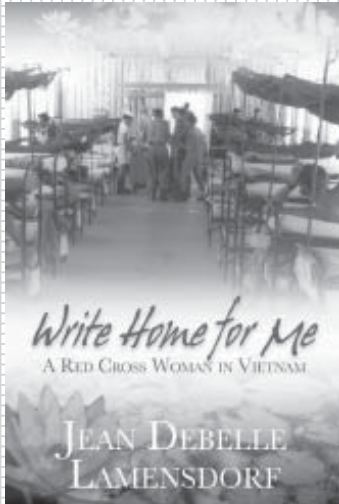


From April 3 - Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne & Adelaide

Jean Debelle Lamensdorf

Write Home for Me

A Red Cross Woman in Vietnam



WRITE HOME FOR ME.
JEAN DEBELLE LAMENSDORF.
RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA.
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BEFORE there were army nurses in the Vietnam War, BEFORE there was a secure camp for the ANZACs, there was a young woman working for the Red Cross, tending to the non-medical welfare of the sick and wounded there. She is the only woman in Australia who was there for the worst battle of the Vietnam War (Long Tan), the busiest hospital month (Dec 66) and the worst landmine disaster (Feb 67). She flew to Vietnam with the first troupe of SAS, and cared for the only SAS man to die of wounds in Vietnam.

Her name was **Jean Debelle**.

WORKING as a journalist at the *Adelaide Advertiser* in 1966, **Jean Debelle** yearned to be involved in the biggest story of the decade - the Vietnam War. But only male journalists in Australia were being sent to cover the escalating conflict. Instead, she volunteered to work in Vietnam for the Red Cross to tend to the non-medical welfare of the sick and wounded ANZAC forces. Jean had planned to report on the war in spare moments - but there were none. For one year she lived in the spotlight: a young Australian woman among 5,000 men.

This intimate personal account is told from the rare and compassionate perspective of a young woman living close to the battlefield. Jean tells of the resilience of the soldiers in the face of daily atrocities and of the international medical personnel fighting to save lives and to rebuild shattered bodies and minds. It is also the story of the Vietnamese, struggling to maintain not just their traditions but their very lives in the face of brutal hardship.

With infectious humour, Jean tells of striving to be like a sister to the men when sex was in the very air they breathed. But she experienced stark terror when she faced a crazed gunman, had a close call in a minefield and was caught in the midst of a Vietnamese skirmish. Jean also offers an unvarnished look at the Australians' worst battle in Vietnam, Long Tan, and their worst landmine disaster. With unblinking candour, she writes of the harsh realisation that after nine months in Vietnam she had grown cold to the unrelenting horror of war.

From diaries, letters and Red Cross reports, **Jean Debelle Lamensdorf** (she married an American and now lives in the United States) has researched and written a story not only of tragedy but also of hope and humour. It is a compelling adventure story - and one of love.

JEAN DEBELLE spent a year caring for wounded ANZAC troops (from June 1966 until June 1967) in Vung Tau then fulfilled another year for the Red Cross in Butterworth, Malaysia before returning home to Australia to work as a journalist for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Australian Women's Weekly*, Editor of the now defunct *Woman's World*, and co-Editor of *Woman's Day* until sent to New York in 1980. She retired in 1995 after eleven years as an executive at Ziff-Davis Publishing in New York where she maintained international editions of *PC Magazine* and other computer titles. Jean married Jack Lamensdorf in the US and now lives in Pennsylvania.

For further information or an interview with JEAN DEBELLE LAMENSDORF please contact

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SOME PAGE-BY-PAGE POINTERS

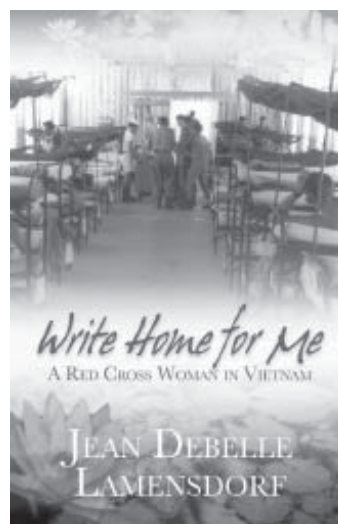
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- What you do for the soldiers in hospital. **P63**
- I was neither a nurse, nor girlfriend, nor a soldier's wife or mother. I knew, though, that it was important for me to be there. **P64**
- An interpreter for the Americans. **P69**
- Unimpressed with Jim Cairns. **P71**
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- "Stories of American nurses contracting venereal disease or being sent home pregnant were enough to reinforce my high-minded principles." **P76**
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- Long Tan. **P95**
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- Russell Copeman was the only SAS man to die as a result of enemy action during the years the unit was in Vietnam. **P228**
- Dear God! I had grown immune to our daily reality: mutilation and the appalling waste of young men's lives. **P252**
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SOME SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

- What made you want to go to Vietnam?
- What did your family think of the idea?
- How old were you?
- Did you ever regret the decision?
- Was your life ever in danger?
- What people or events stand out most in your mind?
- What were other women your age doing at that time – marrying, jobs, travel?
- Did you ever kill anyone?
- Have you stayed in touch with anyone you met there?
- How close were you to the “front”?
- What were your basic duties?
- How did you hear about the Red Cross opportunity?
- How did the men feel about you being there?
- How did the local people feel about you (a woman) being there?
- How did they feel about the Aussies or the Allies generally?
- Do you believe in war
- Has anyone else in your family been to war
- Why wait so long to tell the story
- What prompted you to write this book?
- What kind of emotions did it stir?
- How did you remember all those details?
- How did you do your research?
- Was it difficult writing from such a distance, across the Pacific?
- Do you feel you are glorying war by writing about it?
- What relevance does your book have today?
- What have you been doing since the war?
- Having faced death, do you believe in God



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