
James Fallows....

The Washington, D.C. editor of THE ATLANTIC...used
to be called THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY....

read accounts...

TWO BIG QUESTIONS: (1) When so many of the bright young college
men opposed the war, why were so few
willing to resist the draft, rather
than simply evade the draft?

(2) Why did all of the well-educated humane
young men take advantage of this most
brutal form of class discrimination.....

FALLOWS asks, "why did we let the boys from
Chelsea be sent off to die...?"

Fallows says that "the hordes of people" he met
at anti-war rallies had gotten out of the
war in just this way....

Fallows' insight: this is why the war lasted so long....
why? because the majority class in the
nation was spared the real cost of the
war....

why did it last so long?

=- because the majority class were spared the
suffering that their inferiors were undergoing...
BECAUSE OF THIS, he says, when "our parents opposed the
war," they did it in the bloodless, theoretical fashion...
as they might be opposed to racism in South Africa...

He writes, "As long as the little gold stars kept going
to mothers in West Virginia, or in Appalachia, or in
the rural South...the mothers in Beverly Hills and
Chevy Chase and Palo Alto and Marin County were
not on their telephones to their congressmen,
SCREAMING "YOU KILLED MY BOY....."

Fallows concludes: If the men of Harvard had wanted to do the most
they could to help shorten the war, they should have been
drafted or imprisoned en masse...."

And the way the rules was justified throughout the nation, namely,
that it would be a mistake to take well educated people
and sacrifice their lives in battle when there were
less well educated people who could be called up....

We compare Vietnam with World War II, which we call a JUST WAR....a RIGHTEOUS CAUSE.... because the enemy in World War II was clearly diabolical... Nazism... Hitler..... Anti-Semitism.....

Vietnam didn't work as a war as well because the cause was not righteous so clearly...nor was the enemy so obviously diabolical....

So... Vietnam is a War that gets described in other ways....

It's about adventures that didn't materialize.... about pilgrimages that didn't live up to expectations.... about journeys into the unknown for which there seemed to be no resolution....

The religious literature of the ages is full of examples of pilgrimages who went off in search of enlightenment and wisdom.... who, after finding it, return home to share it with those who will receive it....

But, in the Vietnam instance, there was no return.... there was no joyful homecoming....

/slight pause/

One of the great problems is that this nation has always relied upon military liturgies for its collective celebrations.

Parades.....banners....flags....weapons....fighter planes flying in formation overhead....

And yet, because all of this seemed to go awry in Vietnam... it is difficult to employ the same symbols.....

After Vietnam, the American flag doesn't mean quite what it meant before.....

JOHN WHEELER writes about it this way in his book, TOUCHED WITH FIRE.

"This is what happened. We kept our promise, as we had made it. The orders said Vietnam. We were trained. We went. No fighting force ever sent to war was better equipped or trained. But America makes a promise too. She promises to keep us in her heart, whether we live or die. She reneged on that promise. We soldiers were prepared for the war zone. We WERE NOT PREPARED FOR OUR RETURN TO AMERICA. We were locked out of America's heart. It was a tragic abandonment. Whether we came back alive or dead, there was a grave waiting for our heartfelt inner self, in the attitudes of Americans we grew up with...."

Wheeler describes this as being "an immigrant from the combat zone."

But, Wheeler adds, the "long, prolonged period of isolation brought the immigrants, the veterans, together...giving them a strong sense of unity...."

Big question: Did we lose the Vietnam War.....?

(answer it in a variety of ways....)

Maybe America lost.....

And maybe the America that lost will never be again...!

But I'm not sure that humanity lost.....

I'm not sure that death won over life.....

I'm not sure that the forces of destruction beat the forces of creativity....life...and inventiveness.... and compassion.....

THE DEEPER RESOURCES OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT.....

I think I'd be willing affirm that Vietnam, as paradoxical as this might seem, signifies a TRIUMPH of the HUMAN SPIRIT...

I do not believe we will ever have another Vietnam.....

I think we have to be wary....

we need to be watchful.....

But we don't need to have another Vietnam.....

On November 11, 1984, dedication.....

And Ronald Reagan, the President of the United States.... said:

called the Memorial a "mirror of reflections..." saying that "when you find the name you are searching for you find it in your own reflection....as you touch it... And when you find the name you are standing in the reflection of the Washington Monument as well as the chair in which the great Abraham Lincoln sits...."

The President went on to say that those who fought in Vietnam "are a part of us and a part of our history... They reflected the best in us....

No numbers of wreathes... no amount of memorializing will ever do them justice...

But it is good that we honor them and their sacrifice... and it is good that we do so in the reflective glow of the enduring symbols of our Republic....."

Then the President said, "It's been said that these memorials reflect a hunger for healing....

Well, I don't know if perfect healing ever occurs....

But I do know that sometimes when a bone is broken.... if it is knit together well, it will in the end be stronger than if it had not been broken....."

Fallows, page 4....

approximately 26,800,000 (27 million) men who belong to the Vietnam Generation....

11,000,000 served in the military - // 2,150,000 served in Vietnam
16,000,000 (16 million) never served....

15,500,000 15.5 million were deferred, exempted or disqualified....

Notre Dame study says that of this

~~Lawrence A. Baskin writes:~~

58,000 died in the war

8,000 died from non hostile causes

Why did it take so long for a homecoming to occur....

Conservatives didn't believe in it.....

Liberals..... conflicted over the war....

Veterans had to do it for themselves....

Roll Over

ment with his

1968

→ extent ?

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P. 2

THE ASSUMPTION: it would be wrong to waste well educated lives....
like, you know, if you've worked this hard for a degree
in law, or academics, or in the field of medicine, where
you can benefit humankind so much, wouldn't it
be a great mistake to allow that life to be
snuffed out, when there are others, not so
well educated, who can do it....

Some numbers:

Selective Service Personnel....
there were 16,632 board members in 1967...
only 1.3% were black...
no black members in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana
Mississippi, Indiana or New Jersey....

an average rifle company: 50% Negroes, Southwestern Mexicans,
Puerto Ricans, Guamanians, Nisei, Native Americans...
but hardly a cross-section of American youth....

By 1965, blacks accounted for 24 % of all Army combat deaths...

By 1968, 1 out of 3 casualties in Vietnam was a Black....

Conclusion: it was a ghetto war.... the bulk of the fighting
was done...

One writer: Going to Vietnam was the penalty for those who
lacked the wherewithal to avoid it....

ANOTHER COMMENT: Avoidance was available to everyone...
Ghetto youth sidestepped the draft by
failing to register...

High school dropouts married and had children.
BUT BY FAR THE GREATEST NUMBER OF ESCAPE ROUTES WERE
OPEN TO YOUTHS FROM PRIVILEGED BACKGROUNDS....
And they got status deferments, physical exemptions, or
safe enlistments....

Leslie Fiedler, then teaching on the campus of the University of
Montana, said;"he had never known a single family that had lost
a son in Vietnam....and he said that this was true of most of
his colleagues....

Susan Jacoby: the singlemost important element prolonging the war:
the fact that it was fought by a minority, while the majority
was able to avoid the draft..... Blacks, Hispanics, and the
rural poor were disproportionately represented....