

# Our Turn

By Peter Berlin

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The fall of Saigon fills the screen.  
Filmed six years after I left;  
Forty-six years since my war ended.  
I've been waiting for this,  
a time when TV would tell our story,  
an eight year war they fed the nation for dinner.  
World War II stories finally begin to fade.  
We Vietnam vets get our turn.  
There's anger in this poem.  
Anger at being picked in the draft?  
Anger when I saw what the war was about?  
Anger that dads and uncles locked us out of their warrior brotherhood?  
I'm not sure ? maybe all of it.  
Ever have this happen to you?  
You go to write something,  
something that has been rattling in your head for hours,  
maybe days,  
maybe years.  
Something where you've crafted an opening,  
some key lines,  
your thoughts merging and blending.  
You begin to type and anger grabs control -  
spills out on the screen.  
That solid opening is gone.  
The key lines ?  
so clever,  
so precise ?  
gone.  
And the worst part is,  
you can't stop it.  
You can't merge and blend.  
You can't bring majesty to anger.  
That's how this is.  
I'm watching my war.  
I can't tell you of the sorrow I feel.  
I can't locate the wound and treat it.  
It festers.  
I struggle with decisions I made,  
with the images I bear?  
body bags,  
the morgue,  
frantic medics struggling with the wounded,  
a parade of buses filled with morphined mummies,  
bodies flung across the surface of Highway 1 ?  
Irony.  
My desire to see my war on TV ?  
the war I fought with Willie and Wayne,  
with Beauchamp and Esteban ?  
has been answered.  
And I have passed the rite to adulthood,  
I have a sense of honor,  
to know that I served something bigger than myself ?  
but it's flawed  
and as I watch it's the flaws that catch my thoughts.