter politically who was right and who was wrong. One thing about a war is that the people who are right and wrong are not the people who are getting killed."

APPENDICES



APPENDIX A

ACCREDITED U.S. WOMEN CORRESPONDENTS FOR THE VIETNAM WAR PERIOD

Source: Accreditation files of Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. Accession numbers 334-74-593, Boxes 14-22, and 334-73- 3413, Boxes 1-16, 18-33. Department of the Army. Washington National Records Center. Suitland, Maryland. The accreditation files are not complete. Fire in 1965 destroyed the files, so unless a correspondent who was accredited up to that time applied for reaccreditation during a later year, her name will not appear. Box 17, covering letters E through J for 1969, was missing from the collection. In addition, some files for correspondents known to be accredited were missing.

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APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Why did you go to Vietnam? How did you feel about going?

Can you characterize the focus of your reporting? For example, was there some aspect of the war—fighting, soldiers, Vietnamese people, politics, other—that seemed to interest you more than others, that you reported on more than others? Why?

Did you feel you covered what needed covering and were able to do as much as you could to fulfill your goals as a correspondent? Would you do things the same way today?

What were the major difficulties you experienced while reporting in Vietnam?

Did you feel you had good access to sources and places? Who were your best sources? The least cooperative?

Did you feel that sources talked to you freely, felt comfortable talking to you?

Did military personnel ever object to your presence, especially in a fighting zone, because you were a woman? Did you accompany troops into battle? regularly? occasionally?

Did anyone—military, Vietnamese officials, employer, other—place restrictions on your movements because you were a woman? If so, how did you respond?

What were your working relations with other journalists, both women and men? Did you know other women reporters?

Were you satisfied that you were taken seriously and your work was judged on its merit?

Why did you leave Vietnam? Would you cover another war? How do you feel about your experiences as a correspondent in Vietnam?

Did your assignment there help or influence your later career in journalism? If so, will you explain how?

APPENDIX C

U.S. ACCREDITED WOMEN CORRESPONDENTS FOR THE WORLD WAR II PERIOD

Source: Col. Barney Oldfield, *Never a Shot in Anger* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1956).

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Bess, Dorothy; Saturday Evening Post
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Blakeslee, Mrs. Victor; Collier's
Bonney, Teresa; Duell, Sloan & Pearce
Bourke-White, Margaret; Time
Bracker, Virginia L.; New York Times
Bridgman, Julie; Liberty
Brooks, Olive; INS
Browne, Barbara; Christian Science Monitor
Camp, Helen; AP
Carpenter, Iris N.; London Daily News
Carson, Lee; INS
Chapelle, Georgette M.; Look
Chappelle, Minafox; American Home
Clark, Katherine L.; WCAU
Cochrane, Jacqueline; Liberty
Cookman, Mary C.; Ladies Home Journal
Cowan, Ruth B.; AP
Cowles, Virginia; NANA
Coyne, Catherine; Boston Herald
Craig, Elizabeth M.; Gannett Publishing Company
Cravens, Kathryn; MBS
Danenber, Elsie, NANA
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Diggins, Mary M.; INS
Disney, Dorothy; Saturday Evening Post
Drake, Catherine; Reader's Digest
Durdin, Margaret L.; Time
Ebener, Charlotte; INS
Evans, Druscilla; New York Post
Ferber, Edna; NANA
Finan, Elizabeth S.; Harper's Bazaar
Finch, Barbara M.; Reuters
Flanner, Janet; New Yorker
Fleeson, Doris; Woman's Home Companion
Frederick, Pauline; Western Newspaper Union
Freeman, Beatrice; Magazine Digest
Frissell, Toni; free lance
Gaskell, Betty; Liberty
Gingrich, Helen; Esquire-Coronet
Glosker, Anita; NANA
Gould, Beatrice B.; Ladies Home Journal
Green, Janet; Trans-Radio Press
Hager, Alice R.; Skyways
Hardesty, Harriet C.; UP
Hartzog, Hazel; UP
Hearst, Doris L.; New York Journal American
Hemingway, Martha Gellhorn; Collier's
Higgins, Marguerite; New York Herald Tribune
Hill, Carol; Collier's-Redbook
Hornaday, Mary; Christian Science Monitor
Howard, Rosemary; Newsweek
Hume, Rita; INS
Jacobs, Ann L.; Young America
Jacoby, Annalee; Time
John, Elizabeth B.; Cleveland News
Johnson, Carol L.; NEA
Kempner, Mary Jane; Conde-Nast
Kirkpatrick, Helen; Chicago Daily News
Knickerbocker, Agnes G.; Nashville Tennessean
Kopf, Dorothy Thompson; Bell Syndicate
Kuhn, Irene; NBC
Lamport, Sara M.; New York Post
Landau, Ida B.; Overseas News Agency
Lavelle, Elise; National Catholic News Service

Lecoutre, Martha; Tri-Color
Lewis, Flora; AP
Lloyd, Rhona; Philadelphia Evening News
Lochridge, Mary P.; Woman's Home Companion
Lowry, Cynthia; AP
Lucas, Lenore V.; Overseas News Agency
MacCormac, Isabel; New York Times
Mann, Erika; Liberty
Martin, Cecilia (Jackie); Ladies Home Journal
McCall, Frances; NBC
McCormick, Anne O'Hare; New York Times
McGee, Mary V. P.; Toronto Globe & Mail
McIlhenny, Eleanor; Pan-American
McLaughlin, Kathleen; New York Times
Melendez, Dorothy; Star Herald
Meyer, Jane; Chicago Herald American
Miller, Mrs. Lee; Conde-Nast
Miller, Lois Mattox; Reader's Digest
Moats, Alice B.; Collier's
Muller, Mary T.; Reader's Digest
Murdock, Barbara; Philadelphia Bulletin
Mydans, Shelley; Life
O'Brien, Mary H.; Fawcett Publications
Offner, Phillippa G.; Life
Packard, Eleanor C.; UP
Palmer, Gretta Clark; Liberty
Palmer, Mary B.; Newsweek
Parker, Peggy; American Weekly
Perkins, Alice K.; Fairchild Publications
Phillips, Martha E.; Afro-American Newspapers
Polk, Catherine; Los Angeles News
Poor, Peggy; New York Post
Prewett, Virginia; Chicago Sun
Pringle, Helena; Woman's Home Companion
Putnam, Eva B.' Trans-Radio Press
Rappoport, Joan (Ann Hunter); WAIT
Reston, Sarah J.; New York Times
Reusswig, Martha S.; Collier's
Robb, Inez, INS
Robertson, Ruth A.; Press Syndicate
Robinson, Iona; Saturday Review of Literature
Rocho, Ethel P.; Collier's
Ross, Nancy W.; free lance
Severyns, Marjorie; Time
Shultz, Sigrid; Chicago Tribune

Skariatina, Irina; New York Times
Stirling, Monica; Atlantic Monthly
Stringer, Elizabeth; UP
Strumm, Loraine; London Daily Mirror
Thayer, May V.; INS
Tighe, Dixie; INS
Tomara, Sonia; New York Herald Tribune
Vanderlip, Candace, INS
Vandivert, Margrethe; Time
Whitney, Betsey C.; Washington Times-Herald
Wiley, Connie; AP
Winkler, Betty; Press Alliance
Winn, Mary Day; This Week
Zaimes, Margaret K.; American Red Cross

APPENDIX D

GROUND RULES REGARDING PRESS COVERAGE OF COMBAT IN VIETNAM

Copies of the "Ground Rules" are apparently hard to acquire. The following MACV memorandum, a copy of which was obtained from the Department of the Army Center of Military History, Washington D.C., interprets and summarizes the fifteen categories of information that correspondents could not report.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESS

27 MARCH 1968

Subj: Interpretation of Ground Rules

1. A MACOI memorandum to the press of 29 January 1968 reminded all members of the ground rules involving ground combat to which they agreed when they were accredited by MACV. A follow-up memorandum of 26 February further explained one of the rules.

2. Members of the press have been most cooperative in attempting to stop the flow of important intelligence information to the enemy. However, based both on logic and the many queries received from newsmen, it is obvious that no set of ground rules can cover every tactical situation encountered by newsmen in the field. Although relatively few in number, "gray areas" cannot be eliminated.

3. To assist newsmen in correctly interpreting any ground rule "gray areas," MACV will provide 24-hour service to anyone who obtains information which he feels is subject to the interpretation under the ground rules. Any newsman in the

I CTZ who is concerned about the intelligence value of material he wishes to use in a story should contact the ISO at the MACV Press Center, Da Nang: phone Da Nang 6259. Elsewhere in Vietnam, queries should be addressed to MACV extensions 3163 or 3989 where someone able to make a decision will always be on duty.

4. We hope that this service will help ensure a maximum flow of information while insuring the necessary protection to our troops.

5. For your information, a copy of the key ground rules is attached.

Excerpts from "Rules Governing Public Release of Military Information"
(31 Oct 66 & 29 March 1968)

The following information is only releasable by MACV.

1. Future plans, operations, or strikes.
2. Information on or confirmation of Rules of Engagement.
3. Amounts of ordnance and fuel moved by support units or on hand in combat units (ordnance includes weapons or weapons systems).
4. During an operation, unit designations and troop movements, tactical deployments, name of operations and size of friendly forces involved.
5. Intelligence unit activities, methods of operation, or specific locations.
6. Exact number and type of casualties or damage suffered by friendly units.
7. Number of sorties and the amount of ordnance expended on strikes outside of RVN.
8. Information on aircraft taking off for strikes, enroute to, or returning from target area. Information on strikes while they are in progress.
9. Identity of units and locations of air bases from which aircraft are launched on combat operations.
10. Number of aircraft damaged or any other indicator of effectiveness or ineffectiveness of ground antiaircraft defenses.

11. Tactical specifics, such as altitudes, course, speeds, or angle of attack.
(General descriptions such as "low and fast" may be used.)

12. Information on or confirmation of planned strikes which do not take place for any reason, including bad weather.

13. Specific identification of enemy weapons system utilized to down friendly aircraft.

14. Details concerning downed aircraft while SAR operations are in progress.

15. Aerial photos of fixed installations.

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