

Publishers Weekly

“Nies’s combination period history and memoir is a highly valuable first-person record”

The Girl I Left Behind: A Narrative History of the Sixties

Judith Nies. Harper, \$24.95 (368p) ISBN 978-0-06-117601-2

Future chroniclers of the period may well place the drug and hippie scene as, historically mere decorative fringe to “the women’s movement that came out of the 1960s,” which was, according to Nies, “the most successful and transformative social movement of the twentieth century.” Historian and biographer Nies (*Nine Women: Portraits from the American Radical Tradition*) combines her memoir of the girl she was with an account of the world in which she grew up to become a “pioneer feminist.” She delineates a milieu of limitations of women’s lives unimaginable today – a time when “women were supposed to marry well, dress well, and entertain well,” and when men’s clubs had “Ladies’ Entrances” and Congress a “Ladies’ Gallery.” Nies combines personal memoir (her family history, student days, her travels, her marriage, her jobs from summer waitress to being “one of only a handful of professional women on Capitol Hill”) with period history (the Cuban missile crisis, the Women’s Strike for Peace campaign against nuclear testing, the formation of NOW) and well-known people with whom she crosses paths (Madeleine Albright, Paul Wolfowitz, Dorothy Day and Gloria Steinem, to name a few). While the book lags at times, Nies’s combination period history and memoir is a highly valuable first-person record of a woman who finds herself, and the movement she grew with. (June)