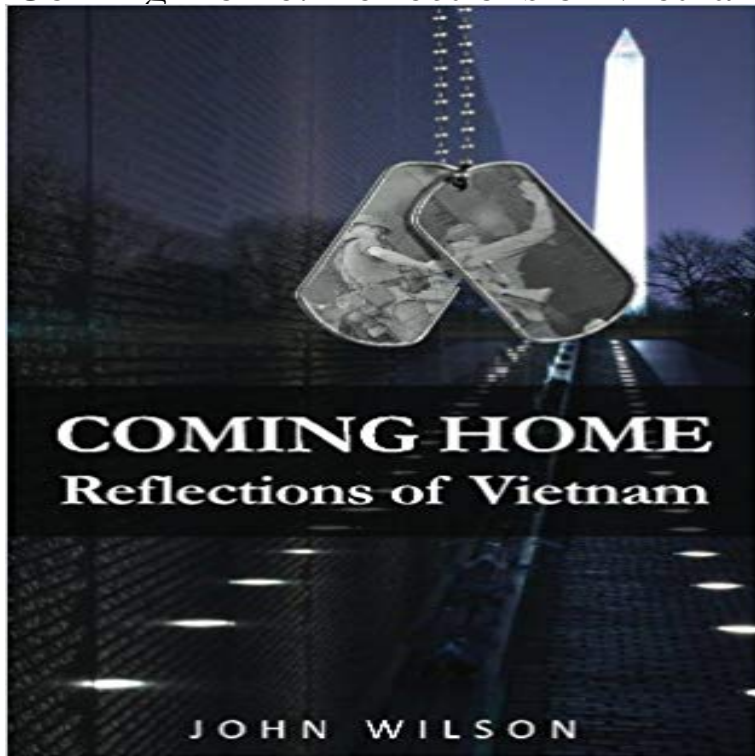


## Coming Home: Reflections of Vietnam



In 1950, America pledged 15 million dollars in aid and the assignment of military advisors to French forces fighting in Vietnam. By the mid 50s, Americans began dying in a war that would go on to claim more than 58,000 of our bravest. Still, while Saigon had once been romantically dubbed Paris of the Orient, very few Americans had yet heard of Vietnam. Their first introduction came in the early 60s, as they watched Buddhist Monks on the 6 o'clock news, publicly burning themselves to death in protest of their presidents policies; and as Vietnams First Lady -- Madame Nhu -- made headlines as an outspoken critic of the United States. Nhu was not the wife of President Ngo Dinh Diem, but of his brother. Following the assassination of both her husband and Vietnams first president, Madame Nhu faded from view. Vietnam did not. 1964 brought the Tonkin Gulf incident, in which an American ship -- the U.S.S. Maddox -- was reportedly attacked by two North Vietnamese PT boats. For the next nine years, the Vietnam War and images of young soldiers dying, dominated the news. On April 30, 1975, two years after the official withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Vietnam, Saigon fell to the Communist North. The last official American casualties were still to come. Those who survived, returned home to the sight of protests, flag burnings, chants of Hell no, we wont go! and unfeeling questions of So, hows it feel to be a baby killer? Coming Home is written in honor of all those who served and whose lives were affected by the Vietnam War as well as those who lead the fight to create the Vietnam Memorial and to ensure that their sacrifices will never be forgotten. Reflections of Vietnam - a story told in verse by a then young Navy Journalist - reminds us all of the unforgettable, expansive, granite monument saluting each

of more than 58,000 brave Americans who died in a far off place - 58,000 of our finest, who died honoring Americas commitment to protect and preserve Gods gift of freedom. Coming Home: Reflections of Vietnam is an American story. If youre a veteran (of any war) - if you feel chill bumps when you hear the National Anthem, or Proud to be an American - if you cannot walk past the Vietnam War Memorial without shedding a tear, this is your story.

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