

Exorcism

by Doug Bradley

I called all the guys I'd been in 'Nam with,
Even the dead ones
Saying hello and waving goodbye
Begging them to let me go

I wrote nasty letters to all the presidents,
Even the living ones
Spouting obscenities and flipping the bird
Beseeching them to stop the war

I prayed to the God I believed in back then
All three parts of him
Crossing myself and chanting in Latin
Imploring him for peace on earth

Finally,
I stopped writing
Stopped pretending
Emptied my filing cabinets
Unloaded my desk drawers
Constructing towers of journals and notebooks
Erecting monuments of poems and stories
Even a spot for the abandoned novel
and the aborted two-act play

I set it all on fire
And tried to dance away my demons...

But the songs on Armed Forces Radio
Still play in my head
The old faces glow in the dark
The nightmares never cease

And I have to put out the fire all by myself

Doug Bradley has written extensively about his Vietnam and post-Vietnam experiences. His latest book, *Who'll Stop the Rain: Respect, Remembrance, and Reconciliation in Post-Vietnam America*, has been described by noted historian H.

Bruce Franklin as “a brave and invaluable attempt to bring us back together...a potent medicine for a sick nation.” After graduation from college, Doug was drafted in March 1970. He served as a combat correspondent for the U. S. Army Republic of Vietnam headquarters at Long Binh, South Vietnam, from November 1970-November 1971. He relocated to Madison, Wisconsin, in 1974 where he helped establish Vets House, a storefront, community-based service center for Vietnam era veterans. A founding member of the Deadly Writers Patrol, Doug is the author of *DEROS Vietnam: Dispatches from the Air-Conditioned Jungle* and co-author, with Craig Werner, of *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: The Soundtrack of the Vietnam War* which was named best music book of 2015 by *Rolling Stone* magazine.