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Loss of Innocence

Reading all these stories, it depressing how many young people lost their innocence because of the war. Whether Vietnamese or American, the war changed a lot of people's lives permanently. So much so that some were unable to go back to their old lives, relate to others and unable to forget that traumatic time. The war had such an effect that it stretched outside the battlefield in Southern Vietnam. The war went on to damage the lives of future youth as well.

The first story that struck me was that of Nguyen Thi Kim Chuy on page 105. In her story, she describes her time working on Ho Chi Minh trail. Even though she wasn't in warfare, her life was put on hold to work on the war effort. It's amazing how hard they worked to keep the trail effective. The descriptions of the conditions on the trails were unbelievable. I don't think I could even endured a week

of that kind of labor. To work to the point of having to be nursed back to health by your parents and only weighing 82 pounds and losing the ability to have kids is sad and at the same time amazing the limits some can endure.

The second story was Le Cao Dai's (page 138) and how the war affected the future Vietnamese lives. This story reminded me of the documentary "In Country: A Vietnam Story" were veterans that are members of "Friends of Danang" deliver medical supplies. While there, they toured an orphanage of children with birth defects. Even the survivors of the War can't escape the side effects. Survivors had to continue to battle cancer and deal with birth defects of their children. They have to deal with the destruction of their surroundings and their environment.

Jim Soular (page 156) says in the first paragraph that the Vietnam War hurt him. How his patriotism led to putting himself in a position to be drafted. He told of the adrenaline high which some never got over. When they had to pick up soldiers from the "incredibly dense and menacing" part of the jungle, the way he describes the soldiers. With their fatigues rotting off, and how one guy had scalps hanging from his belt. And how these "bad looking dudes" out in the deep jungle were young guys like himself. In his conclusion he says that "A day doesn't go by that I don't think about Vietnam-not just what happened to Americans, but what we did to Vietnam."

While talking to a vet recently, he described how at his age, he drank all the Kool-Aid. That not only did he "drink the cool-aid" but the youth recruited by the gorillas. That it wasn't until he was older that he started to question. It seems like on both sides, youth and patriotism kept this war alive at the sacrifice of that very youth. The youth who fought, grew up and survived by adapting to warfare. It's amazing how far the effect a war in the small country of Vietnam had. Long in both distance in time, the effect of the war continues to hurt youth in Vietnam.

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