



Looking Both Ways: Two Men Face War

Wil I. Jackson

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The reader is invited to enter the lives of two young men with completely opposite views of the Vietnam War. One was a helicopter pilot, flying gunship in Hueys. The other enlisted in the Navy to keep from being drafted by the U. S. Army. From start to finish, the combined stories make a unique contribution to the field of literature. Slightly fictionalized to provide a coherent narrative and to protect their identities and the identities of a number of the supporting characters, the story line is amazing in revealing details that are true, almost beyond belief. Interestingly, both men chose to be called Jim - not Jimmy, Junior or Jimbo but Jim, with great determination! They met at historic Hay Street United Methodist Church in downtown Fayetteville. They both matriculated as students at Methodist College, now University, yet they never passed each other in the halls of that institution of higher learning. They both thought of adopting the children of their previously married wives, being genuine in their parental love for these three young stepsons. The earlier marriage of one of the spouses raised a lot of questions about her past. Both wives played significant roles in the telling of their husbands' stories. Furthermore, both of their fathers were WWII veterans, one a highly decorated paratrooper in the Battle of the Bulge. The other father was on the island of Okinawa where he was a part of our Army's invasion into Japanese territory. He became a part of the "cleanup" operations after the A-bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Their lives took many twists and turns during those turbulent years. And if you read their backstories, you will be eager to continue with the in-between stuff of greatest importance. The by and by years, or the concluding years, find them living, peacefully, on the banks of the Atlantic Ocean or rivers that flow into the ocean's depths - or somewhere close by until they can get closer (second homes). While the writing is principally memoirs, it is also a sociological study of a significantly changing time, the 1960's and early 1970's. One assessor of this project says the book belongs on the shelves of university and public libraries. Unlike most books on this era, it is not written strictly from a hawk's or a dove's viewpoint. The reader is encouraged to seek middle ground as he leans into the interior of these two young men's hearts and minds. The Vietnam era found us badly divided as a nation, either supporting or not supporting the war. Is that where the deep division that divides us today originated? I, as the author, of these memoirs invite my readers to learn to be more kindly, instead of rigidly opinionated, as we look at the other person's point of view, politically, religiously or otherwise. Thank you for your interest in this project. --Wil I. Jackson

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