

1988

Matter of Survival: The War Jane Never Saw

Russell W. Ramsey

Chris Noel

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Ramsey, Russell W. and Noel, Chris (1988) "Matter of Survival: The War Jane Never Saw," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 41 : No. 2 , Article 27.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol41/iss2/27>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

118 Naval War College Review

several years prior to this event. Gibson also notes how Harry Summers, in his book, *On Strategy*, frequently cites Lieutenant General Dave Palmer (then a Lieutenant Colonel) when, in fact, he means General Bruce Palmer. President John Kennedy dramatically increased the number of U.S. advisors in 1962, not in 1960 (when Kennedy was a U.S. Senator) as stated by Gibson. Other "facts" such as the Japanese invasion of China in 1939 (it happened in 1937) and Gibson's tirade against the military's "postal exchange" (post exchange) stores, indicate a lack of familiarity with some of the basic history, characters, and institutions the author lambasts under his Technowar thesis.

In sum, *The Perfect War* is a disappointment which, despite its considerable length, provides little insight into America's most divisive war in this century.

ANDREW KREPINEVICH
Major, U.S. Army

Noel, Chris. *Matter of Survival: The War Jane Never Saw*. Boston: Branden Publishing, 1987. 200pp. \$15.95

"Hi Luv, it's Chris Noel . . . welcome to another date with good sounds from the States. . . ." and Armed Forces Radio Transmission Service had its blond bombshell on the airwaves over South Vietnam. For seven years, Chris was the voice, the face, the figure—in a word, the persona—of American womanhood

for the troops fighting in America's longest war. Her memoir mixes remembrance with hindsight in alternating chapters.

Chris Noel's radio broadcasts were a mix of friendly chatter, disc-jockey format, and a few songs that she performed in a little girl voice. Her image was the sexy-but-nice girlfriend, wife, or sister that every soldier, sailor, airman, and marine dreamed about as the stateside daily mail arrived. She was always impeccably groomed—gleaming blond mane, curvy shape in snug sweater, neat miniskirt, white boots, and dazzling smile were her trademarks.

She came out of the sound booth to tour the boondocks of Vietnam like no other show biz personality. Special Forces outposts, base camps, training centers, air bases large and small, rivercraft, aircraft carriers, and hospitals—all were her beat. But she was drawn to the wounded, to the hospitals, where her kindness and beauty was a golden touch amid a world of amputations, mutilation, malaria, and wondering if the folks back home even knew or cared.

Chris Noel became a war casualty herself. She married an Army Special Forces officer who committed suicide after his combat days ended, had a second unsuccessful marriage with a violence-prone adventurer, and endured the scorn of her show biz colleagues, some of whom had actually cheered for a Communist North Vietnamese victory.

The Marilyn Monroe look-alike, who once starred in MGM films with Robert Vaughn, Robert Goulet, Elvis

Presley, Hugh O'Brien, Richard Chamberlain, Dennis Hopper, and Chad Everett, eventually entered into a substance abuse treatment program, hooked on Valium and traumatized by the war. She re-emerged as a leader in the Vietnam Veterans' movement, an older but still beautiful champion of psychological treatment programs and compensation for Agent Orange victims, and, to be sure, the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Chris wades into the philosophical swamp that engulfs anyone who would champion the Vietnam G.I. without taking a position on the rightness of U.S. involvement in the war itself. She fires several salvos at the gulf between the women's liberation movement and the women who served as nurses and entertainers in Vietnam. She outlines a plausible indictment of Jane Fonda for treason, and a less plausible indictment of American womanhood for not caring adequately about the Vietnam conflict.

Her memoir is uneven, punchy, and unforgettable; a sometimes painful testimony to the plight of a gorgeous woman. She tried to bring American femininity at its best to the troops in Vietnam and she thinks America gave her guys a bum shake.

RUSSELL W. RAMSEY
USAF Command & Staff College

Hersh, Seymour M. *The Target is Destroyed: What Really Happened to Flight 007 and What America Knew*

about It. New York: Random House, 1986. 288pp. \$17.95

When Korean Air Lines (KAL) flight 007 was shot down, the American intelligence community produced one of the most impressive signals intelligence (SIGINT) coups in memory. Indeed, the average American knew more about the shootdown the next day than did the Soviet Ambassador to the United States. For students of operational intelligence, the language, acronyms, and story are very familiar.

Hersh makes several conclusions encompassing the entire affair. Some are backed by exhaustive research and logic. Others reveal, perhaps, a hidden political agenda the author has regarding the Reagan administration—the emerging awareness of which left this reader with an increasingly sour taste.

Intelligence officers can learn many lessons here. For the junior officer, Hersh provides an enlightening look at what happens to intelligence products at the senior staff level. For senior officers, Hersh explains how military intelligence can quickly become politicized and public.

As thorough as his research is and as plausible as his scenario for what might have actually happened, Hersh's book has several weaknesses. He is quick to point out, for example, that "[t]his is a book whose key allegations hinge on unnamed sources." After making a reasonable plea for his readers to believe him, he sets out to draw conclusions about policymakers and intelligence