

Back to Vietnam



Courtesy photo

James Neeley, right, and his wife, Sandra, of Grandview hold a photo of an Air America helicopter crew member helping evacuees up a ladder on the roof of 18 Gia Long St. in Vietnam on April 29, 1975. The couple traveled to Vietnam in April to visit places where James Neeley served during the war.

Grandview veteran revisits war zone 50 years later

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James Neeley of Grandview was a student at Rice University in Houston when he was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1967.

He knew he'd be headed to Vietnam.

"I pretty well knew as soon as they drafted me, because of the situation we were in, that I was going there," he said. "It wasn't something I would volunteer for, but it wasn't something I wasn't particularly reluctant to do. I was nervous; you can't help but be a little frightened with the idea of going to war."

The Vietnam War lasted from 1957-75 and was a conflict that pitted the communist government of North Vietnam and its allies in South

Vietnam, known as the Viet Cong, against the government of South Vietnam and its principal ally, the United States.

The human costs of the long conflict were harsh for all involved. Not until 1995 did Vietnam release its official estimate of war dead: as many as 2 million civilians on both sides and some 1.1 million North Vietnamese and Viet Cong fighters. The U.S. military has estimated that between 200,000 and 250,000 South Vietnamese soldiers died in the war, according to the Encyclopedia Britannica.

Neeley said his family thought he should have stayed in college, which was an option for those who were drafted.

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