FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

**The Dust of Life: America's Children Abandoned in Vietnam**

Robert S. McKelvey
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A former Marine who fought in Vietnam in the late 1960s, McKelvey fell in love with his so-called enemy. Rather than just serve his tour of duty and return home in relief, he instead became fascinated by the people, the culture and the terrain of Vietnam. After coming back to America, this love dulled slightly, only to flare anew when he later became interested in Amerasians, the children of Vietnamese mothers and American G.I. fathers. With the support of a project grant, McKelvey, now a doctor and Director of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the Oregon Health Science University, returned to the country to which he?d formed such a devotion, and began interviewing hundreds of Amerasians to discover what impact their race had on their lives.

Abandoned by their American fathers and by America itself despite some efforts to bring them to this country, the Amerasian children, now adults, tell stories layered with sadness and discrimination. Often denied educational opportunities and unwanted for marriage, many of the children were driven into life on city streets or forced to live as near untouchables in rural villages, given the work no one else would do.

McKelvey doesn’t present the tales as dry observation or mere oral history; instead, he shares how the interviews affect him and make him feel as rootless and lost as his interviewees. He organizes the book around central themes that are common to the Amerasians? experiences, such as dealing with unrealized hopes for the future, early maternal loss and suffering prejudice from fellow countrymen. McKelvey renders every encounter with sensitivity, allowing the strength of his interviewees to shine through in an inspiring and graceful way. In his conclusion, the author doesn’t shrink from casting blame on the American government for their half-hearted efforts at aid, and calls upon them, as policymakers, and us, as compassionate and informed citizens, to change the condition of the Amerasians abandoned so long ago.

*Elizabeth Millard*