



**Once Upon a Distant War: David Halberstam, Neil Sheehan, Peter Arnett--Young War Correspondents and Their Early Vietnam Battles**

*William Prochnau , Edward Kastenmeier (Editor)*

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Once Upon a Distant War tells the stories of such young Vietnam war correspondents as Neil Sheehan, Peter Arnett, and David Halberstam, providing a riveting chronicle of high adventure and brutal slapstick, gallantry and cynicism, as well as a vital addition to the history they shaped. "Prochnau . . . tells a Vietnam story we haven't heard before. . . . Complex, witty, and humane."--Tobias Wolff. of photos.

## **Once Upon a Distant War: David Halberstam, Neil Sheehan, Peter Arnett--Young War Correspondents and Their Early Vietnam Battles Details**

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# **From Reader Review Once Upon a Distant War: David Halberstam, Neil Sheehan, Peter Arnett--Young War Correspondents and Their Early Vietnam Battles for online ebook**

## **Toby Decker says**

Mr. Halberstam's books are thoroughly researched, and his penetrating insights are invaluable to every human regardless of one's age, and politics.

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## **Peggy says**

I would have given this five stars but feared my enthusiasm as a former reporter given the chance to wallow in that old machismo world with its in jokes, apocryphal tales, stupid daring and balls out reporting and writing was leading me to give the book more credit than it deserved. It's often said reporters of my generation (the one following Halberstam, Sheehan, Arnett et al) were inspired by Watergate. Well, yes, but also by the men whose Vietnam stories we read in the paper and whom we watched on TV and who were held up as exemplary in our j-school classes. The righteousness of journalism in the 60s and 70s was at the heart of that golden time. Glad I was there, in my very tiny way.

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## **Patrick says**

If you liked David Halberstam's *The Best and The Brightest* or if you want to know more about what happened to the US in Viet Nam, this is worth reading. It is the history of the American press correspondents who reported from south Viet Nam in 1961. In addition to Halberstam, you meet a young Peter Arnett, Neil Sheehan, and many others. Bottom line: they all supported the idea of what the Americans were trying to accomplish in Veit Nam, but they accurately foresaw that the military, embassy, and CIA leaders were not facing up to the reality or the nature of this war, and that the government in Washington didn;t want to really know what was going on. They were given a very hard time, even by their own newspapers, for reporting what they saw.

An interesting book, well written. This would have a really fun book to write, if the ultimate outcome of what happened in the end weren't so tragic.

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## **Don Kasprzak says**

Wow. The young war correspondents fought their newspaper editors and owners just as much as they fought the South Vietnamese military and political leaders between 1961-63. Their stories tell a comical yet tragic story with the backdrop to a growing war. Reveals how out of sync the entire war effort was being sold to the American people. The book culminates in their news reporting between the buddhist immolations and the assassinations of Diem and Nhu.

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## **Iano says**

One of the few books I've ever abandoned due to boredom. I still gave it two stars as it starts well and is very interesting for about the first half. Paints exoticism of VietNam vividly in early chapters during build up to war. Folly of US policies is evident and the fact that they are repeating many of the same mistakes over and over in Iraq and elsewhere is depressing. Prochnau descends into hero worship of the journalists as the book progresses and it starts to read like a fanzine. You've got to acknowledge that they worked harder than the "embedded" dispersers of propaganda that masquerade as war reporters today but the gushing praise from Prochnau is over the top.

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## **Timothy Hallinan says**

Why hasn't anyone filmed this book?

A crew of young correspondents is sent to cover an obscure war in an obscure country and then feel the earth shift as their own country becomes increasingly engaged in the war -- and find themselves uncomfortably in the middle of one of the greatest stories of the 20th century when it becomes inescapable that the government is steadily, implacably, lying to the American people.

It's Vietnam, of course, and the reporters grew up to be David Halberstam, Neil Sheehan, Peter Arnett, and some others of equal stature if not equal fame. This being a war, some of them didn't grow up at all -- for example, Sean Flynn, the suicidally courageous son of Errol Flynn, who was everything his father pretended to be -- but also had a death wish that was granted as he rode out of this world on a motorbike, heading for a battle he'd been warned about.

As the reporters filed their stories, the White House called their papers to complain. The Armed Forces threatened them. More experienced correspondents, including Marguerite Higgins and Joseph Alsop, flew in, took the Army tour, and wrote stories attacking the correspondents. The Diem government shadowed them and might have put contracts out on them.

But they kept writing, and they were right. It was a journalistic triumph on the level of Watergate, and it's difficult in reading the book not to feel that today it wouldn't have happened - that today these reporters would have been "embedded," managed, censored, and not given the support of their journalistic and corporate bosses.

This is a great book that reads like a thriller.

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## **Bill says**

I pretty much read this in one sitting - which took the better part of a weekend. Good history/journalism grips me and it doesn't matter a whit that I know the outcome at the outset. Lots of details on characters I had little familiarity with. Of particular note was JFK's Nixonian response to the work of a small group of intrepid youngsters working under very difficult conditions. I didn't think the lies began until LBJ. Vietnam was a

war doomed from the start and it is remarkable how similar the Bush wars were to this. Prochnau doesn't present anyone as wholly blameless, particularly Halberstam, and it is startling to be reminded that most of the press working in Vietnam at that time did not question the war itself, only the way it was being waged.

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### **Richard Thompson says**

I was a teenager in Canada when the war in Vietnam was first in the news and had a very vague idea what was going on beyond a undefined idea that the war was BAD. This book tells the story of the early years of the "war" through the stories of a group of young journalists.

I read David Halberstam's THE COLDEST WINTER (his history of the Korean War) but I had no idea of his role in this story (and his place in the history of American journalism).

I am pretty sure I sought out his book after reading about it in a laudatory mention in one of Mary McGrory's columns. I say "pretty sure" because McGrory was a big JFK fan and picture that we get in this book the superstar president and his advisors is far from flattering.

A very big cast of characters in a very complicated story, but well told and compelling.

An inter-library loan.

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### **Eric\_W says**

Review posted at <http://www.librarything.com/work/4859...> and <http://rarebits.blogspot.com/2013/10/...>

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### **Jim says**

This is an interesting look at the pre-Tonkin Resolution Vietnam War between 1961 and 1963. The lies told to the American people by President Kennedy about Vietnam are displayed openly and without prejudice. The book is ponderous in some spots--do we really need to read a multi-page assessment of journalist Marguerite Higgins?-which detracts from it. Overall, I'm glad I read it.

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### **Theasa Tuohy says**

Fabulous. My favorite book about the Vietnam War. And I've read plenty in researching my own book, "The Five O'Clock Follies."

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### **Randy Johnson says**

An absolute fave of nonfiction, it's essentially Neil Sheehan's *Bright Shining Lie* reduced to a manageable size and accelerated to a much brisker pace.

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### **Andrew Pinney says**

a really fascinating topic. Viewing the years leading up to the war through the lens of the young war reporters was an interesting & fascinating study. It did feel unfinished.. but it was not intended to be about reporters throughout the entire war.

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### **Wendy says**

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### **Susan Dixon says**

This book had me hooked from the beginning and kept me hooked to the end. I had heard of all these names, of course, but had no idea what they had gone through during those two years. I had bought the accepted wisdom that the government and the military had had a policy of free access during the Vietnam War that was changed later because of all the trouble it caused. I had no conception of how deeply the lying permeated the policy from the beginning. Prochnau's writing style, although certainly idiosyncratic, enhanced his material, keeping pace with the rapid and tumultuous unfolding of events. Unlike other reviewers I did not find that Prochnau hero-worshipped his subjects. Quite the opposite. He showed the very human effects of constant work and anxiety, as well as the debilitating cost of calling out the lies and fear of an entire power structure. I found it especially interesting that none of the reporters questioned the war, only how it was being waged. Prochnau's extensive research tells a story from before the hawk/dove divisions for which that conflict came to be known. It isn't an easy story to read, but Prochnau makes it compelling.

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