

[REDACTED]
Adrian, MI 49221
Jan. 3, 1997

Bryan Lamb
C-Span
Suite 412, 400 N. Capitol St.NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

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I am sending you a copy of a letter I wrote to my nephew who was in Vietnam in 1965. I am also sending him a copy of Hendrickson's "The Living and the Dead" which I hope he will be interested enough to read. I didn't have to buy "In Retrospect" since it was in our local library so I guess he'll have to go to his library if he's interested.

When you were devoting the day to Bocknotes yesterday, I tried to get through but was unsuccessful. I guess that e-mail is more practical but I'm computer illiterate. Anyway, you can send this whole thing to McNamara if you want to. Sorry I can't talk to you about it in person.

Cordially,

[REDACTED]

0. BK

Jan. 3, 1997 Fri.

Dear [REDACTED]

I don't know whether you listen to Booknotes on C-Span or not, but I listen at 8 o'clock and almost never miss. I think that Bryan Lamb is a really good interviewer. Last month he talked to Paul Hendrickson, the author of "The Living and the Dead" which I am sending you on the off-chance that you might be interested. I even went to the bookstore and bought the book since it wasn't in our local libraries. I don't want it back so you don't need to rush to read it or to return it. The author bases his book on five individuals who were involved. He makes the point that Bob MacNamara realized as early as Jan. 1965 that the war was unwinnable and he should have put pressure on Lyndon Johnson to call the whole thing off. If you begin on p. 123 it will be most relevant to you since you spent the last half of 1965 in Vietnam. The author bases his theory on what happened to five individuals who were there.

After I read "The Living and the Dead" I decided I ought to get McNamara's side of the story. So I checked out of the library his defense of his position published two years ago, called "In Retrospect", which I had not read. I knew about the book and had read reviews but decided to read the whole thing which I just did. It seems to me that all of us (you were pretty young, of course, and maybe weren't paying much attention while you were doing your military service, but we were all so sure that the Communists were going to take over the world if we didn't resist. McN. was sure of that, too, and as Sec. of Defense he thought we should take our stand in Vietnam. He was wrong, of course, but Hendrickson is too hard on McN, I think. From my vantage point thirty years later, N. Vietnam took over the south and with the collapse of Communism everywhere, it doesn't matter much who is in charge in Vietnam. We didn't seem to understand that nationalism rather than Communism was what inspired the Vietnamese. And 55,500 men died for such a foolish notion. I'm certainly glad that you weren't one of them.

I studied the origins of WWI in a World Politics class in college and there were horrible mistakes made in that war, too. Mistakes made by leaders from both sides but I don't recall that anybody apologized for it later. I have more sympathy for McN. after reading both books.

The weather here is quite mild today but [REDACTED] says it's been raining constantly in San Jose. She is on the second floor so I guess is in no danger of flooding, but that's not like San Jose weather. Glad I'm not there.

Come to Adrian if you can.

Fondly,
[REDACTED]