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Perseverance, The act of persisting or persevering; continuing or repeating behavior. To me, an iron will, committed to finishing what you have started or not giving up. I chose perseverance because that is something in life I truly live by and value, I believe that with a little perseverance anything can be accomplished even if its not the outcome you were hoping for or the way you planned it, it still is rewarding in the end to know you have given it all you have physically and mentally. The people you will be reading about in the next couple of paragraphs show amazing strength and perseverance, the iron will in their heart shine through like a full moon in a cloudy haze. They are different races, ages, and genders, raised with different beliefs, fighting for a different country and yet the common thread that ties them together even though they seem worlds apart is perseverance.

Nguyen Thi Kim Chuy was a young Vietnamese girl, who worked in the jungles of the Truong Son as a youth volunteer for four years, during that four years she devoted herself to her country and beliefs knowing that years on her body and soul was going to map out her future and she would sacrifice things little girls dream of such as being married and having children, she was willing to take that risk. She was sent to Truong Son to build trails, She worked in the Quang Binh Province also called the " bombing capital." One day while under seven bombing attacks she saw a bomb drop into a shelter hole, everyone ran screaming and crying to evaluate the situation, as they were on their hands and knees clawing at the dirt, their arms smeared with blood, five people were in the shelter. "Four of them turned to porridge." They could not tell them apart, they divided the parts into separate mounds and buried them. They came across a young woman holding her child trying to protect it, they could not separate them so they buried them together. After that horrific sight, I am sure the emotions were pouring out of there body like water from a faucet, but they had craters to fill, work had to be done, there was no time to have a break down, they continued or persevered on as if nothing had happened. Working in the jungle took its toll on everyone, food was a shortage, and sickness was plenty. Almost everyone got malaria and a lot died from it, she too got malaria. She was told to eat a worm, it was a good "folk remedy" she said she was willing to do

anything to feel better and ate it without another thought. They lost their hair, had ghostly white eyes, pale skin, purple lips and where completely skin and bones. I see a frail, fragile, sickly, tiny woman who showed the strength and "iron will" of a stadium full of linebackers, who at their peak physical and mental strengths would not have the "will" to persevere as this woman in her sick moment. This young woman could have been considered for many different themes such as "strength", "commitment" "courage", the list goes on, however I felt like "perseverance" was the most fitting because she never faltered and continued on with amazing strength and devotion. She had accomplished what she set out to do.

Porter Halyburton was a "back-seater" in a two-man Navy F-4 Phantom, his responsibilities were radar, navigation, and radio communications to name a few. In October 1965, on his seventy-fifth mission, his plane was shot down over North Vietnam. He was imprisoned until 1973, eight years in captivity enduring torture, devastation, pain and on the brink of an emotional break down, this brave soldier persevered. This soldier was taken to many different POW holding areas, prisons, camps, cages, whatever they could possibly put someone in, he was there. Depending on if the soldier cooperated or shall I say "rolled over on their country" was the determining factor on how he was treated. Porter kept his honor and with that, the torture began. The conditions he was in were unthinkable, "ants, rats, mosquitoes by the ton." They would put a bowl of rice outside the cell and leave it there for hours until it had become infested with bugs, that was his dinner. He spent months alone with no other Americans and was getting disheartened. The constant interrogation and indoctrination alone was wearing him down, yet he kept persevering. It only got worse, the torture more brutal. They started by beating him, then setting him on a wooden chair for days, until he fell over from lack of sleep, food and water. After that he says "the torture began," like that was not already enough? They used a method called "max-cuffs" where your arms were pulled up behind your back and then they put these handcuffs on the upper part of your arm. Then they tied a rope around your wrists and pulled it up, Porter says he could actually see his fingertips over the top of his head when they did that. It pressed the nerves against the bone-indescribable pain. He says the psychological damage was worse than the physical torture, he felt like he had failed because he could not take no more torture and gave the Vietnamese a "report." not the kind of reports they were looking for though, with his mental capabilities still in tact he was able to find a happy medium and lie. This man is what perseverance is about, yes they finally wore him down, but they did

not break him. Through the years and countless times of torture and all he endured he came out with his sanity and his dignity. He persevered even when it would have been acceptable and only human to surrender. I can not imagine or fathom what he went through. In my head I keep seeing the bowl full of bugs, and nothing to eat, the hunger pains he was feeling. I can see a clear visual of the torture and how I am sure he wanted to cry, yet no one to comfort him or hold him close.

Dennis Deal, a young lieutenant in the La Drang Valley of the Central Highlands and a battalion of the 1st Cavalry Division, some 450 Americans. It was November 14, 1965 they were surrounded and attacked by three North Vietnamese regiments- a force of more than two thousand. Dennis describes what a beautiful day it was outside and how peaceful it seemed. By the way Dennis talks about his time there at the beginning I see this macho man, who was in for a rude awakening. Dennis and his platoon were ordered to move up this mountain, within a few minutes they could hear firing up front. Henry Herrick's platoon had come under heavy fire, Henry instantly held up his rifle like a true leader and yelled "follow me." His whole platoon broke ranks and followed Henry to where the Vietnamese were, that's the last he saw them, it was an ambush. Dennis platoon moved up to try and help. They got within a hundred yards of Henry's platoon, but the North Vietnamese just "mowed us down." Dennis and his men had to pull back with their injured. Dennis had to regroup and strategize so they could try and get to Henry and his platoon. Dennis endured countless attacks on him and his men, trying to persevere through them all. He was not going to give up on getting to Henry and his platoon. Can you just imagine ducking and dodging bullets all day? I can almost hear his heart beating out of his chest as he is crawling around to find cover. Not your typical days work. November 15th Dennis and his men were back at the task of trying to save Henry's platoon, another attack occurs but the perseverance pays off, they had had enough, Dennis and his men were fighting hard and at the end of this attack, there was no resistance. They made it to Henry's platoon, they were injured and traumatized but a few were still alive. Dennis and his men gathered them and got them out of there. Dennis kept going through the ambushes and the struggles, he was scared to death for his own life but was willing to do whatever it took to save the lives of his comrades. How many friends can you say would endure and persevere through something like that for you? I realize that was his job and his duties, but at what point is enough- enough? It boils down to perseverance.

So whether it be Dennis, Porter or Nguyen, these people showed perseverance to get through their struggles and continue on to what the objective was at the end of the tunnel, and if it was not for that they would have fallen with the weak.

I am proud to be an American. I stand and salute my flag in honor. I respect the men and women who serve and served our country, and any time someone will give there life to defend there country and its people, I stand beside them.

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