



Last Full Measure of Devotion: A Tribute to America's Heroes of the Vietnam War

Donald Farinacci

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There were no marching bands welcoming home returning troops from Vietnam, no ticker-tape parades for its heroes and no celebrations in Time Square. Instead, returning Vets were confronted with a range of reactions, not the least of which were indifference, silent disapproval, criticism, hostility and even contempt, in some quarters, for their lack of cleverness in not avoiding service in a war zone. Most returning Vietnam warriors were bewildered by the reactions of their fellow countrymen; but, then how could they possibly comprehend the psychological phenomenon which was only beginning to take hold and would later be named the "Vietnam Syndrome", a phenomenon which, at its extremes, was manifested in a revulsion to all things military? Even those who were proud of the returning servicemen and women were hardly effusive in their praise and greeted them with only muted enthusiasm. Most of these young veterans of an undeclared war had been shaped and molded in their formative years by the patriotic fervor which seized America during World War II and continued for perhaps a decade and a half after V. J. day. But, American society had profoundly changed in the 1960s with a shift in emphasis away from national goals to more individual ones such as civil rights, sexual liberation, pacifism, academic freedom, consciousness raising and a reaction against the excesses of the "military industrial complex", ironically named by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The cataclysmic cultural revolution of the 1960s collided violently with the more nationalistic goals of containing the spread of international communism and curbing the expansionist policies of the Soviet Union and Red China. Those who actually fought the Vietnam War became collateral victims of a wrenching cultural war, not of their own making; for the core values of these young men and women had, for the most part, not changed. Just as the World War II generation was imbued with traditional values of patriotism, loyalty

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