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Determination and Courage

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As I read all of these amazing stories, I thought to myself, wow, I might just have given up. It takes a lot of determination and courage to do what these people did in the Vietnam War. They were very lucky to be able to live through it all. I found an amazing common thread between all of the stories. I can point out in almost every story where these people showed courage and determination.

On page 106- Trails to War, Helen Tennant Hegelheimer tells us her story. It is titled "I was their wife, their sister, their girlfriend." Helen was a flight attendant. She always wanted to be one since she was little. After reading her story, I thought, did she still want to be one after this war? It took a lot of courage and strength to fly those boys to possibly their final destination... ever. They may never come back. She knew her job meant much more than just assisting them in the air. Helen had a job of being the last face to a life that would never be the same. Forget about the F-4 Phantom escorts and the fear for her life by possibly being shot down by the enemy. She knew she had it easy compared to the rest. She needed to give those men the strong, courageous encouragement to go and fight, even if that meant their death.

Dennis Deal page 130, "Man, if we're up against this, it's gonna be a long-ass year." Dennis went into Vietnam thinking it was going to be so easy to win. I do not even think he thought about having to survive, it was too easy. He soon found out that he was in an environment he did not know and was going to have to fight for his life the way most people could not even imagine. When he landed in the central highlands, he had no idea what was coming. He was in one of the largest attacks in the Vietnam War. There he stood with thousands of bullets flying by per second. They could not even hear a plane go down, it was so loud. He speaks of how "it was so terrifying. I was terrified almost to the point of insanity. But what you have to do when you are a leader and everybody's looking at you is to figure out a way to pull out that extra millimeter of courage. All you need is one more millimeter than the guys around you and they're okay. But if you show failure, they're going to stampede." He got up enough courage to try and rescue the rest of his platoons. Most of them were killed. I think his strength and

courage is what saved him. He had a shooting standoff with five to six north Vietnamese by himself, he survived with not one single bullet.

Page 228, Truong My Hoa, "They tried to make us say, Down with President Ho!"

Her passion and courage is what kept her alive. She felt so strongly about revolutionary traditions. Her parents showed the way down the path to Vietnamese freedom from the French. Her whole family was so involved in this movement, they were all imprisoned totaling a half of a century. She felt resisting was the only way to achieve peace, independence, and unification. Truong was arrested for disrupting order and political stability and charged 18 months imprisonment. Her imprisonment actually lasted 11 years. She had powdered limestone poured on her that burnt so badly she had to cut her hair using a sharpened tin can. Beaten and bloodied, this woman held on to her life like most cold not. This took strength and courage to stay alive so long when I really have to question if I myself could have done what she did and survived.

Overall, there are three different ways these people had to show strength and courage to help, or survive in Vietnam. Coming from a flight attendant who knew her face was the last face of the past; to an American soldier fighting to save his platoon as well as his life; and to a Vietnamese revolutionist having so much courage and compassion to fight for what she believed in, even if it cost her life.

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