



My War: The Story Of A Reluctant Soldier

Gene Opfer

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In the year 1966 the Vietnam War was raging. The last thing I wanted to be was a soldier! There wasn't much choice. Even today, regardless of our maturity, we boys legally become men at the age of eighteen. As a legal man in 1966 we became eligible to be drafted into the Army. There are some guys who dream about being a soldier. Not me. I didn't play soldier as a kid, and I definitely didn't want to do it as an adult. I did have some options to avoid being drafted. I could hide somewhere and hope that the draft board couldn't find me. I could move to another country and give up my United States citizenship. I could go to college. Going to college would postpone my being drafted until I graduated or flunked out. I could get married and make babies really fast. Lastly, I could play a game called the dummy. After laboring over these options I decided that I was too much of a coward to hide. If I got caught I would go to jail. I wasn't willing to give up my citizenship, and I was terrible at school! To make matters worse, nobody wanted to marry me and make babies! I chose to play the dummy game. Here is how you play. When the dummy sees a disaster coming right at him he ignores it. Basically he does nothing until the disaster slams into him. That was my strategy for avoiding the draft. How dumb was that? I said to myself, "It won't happen to me." Then I did nothing to stop it. Guess what? Not only did I get drafted, I got drafted into an all volunteer branch of the military called the Marine Corps. Getting drafted into the Marine Corps was unheard of. Nobody gets drafted into the Marine Corps, but I did! Do you know what the Marine Corps motto is? It's First To Fight! You can probably guess what that motto means! It means first to die! Believe me, I was aware of that motto. My story is not a shoot them up account of a Marine war hero. It is the story of a reluctant, but very lucky Marine during the Vietnam War. I would like to take this opportunity to invite you into this chapter of my life. It's a great story!

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