

#25 January 2018 Cameraderie

The Vietnam/American War

I have covered only a little news photography so far in this series (Sam Nzima, #8, Summer, 2013). And no war photography at all. Painful as the images are, war photography is an important record of history, and sometimes a mover of history. Many of you have probably recently watched Ken Burns' and Lynn Novick's "The Vietnam War" series on public television. Here are some of the iconic images of the Vietnam/American war.

The Tet Offensive Execution

You can read the full story of this Pulitzer Prize-winning image of an execution in the field, taken in Saigon by Associated Press photographer Eddie Adams on Feb. 1, 1968, here: <http://100photos.time.com/photos/eddie-adams-saigon-execution>

The shooter, Brigadier General Nguyen Ngoc Loan, died a natural death here in the United States. The New York Times obituary (<http://www.nytimes.com/1998/07/16/world/nguyen-ngoc-loan-67-dies-executed-viet-cong-prisoner.html>) had this to say, in part:

Nguyen Ngoc Loan, the quick-tempered South Vietnamese national police commander whose impromptu execution of a Viet Cong prisoner on a Saigon street in the Tet offensive of 1968 helped galvanize American public opinion against the war, died on Tuesday at his home in Burke, Va. He was 67 and had operated a pizza parlor in nearby Dale City.

I can recall reading in the Washington Post about him being "exposed" as leading a quite life in the suburbs of Washington, years after the end of the Vietnam/American war.



Misdirected Napalm Attack

After brief and intense internal controversy, the Associated Press decided to distribute this photograph. Immediately after taking the image, the photographer, Nick Ut, took the burned girl, Phan Thi Kim Phuc, to a hospital. She recovered from burns on 30% of her body. She now lives in Toronto, and she and Ut have maintained a life-long friendship. Ut won a Pulitzer Prize, and several other awards, for this image. Read the story of this image and Nick Ut here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nick_Ut. I have shown two versions of Ut's image available on the internet. The first is evidently the full frame he shot, and the second is an editorial cropping, which instructs us all how to focus on the main subject of a scene.

"The Terror of War" by Nick Ut / The Associated Press



Buddhist Monk Self-Immolation

In June of 1963, Vietnamese Mahayana Buddhist monk Thich Quang Duc burned himself to death at a busy intersection in Saigon, in protest of the persecution of Buddhists by the South Vietnamese government led by Ngo Dinh Diem. Malcolm Browne won a Pulitzer Prize for his photograph of the monk's death. A few years ago, as tourists in Vietnam, my wife and I visited the home monastery of Thich Quang Duc, and viewed a museum exhibit of this event. The car in the background of the photograph was preserved as part of the exhibit. Many other protest self-immolations by Buddhist monks took place in the following years.



Kent State

Here at home, the Ohio National Guard opened fire on a student protest at Kent State University on May 4, 1970. Four persons were killed and nine wounded. This image was taken by John Filo, and won a Pulitzer Prize. I have personally met two people who were nearby at Kent State that day.



Welcome Home

While we cannot forget the horrible images of injury and death from war, and recognizing that happy images of homecoming do not compensate, here are a couple of photographically excellent images of homecomings. I searched very hard to find an image of a Vietnamese soldier coming home to their family—but could find none.

Welcome Home—Getty Images



Welcome Home—LA Times

Used in Ken Burns' and Lynn Novick's recent PBS film series on "The Vietnam War"

