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Decisions

The Vietnam War was made up of many decisions. Ranging from the president and his people making the "big decisions", to the soldiers making decisions that would hopefully allow them and sometimes others to survive another day. From this section 'Escalations' in the Appy book, I took three accounts that show these different type of decisions. Because the decisions that were made in these three accounts are so different, I am choosing to analyze there decision making in different ways, specific to them.

The first story I will analyze is the story of James Thomson, the special assistant of McGeorge Bundy. I chose this story to support my theme of decisions because James had to decide if he was going to allow the armed recce proposed to him every week to go through. I will judge Thomson's decision making on two points; How well did he understood the situation at hand and did he make a well educated decision. What got to me in this story is that James was the man in charge when it came to armed recce. He admitted he wasn't sure exactly what it was, yet he made his own assumptions. In doing so, he had no idea what he was condoning. Therefore this proves that he clearly didn't understand the situation at hand. Because he didn't understand, it makes the next point of whether or not he made a well educated decision quite obvious. He

did not. This is a scary thing to find out. The fact that even a man in charge can make decisions as careless as this makes me wonder how many other decisions in the Vietnam War were made out of lack of understanding.

My next story I chose is that of Chi Nguyen. This story is out of the section triage. The definition of triage is the system of sorting patients for treatment according to the severity of their wounds. Many times this left people with the decision of who lives and who dies. I believe any of the stories out of this section would go along great with my theme of decisions but I chose this one because Nguyen describes it best with these words; 'I remember walking around with a clipboard saying, "this one will go first, this one will go next, and then this one." I felt I held there destiny in my hands and it was a very, very painful situation.' A very painful situation, because of very difficult decisions. As unfortunate as the triage system was, I believe it was the best and only way to help these people make such significant decisions. They had to be logical and that meant putting emotions aside. Therefore I say the decisions Nguyen, and all the others in the same situation, made were the best that they could have done.

My final supporting story is Porter Halyburton's story of his time in a POW camp. I chose this story because it shows a different part of the war with different decisions to be made. A part of the war that is hard to understand completely unless you've been in that situation. I point this out because I want to focus on his decision to talk with the interrogators. Some might be quick to judge him as weak or comment on the fact that he gave up too soon. But if you

weren't there, I don't think you get to have a say in whether he made a poor decision. He did what he could to survive. And it came with a most guilty feeling on his part. I think the first time he spoke the words "*bao cao*" he had finally made his decision. And it devastated him into a depressed state. Analyzing his decision I've decided that he made the best choice. That is because even though they shared information, it wasn't always the truth. Because of that he was able to sustain less torture and give away minimal information. He made the best decision out of the worst situation.

Decisions were a huge part of the war. All these stories are here to show the common-thread of decisions that were made in these individual stories. All three fully support my theme and I hope they gave a good look at the different types of decisions that had to be made in this war.

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