

It seems that the last of the Vietnam novels has yet to be written. With the recent publication of such literary gems as Dennis Johnson's National Book Award winning *Tree of Smoke* and the critically acclaimed *Matterhorn* by Karl Marantes, that terrible and unfortunate war still inspires writers to create great literature years after it ended. Now add Grady Smith's *Blood Chit* to the list of literary works which that war inspired. Smith takes us to Staff Sergeant Chuck Paxton's war and back. He shows us the man, the hero, and the deeply troubled combat veteran being consumed by a war every civilian considers over but which lives on in the psyche of the veteran. This is the back-story of the "crazy vet", the tragic "victim", the disposable man/woman. It is a story familiar to combat veterans but new to those who are not. In less skillful hands than Smith's, Chuck Paxton would be just another "man in a gray flannel suit"-troubled by memories but getting by. But in *Blood Chit* we witness his demise and we understand why. That is a gift of fiction and its author Grady Smith's gift to us.

Mike McDonell

Marine platoon leader, I Corps, Vietnam

Currently teaching writing, critical reading and Vietnam War literature at the University of South Carolina-Beaufort

*Co-Founder, The Memorial Day Writers' Project*