

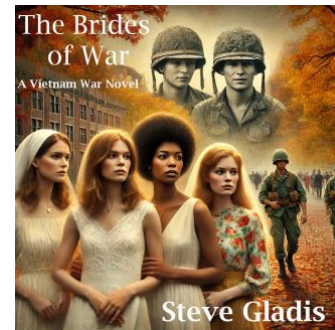
When Geography Meets History: How a Virginia College Became a Quiet Frontline of the Vietnam War

Press Release & Media Background – Steve Gladis' The Brides of War: A Vietnam War Novel

This year marks 50 years since the end of the Vietnam War — and a powerful new novel is telling the untold story of the women forever changed by America's most controversial war.

In the tradition of Kristin Hannah's *The Women* and Margot Lee Shetterly's *Hidden Figures*, *The Brides of War: A Vietnam War Novel* by Steve Gladis offers an intimate, moving portrait of women whose lives were shaped not by the battles they fought, but by the men they loved—and the geography that brought them together.

In 1968, Mary Washington College was an all-women's college located just twenty minutes from the U.S. Marine Corps Base at Quantico, Virginia. That short drive linked two very different worlds: a campus of young women preparing for their futures, and a military hub training young Marine second lieutenants bound for the battlefields of Vietnam. It was a collision of place and time that led to countless wartime romances—and ultimately, to heartbreak, resilience, and the forging of lifelong bonds.



The Brides of War follows four Mary Washington women whose lives intersect in friendship, love, and loss. Through interracial relationships, antiwar protests, and the personal struggles of the late 1960s, the novel reveals the hidden cost of war on the women left behind—those who waited for letters, feared the late-night phone call, and faced a future reshaped by conflict.

"The women at Mary Washington lived just down the road from Quantico," says Gladis. "That proximity created a bridge between two worlds—one academic, one military—and in that meeting ground, destinies were rewritten. These women became the quiet collateral of war."

SIDEBAR: The Real History Behind *The Brides of War*

In the late 1960s, Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg, Virginia, was an all-women's school, part of the University of Virginia system. At the same time, the U.S. Marine Corps Base at Quantico, one of the military's most important training centers, was operating at full speed, preparing young Marine lieutenants for the escalating war in Vietnam, where over

58,000 service members were killed and over 150,000 were wounded.

The two institutions were only about a twenty-minute drive apart—a short trip that bridged two worlds. On weekends, Marines from Quantico would head to Fredericksburg for social events, mixers, and blind dates arranged by friends. The college women, in turn, often attended dances, parties, and Marine Corps balls.

This proximity created an extraordinary wartime social dynamic. Many Mary Washington students fell in love with Marines who were soon deployed overseas. Weddings happened quickly—sometimes in hurried ceremonies before deployment—leading to the nickname "The Brides of War." For some, these marriages led to lifelong partnerships. For others, the war brought separation, heartbreak, loss, and the challenge of rebuilding a life.

While the Vietnam War is often remembered through images of combat and protests, the Mary Washington–Quantico connection reveals a quieter, more personal history—one of young women caught up in the tide of war simply because of where they went to school.

About the Author

Steve Gladis, Ph.D., is the author of more than 25 books on leadership and four novels. He is a George Mason professor, an executive coach, and a prolific author. His fiction and nonfiction explore human courage, moral choice, and resilience. A former Marine Corps officer and Vietnam veteran, he lives in Northern Virginia with his wife, Donna, a Mary Washington graduate.

The Brides of War will be released in Fall 2025 in print and eBook editions.

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