



Nurses in Vietnam: The Forgotten Veterans

Dan Freedman

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Among the more than 58,000 names carved on the wall of the Vietnam Veterans memorial in Washington, D.C. are those of eight women, interspersed among their male compatriots'. Despite an upsurge of public interest in Vietnam and the veterans who fought there, relatively little has been written about the 8,000-10,000 women who served as well--about why they went, what they did there, and how the war affected them. Women worked in all branches of the military as intelligence analysts, air traffic controllers and supply clerks. But the vast majority were nurses--for the most part working in Army field hospitals. Nurses in Vietnam is the compelling story of nine Army nurses who served in Vietnam between 1965-1971. Their diverse and individual accounts vividly express the frustrations and challenges of their experiences. Not all the women served in exactly the same setting. Some were in frontline hospitals dealing with large influxes of wounded patients. Others served in rear convalescent or specialty care facilities, looking after psychiatric and drug cases, and patients suffering from tropical diseases. Nurses arrived in Vietnam confident their abilities could save lives. What they found instead was a war where new sophisticated weaponry created horrors never before imagined. For some, the war was a positive experience--the ultimate test of their nursing skills. For others, it was a nightmare that haunts them to this day. Their moving and inspirational stories in Nurses in Vietnam will not easily be forgotten.



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