

# Book critique a piece of my heart

War, Cold War



The book "A Piece of my Heart" by Keith Walker is a compilation of twenty-six stories told by the Women who served in Vietnam. Each woman has their own story and memories that they tell to give the reader an appreciation for all of the women that served alongside the men. These women all show us the reasoning behind why they served, their experiences in Vietnam, and their life following the war. Whether these women were nurses, activity planners, or "doughnut dollies" (women who were reminders of what was waiting back home, meant to motivate the troops) they all experienced surprisingly similar experiences. These women all had their share of danger, sexual harassment, and loneliness while in Vietnam. They even tell the story of when they come home. About how they had extremely hard times readjusting to their old lives. These are the stories told by these twenty-six women. "A piece of my Heart" is centered around the Vietnam War, a war where the United States was fighting with South Vietnam against North Vietnam and its communistic allies. The United States became involved because they feared a communistic takeover of South Vietnam. To have this happen would go against their larger strategy of containment (a United States policy to try and prevent the spread of communism abroad). This war was also a part of the Cold War and was hugely meant to stop communism spread that would strengthen the Soviet Union. Geographically these stories take place on the Vietnamese warfront and mostly United States bases on the warfront. In Vietnam there is a very humid climate and there is dense forest and many kinds of plants and animals that many Americans are not used to. The Historical time period that "A Piece of my Heart" deals with is the time period of the Vietnam War. It goes from when ground forces started

entering Vietnam in 1965 to when America withdrew with the Paris Peace Accords of 1973. The Author of " A Piece of my Heart" is Keith Walker, a College Professor who was teaching near San Francisco at the time of the Vietnam War. He became interested in the subject of Vietnam War veterans because he was constantly aware that his students were concerned over being drafted. He had also been drafted himself and sent to Korea earlier in his life. Walker chose to write about women in Vietnam in particular because of Rose Sandecki, the director of the Veterans outreach center in Concord. Rose told Walker about all of the women that had served in Vietnam as well as the men. When confronted by this fact Walker was dumbfounded that so many (he was told about 15000) women served and not many people even knew. So by in learning this he centered his research around the woman rather than Veterans in general. This book has no viewpoints or biases shown by Walker. This is because it is the first hand accounts and stories of the women. There is a lot of new information presented in this book. The most information is about women's role in the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War occurred in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia from November 1st , 1955 to the fall of Saigon on April 30th , 1975. The two opposing sides were North Vietnam (Communism) and South Vietnam. The United States backed South Vietnam in an attempt to stop the spread of communism. The roles of women in the war varied. They worked mainly as nurses but were also known to be air traffic directors, clerks, and physicians. Some were even known to be in the armed forces. What is interesting to learn about in this book is the way that these women arrive in Vietnam. They are recruited and when they go there, there is no set way to get where they are going. In one

instance within the book the escorts in which the women was supposed to be picked up by did not arrive. Luckily two men knew of her predicament and brought her to an ambassador's hotel. What is also frightful to learn is that some men were afraid to leave Vietnam. Not afraid to go home exactly but the action of leaving, for they often hear about planes being blown up while trying to take off to go home. Most of all this book teaches the huge effects placed on these women by these experiences. No one has gone untouched by the events that happened in Vietnam. Many of these women experienced very confusing thoughts, some of suicide, depression, and in some cases post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSS). By reading this book it can teach many new interesting things. What can be learned in terms of United States history and culture by reading this book is that the country as a whole is starting to come together. It shows that the country is starting to recognize women as an important part of the country and seeing that the do make a huge difference. It can also show how far the United States still has to go for women to reach equality, for it is not until recently that it is known that these women did serve. This book was written after the war. It was published February 4th 1997. This is only twenty four years after the withdrawal of the U. S. from Vietnam.