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# Veteran



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## At The Convention

When VVA member Ken Williamson arrived in Vietnam in April of 1969, he had a thought that someday he would document his tour of duty in words and photographs. Williamson, who was drafted into the Army after graduating from Ohio University, was well equipped for such a task. A college grad, a photographer, and a not-too-shabby writer, he served as an Army photographer in Vietnam in 1969-70. His assignments with the 815th Engineers in Pleiku and an Engineer Public Information Detachment on Long Binh Post took him throughout South Vietnam.

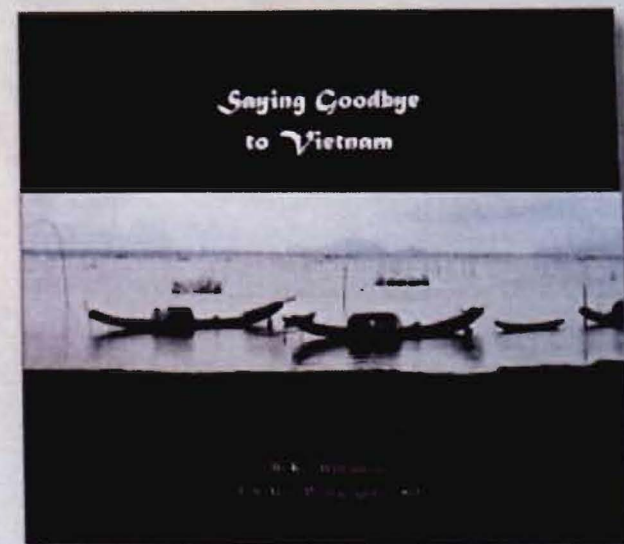
*Saying Goodbye to Vietnam* (Photo Gallery On the Net, 383 pp., \$49.50) is the fulfillment of Williamson's original thought. Four years in the making—but more than forty years in gestation—the book is a top-quality, one-of-a-kind assemblage of hundreds of Williamson's photos from his tour of duty, and his thoughts at the time, along with more photos and writing detailing his trips back to Vietnam in 1998 and 2004.

As *VVA Veteran* editor Michael Keating (a fine photographer in his own right) has said, Ken Williamson

“writes without hyperbole or self-aggrandizement about his tour in Vietnam, the challenges he faced as combat photographer, as well as his mixed feelings about the war and his longing for his wife and their newborn daughter.” The book is “quiet and serious,” Keating went on to say, “but never dull.”

Williamson characterizes his book as “the story of my hour-by-hour struggle to make it one more day without losing my mind as I photographed the daily military events of the U.S. Army Engineers and the people of Vietnam.” He covers events chronologically, showing us a side of the Vietnam War that is seldom seen: the life of a military photographer who had to scrounge to set up his own darkroom and spent his tour of duty looking at the war, those who fought, and the people of Vietnam through his camera lens.

“With this book,” he writes, “I have captured a slice of history about the Vietnam War as lived through my experiences and photography from a perspective not experienced by most military personnel.” As for his title, Williamson notes that Vietnam veterans “never say goodbye to Vietnam. It is impossible to say good-



bye to the sights, sounds, and smells of a combat zone. These experiences stay with us forever.”

Ken Williamson will be signing copies of his book at the VVA National Convention in Springfield, Ill. His photoessay, “Children of War,” appeared in the November/December issue of *The VVA Veteran*. ■