

Due date: Saturday, 20 November 2010, 09:05 PM
Last edited: Saturday, 20 November 2010, 08:37 PM (1330 words)

PART 1

Throughout part four in *Patriots* there were many different accounts that I thought exemplified a significant "turning point" in the Vietnam War. The story that struck me as particularly poignant was told by Clark Dougan in the section entitled *Memorial Day 1968*. Clark was not a soldier in the war, nor did he mention any relatives that were involved in the war. He was simply a teenager in high school who elected to attend a collage instead of serving in the military during the war.

use past tense

Clark begins his story by talking about how his high school would periodically make announcements through the intercom to notify students that soldiers from their home town in Parma Heights, Ohio had been killed fighting in the war. This brought a somber feeling throughout the school and students resulted to immature antics in order to lighten their spirits. He relates a story about a fellow student named Greg Fischer. Clark said "we didn't know each other very well, but because my last name began with D and his with F, we were in the same home room for three years (304)." Later in Clark's story, he recalls a conversation between himself and Greg in which they shared their plans after graduation. Greg planned to enlist in the Marine Corps and Clark planned to go to college. While Clark was away at school he says that he was "kind of oblivious of the war (305)." Upon Clark's return from college after his first semester, he opened the *Cleveland Press* to an editorial written on the front page of the newspaper entitled "He was only 19 - Did you know him?" As it turns out, Clark did know him - it was Greg Fischer, the kid that he had sat with in home room for the past three years of his life, the same kid who had said "Ah, I don't think I'm going to college. I'm thinking about going into the Marines (305)."

Reading that editorial and pondering about Greg Fischer was a significant turning point for Clark. At that moment he realized how easily it could have been him who was killed. Clark said "the editorial was really asking, how many more people like Greg are we willing to waste (306)?" This caused Clark, as well as many other Americans, to question America's involvement in the Vietnam War. Clark explicitly states "I think that was the moment when "Middle America" really turned against the war (306)." Throughout the war there were thousands of Americans who had this feeling because they had a friend, relative, or acquaintance that was killed during the war, but personally for Clark and the community of Parma Heights, Ohio it had gone on for too long and the toll was now too personal. Therefore, it resulted in a "turning point" for the

community in Ohio and personally for Clark. Another reason that identifies this editorial as a turning point is that in Clark's account he claims that "The *Cleveland Press* was part of the Scripps-Howard chain, a conservative syndicate that had strongly supported the war." So it was remarkable that this newspaper would run such an angry editorial about an American casualty (306)." Ordinarily organizations don't just change their stand on politics, but the Tet Offensive had resulted in at least one organization such as the *Cleveland Press* to write an article to raise concern about America's involvement in the war. One other statement made by Clark proves even more that this was a significant turning point the statement read "I think that a lot of World War II vets who had been sitting around their kitchen saying, " You've got to fight for your country, " were starting to say, "Fuck this. It's not worth Greg Fischer's life or his buddy's life." Or maybe they weren't saying it, but they were feeling it (306)."

On Memorial Day 1968, a seemingly insignificant editorial was written in a medium-sized newspaper about a young man from the small town of Parma Heights, Ohio, but it gave voice to the growing frustration that was spreading throughout America. While this wasn't the singular "turning point" in the war, it was a moment in Clark Dougan's life where he had thought something needed to change, and he wasn't alone. Countless other citizens were having similar moments of awakening around that same period of time. For some, it was triggered by the news of the death of a loved one, and for others it was another event. Taken together, these quiet revelations became a groundswell that spelled the end of public support for the war in Vietnam. Without that support, the end of the war was only a matter of time.



PART 2

Even after reading part five in *Patriots*, I found it difficult to pinpoint the actual "end" to the Vietnam War. Obviously, the official end to the war occurred in 1975, but it seems to me that the withdrawal of the last United States troops was a mere formality. In the section entitled *Paris*, Nguyen Khac Huyn tells his account of the discussions and negotiations that took place.

Now 77 years old, Nguyen had started working for the Ministry of Foreign affairs in 1954. He was involved in the peace talks that took place in Paris between the years of 1968 to 1973. "After five years of formal talks that were mere shadowboxing, real discussion began in the summer of 1972. The famous draft agreement of October 8, 1972, finally broke deadlock and within four days we reached a basic understanding (468)," Nguyen said in the opening statement of his story. After reading this, I felt it was an actual sign the war was coming to an "end," and according to Nguyen, members of the delegation felt the same way. He went on to state, "Every member of the delegation believed peace was at hand. We

had enough hostilities and enough delegations (468).” What Nguyen explains next was mind-boggling to me, and it seems to him as well – the United States started bombing again after agreements to end the war had been reached. While reading Nguyen’s account, I sensed that he still holds a great deal of resentment towards America for bombing after negotiations yielded the promise of peace. In his account he says, “The Americans made many mistakes, but this was the biggest mistake they had ever made. No, it was not a mistake, it was an inexplicable crime. After the agreement had been concluded, why did they bomb and kill civilians (468)?” Despite his bitterness, and even though I don’t have an answer to his question, **reading his story made me feel that the “end” of the war was nearer.** Nguyen goes on to explain the difficulty in reaching another agreement in January of 1973. Although he explains the challenges of having everyone sign the agreement, I could sense the light at the end of the tunnel at that point. In his brief account, Nguyen remains negative while referring to a conversation between himself and Secretary of Defense McNamara about missed opportunities to end the war sooner. Nguyen claimed that a statement was made by Mr. McNamara and Nguyen retorted, “When McNamara says both sides missed opportunities he wants to distribute the blame for the war equally on the shoulders of both parties and mitigate American responsibility for the war (469).” Regardless of who made the majority of the missteps in the peace process, I got the impression from Nguyen’s account that the end of the war was a forgone conclusion at that point.

Even though this account refers to events that had happened several years prior to the formal end of the war in Vietnam, I believe that it comes about as close as possible to pinpointing the events that actually brought an end to the war.

Close this window

 [Moodle Docs for this page](#)