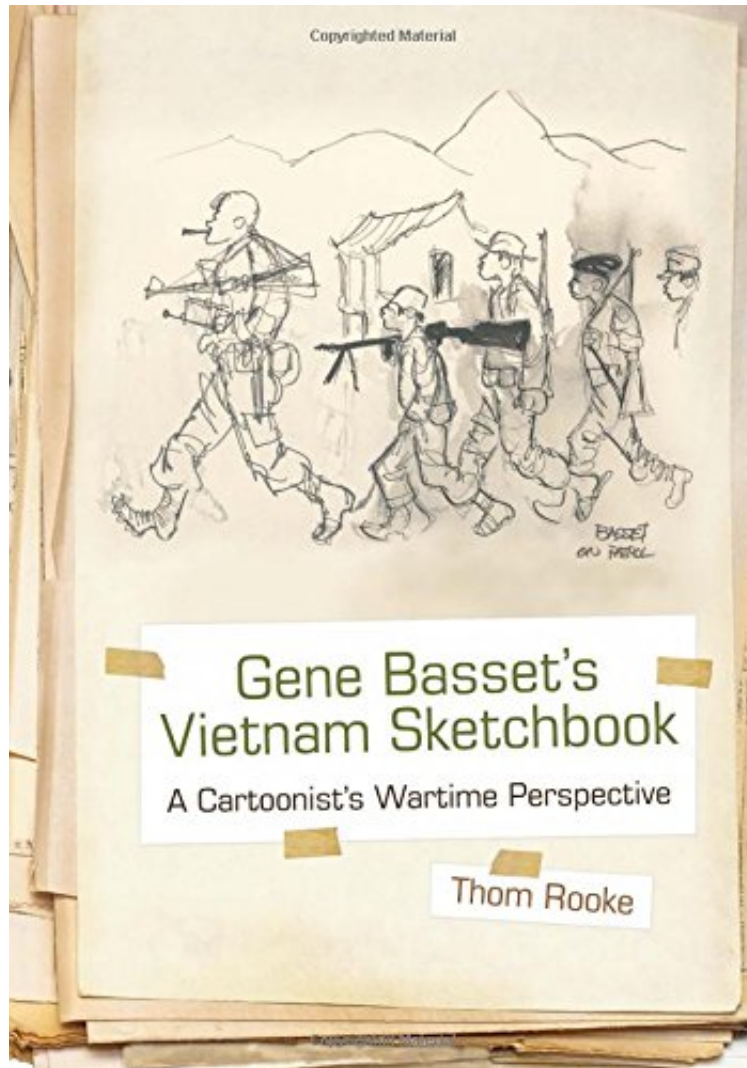


Gene Bassets Vietnam Sketchbook: A Cartoonists Wartime Perspective

Thom Rooke

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#File Name: 0815610572176 pages Gene Basset s Vietnam Sketchbook A Cartoonist s Wartime Perspective |
File size: 64.Mb

Thom Rooke : Gene Bassets Vietnam Sketchbook: A Cartoonists Wartime Perspective before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Gene Bassets Vietnam Sketchbook: A Cartoonists Wartime Perspective:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. and a wonderful one. Gene Basset is a great artist By steve northup This is an important book, and a wonderful one. Gene Basset is a great artist, managing to stop time and freeze

the perfect expression with a single line. Dr. Rooke's use of the stages of grief is most apt, and spot on. This is a book for those who were there, and for those who weren't and want to better understand the profound changes in our country and society brought on by this war, and its aftermath.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By Customer Truly excellent!
4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Fantastic, Interesting Perspective on War-Grief
By Alex Wilson Thom Rookes Gene Bassets Vietnam Sketchbook: A Cartoonists Wartime Perspective is currently my favorite book of 2015. Using eighty-six sketches in eighty-nine pages, Rooke and Basset take the reader through Dr. Kbler-Rosss original five stages of grief while reflecting on the Vietnam War. Rooke poignantly and succinctly addresses the unifying humanity of war more generally during and after war, we all grieve the permanent loss of something or someone. Comprised of five chapters each representing the traditional stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance Gene Bassets Vietnam Sketchbook ties together Bassets cartoons and descriptions with Rookes naturally flowing and emotive insights into war-grief. Like a doctor with supreme bedside manner, Rooke (who really is a medical doctor) gives his reader all the relevant options, usually in the form of rhetorical questions, and then carefully helps the reader arrive at his or her own understanding. Rooke states early on, If there is anything of value that a person who missed the war as I did may be able to bring to this discussion, its a genuinely objective perspective. (p. xii, preface) Reading this sentence raised red flags because of the biased nature of drawing and interpreting cartoons. Rooke notes, Whereas a photograph is grounded in objectivity, a sketch always reflects an element of bias. At its unretouched core, a photo shows us what happened, while a sketch conveys what I think happened or maybe even what should have happened. (p. xx, preface) Rooke understands that while he objectively navigates around divisive elements of the Vietnam War, he recognizes that artistic license and double-subjectivity (both his and Bassets subjectivity) are unavoidable. This amounts to a book that is easily relatable and also deeply introspective focusing on the ego in all of us while acknowledging the id and superegos influences. No other part of this book captures the symbiosis between objectivity and subjectivity quite like the unprejudiced yet sincerely personal Epilogue; which, in its brevity avoids pitfalls like was it worth it and who won, and instead reminds the reader of the undeniable responsibility we all share as a species that wages war against one another. I get goosebumps when I consider the profound universality of Rooke and Bassets last two words in the Epilogue: Welcome Home. They answered one of todays most challenging questions facing civilians: how to address those returning from war. My fellow Millennials are without a compass when it comes to responding to our current wars and soldiers, sailors, and Marines. Todays civilians know fewer service members than ever before. A quick glance at Stars and Stripes provides us civilians people more removed from our current wars than Rooke was from the Vietnam War with a truly horrifying reality. Our Spartan military of a relatively small number of highly specialized soldiers, many of whom even when home live in barracks that are impenetrable by the public, feel like complete outsiders within the country they fight for. Civilians, with absolutely no comprehension of war, who dont even know the names of the operations Congress has approved, see soldiers in airports, and awkwardly avert their eyes or offer thanks for their service. One soldier recently wrote, "So many people give you lip service and offer fake sympathy. Their sons and daughters aren't in the military, so it's not their war. It's something that happens to other people." (Quoting, Phillip Ruiz, a former Army Staff Sergeant who served three tours in Afghanistan and Iraq. Article by, Zucchini, David. US Military and Civilians are Increasingly Divided Los Angeles Times and Military.com. May 25, 2015. <http://www.military.com/daily-news/2015/05/25/us-military-and-civilians-are-increasingly-divided.html>). In TV and movies soldiers are superheroes, super-villains, or super-tragic theyre almost never the man or woman next door. (See, Merry, Stephanie. Theres a Divide Between Civilians and Soldiers. Hollywood is Partly to Blame. The Washington Post and Stars and Stripes. May 21, 2015. <http://www.stripes.com/there-s-a-divide-between-civilians-and-soldiers-hollywood-is-partly-to-blame-1.347701>). Reading soldiers interpretation of how civilians view them genuinely makes me feel terribly, both because theres some truth to their perception, and because it negates most peoples genuine desire to show respect and gratitude. Culturally, weve swung in the opposite direction from the time when Vietnam veterans were spat upon while walking down concourses; in fact recent polls show that most Americans report they feel members of the military are highly respectable. Americans, overwhelmingly, are proud of our soldiers; unfortunately, our reverence can also alienate the people we are attempting to respect. In a war where few of us experience war-grief directly, its hard to understand how we should feel and respond to those still serving. Politics, budgets, party lines, religions, resources, those are the front-page war-headlines theyre void of ethos or urgent humanity. Occasionally we hear about suicide, PTSD, and violence rates among soldiers and veterans, but those headlines as true and terrible as they are seem to push civilians further away from those in uniform, confirming our them-not-us (denial) mentality. Maybe its also because of todays hyper-real/raw war photos, YouTube clips, and Hollywoods HD renditions of war, that society is stuck in the early grieving stages of denial and bargaining. Civilians, facing a war weve resigned will never end, are denying wars literal existence by bargaining away our soldiers our brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, neighbors and friends. Gene Bassets Vietnam Sketchbook: A Cartoonists Wartime Perspective seems an unlikely guidepost for how to resolve the devastating alienation felt by our current service members, while also teaching society how to understand war. Frankly, Ive never read a book that so succinctly addresses the problem and (one) solution to soldier/civilian alienation and war-grief reconciliation. Rooke is helping America realize Dempseys call for civilians and soldiers to come

together under a shared understanding. (Quoting, Martin E. Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff calling on both civilians and service members to build relations: We can't allow a sense of separation to grow between us. As the all-volunteer force enters its fifth decade, civilians and the military need to maintain the shared understanding necessary for a healthy relationship. Article by, Garamone, Jim. Dempsey Calls on Americans to Discuss Civilian-Military Relations. American Forces Press Service: Department of Defense News. July 5, 2013.

<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=120412>) Our soldiers are also civilians; they are like us because they are us. When you're through with grieving over something, or when you've been away for a while, what's the one thing you want most of all? To be welcomed home, and to move forward in the place and with the people you belong. Originally, I took notes on each chapter specifically to highlight my favorite cartoons, phrases, or lessons provided by both Rooke and Basset, but I'm going to refrain from summarizing this book because I believe Gene Basset's Vietnam Sketchbook is a journey too masterfully charted to be distorted by a summary. Instead, I'll leave you with this quote about the genesis of Basset and Rooke's endeavor: One afternoon over cocktails, Gene and I were discussing some obtuse aspect of the United States ongoing involvement in Iraq or maybe it was Afghanistan? He started reminding me that the government was repeating the mistakes of the past. To illustrate his point, Gene hurried off to his basement and returned minutes later with a collection of drawings he had made more than forty years earlier in Vietnam. Tags: Nonfiction, Military History, Vietnam War, Cold War, Vietcong, US Military, Comics, Cartoons, Cartoonists, Graphics, History, War Art, Military Art, War Journalism, Military Journalism, Military Comics, War Comics, War Cartoons, Military Cartoons, Grief Thank you, NetGalley, for providing me with a free ARC. Syracuse University Press, I'm grateful to have received this galley. Quoting, Phillip Ruiz, a former Army Staff Sergeant who served three tours in Afghanistan and Iraq. Article by, Zucchini, David. US Military and Civilians are Increasingly Divided Los Angeles Times and Military.com. May 25, 2015. <http://www.military.com/daily-news/2015/05/25/us-military-and-civilians-are-increasingly-divided.html> See, Merry, Stephanie. There's a Divide Between Civilians and Soldiers. Hollywood is Partly to Blame. The Washington Post and Stars and Stripes. May 21, 2015.

<http://www.stripes.com/there-s-a-divide-between-civilians-and-soldiers-hollywood-is-partly-to-blame-1.347701> Quoting, Martin E. Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff calling on both civilians and service members to build relations: We can't allow a sense of separation to grow between us. As the all-volunteer force enters its fifth decade, civilians and the military need to maintain the shared understanding necessary for a healthy relationship. Article by, Garamone, Jim. Dempsey Calls on Americans to Discuss Civilian-Military Relations. American Forces Press Service: Department of Defense News. July 5, 2013. <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=120412>

In 1965, Gene Basset, a well-known political cartoonist, was sent to Vietnam by his newspaper publishing syndicate. His assignment: to sketch scenes of the increasingly controversial war in order to help the newspaper-reading public better understand the events occurring in Southeast Asia. In much the same way that M.A.S.H. gave viewers an irreverent, wry view of war and its devastating effects on citizens as well as soldiers, Basset's sketches portray the everyday, often mundane, aspects of wartime with an intimate touch that eases access to the dark subject matter. In this affectionately curated collection, author, doctor, and longtime friend of the artist, Thom Rooke, deftly leads us through more than eighty of Basset's cartoons, organizing his insights according to the well-known stages of grief, from denial to acceptance, and demonstrating how Basset's images convey moments of trauma, coping, and healing. From scenes of American GIs haggling with Vietnamese street vendors to a medic dressing the wounds of a wide-eyed soldier, Basset's endearing sketches and Rooke's friendly prose humanize life during wartime. The serio-comic vignettes and analyses are delivered with wit, compassion, and subtle charm sure to please academic, artistic, and casual readers alike.

Rooke offers us a fresh perspective on the Vietnam War through the drawings of correspondent and artist Gene Basset. We are asked to consider the war just as we consider the anticipation of death, moving through the inevitable stages of the human psychological condition, from denial through to acceptance. In many ways, America continues to struggle with acceptance of Vietnam and with acceptance of our current wars. This book challenges us to view war in the way we view death, with an inevitability we cannot ignore. (Bruce Sutor, MD, a Consultant and Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the Mayo Clinic) Calling Gene Basset a cartoonist is like calling Da Vinci a pretty good sketch artist. He draws with his head, his heart, and hand, and holds a wonderful mirror. Rooke's adaptation of the stages of grief is totally apt. Vietnam was the death of American innocence, and this book is a wonderful, insightful way to begin healing. (Steven Northrup, former United Press International staff photographer, Saigon, 1965-66) This is a truly worthy addition to the well-stocked shelves of books on the Vietnam War. Rooke writes with tremendous verve and wit and is a likeable and knowledgeable guide through a remarkable collection of sketches. The visual history of the Vietnam War is dominated by photography and film, so Gene Basset's drawings provide a fresh and fascinating angle of vision. This book is more than a history, it is a meditation on grief in war. (Todd DePastino, author of Bill Mauldin: A Life Up Front) This work is of real importance, not only for making Basset's fine drawings more widely known but also for the unique perspective his visual commentary sheds on the Vietnam era. The book should appeal to those interested in history and psychology and especially to those interested in art. (Donald Myers, director, Hillstrom Museum of Art) In

1965, editorial cartoonist Gene Basset was sent to South Vietnam by his newspaper publishing syndicate, the Scripps Howard News Service. Basset produced scores of cartoons during his time in country, and about eighty of his best cartoons have been gathered in this book. Vietnam veterans will probably empathize with all or most of the scenes illustrated. All readers who are interested in comic history or in the early days of the American involvement in Southeast Asia will enjoy Gene Basset's Vietnam Sketchbook. (Roger D. Cunningham *The Journal of America's Military Past*)

About the Author Gene Basset is an American cartoonist primarily known for his editorial cartoons. He was the chief editorial cartoonist with Scripps Howard newspapers for twenty years. In 1982, Basset joined the staff of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, where he worked until his retirement in 1992. His work has been exhibited at the Pratt Institute, and in 2005, drawings done by Basset during a trip to Vietnam were exhibited at Gustavus Adolphus College.

Thom Rooke is professor of medicine at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. He holds an endowed chair in vascular medicine and is former head of the Section of Vascular Medicine and director of the Gonda Vascular Center.