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Biography

Soldiers Once: My Brother and the Lost Dreams of Americas Veterans
Catherine Whitney
Da Capo Press
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"The great myth of war is that it can be left behind," Catherine Whitney observes in this stirring, yet sadly familiar story about her brother, Jim Schuler. Retired Staff Sergeant Schuler lived through three years in Vietnam, but he couldn't survive his longest tour-the return to civilian life. He died the day before 9/11 at age fifty-three, or, as the author tells us, three years younger than the average life expectancy of a Vietnam veteran.

In *Soldiers Once: My Brother and the Lost Dreams of Americas Veterans* (Da Capo Press, 978-0-306-81788-5), Whitney, who has co-authored and ghost-written more than thirty books, reveals how her brothers life had begun to unravel during his three tours in engineering battalions, where he blew up more things than he helped build. By 1971, the author, now involved in the peace movement, and her brother parted over the meaning of the war. The book describes how Whitney put together the missing pieces of Schuler's tragic life, which entered a downward spiral of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and alcoholism. Whitney writes with a simple eloquence that compares with Ron Kovics iconic *Born on the Fourth of July*. In addition to the story of her brother, Whitney indicts recent presidencies for cutting budgets while promising improved veterans services. The author rightly identifies this as a national disgrace. She vividly shows how her brother was a victim, along with thousands of other vets who have died or who are living lives of slow death.

Karl Helicher