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I selected Tom Grace's story as a turning point for two reasons. The first is that Tom as an individual was forever altered by the protest and shootings at Kent State. Before being shot in the foot, Tom had only attended rallies and protests but had not yet committed himself fully to the anti-war campaign. Although he says "I honestly can't say that the Kent State shootings altered my political perspective. But it did reinforce an existing one and the anger I felt about it was my political fuel." Tom's devotion and level of involvement changed because of the anger and outrage the shootings evoked in him. After his recovery he went on to lead protests, pass out flyers, planning, organizing and leading meetings and the shootings even shaped the path of his career. So, personally for Tom, the Kent State shootings were a very impacting event in his life.

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The second reason I chose Tom Grace's story is that I feel that Tom probably represented a large number of American college kids during the Vietnam War. College is typically a place where young adults explore their political views and get involved in causes that resonate with their newly found independence and Tom was no different. After the Kent State shootings, many college kids across the U.S. shared in Tom's rage over the event. This contributed to a broader resentment for the Vietnam War and any president or government who was not in favor of ending it. The Kent State shootings were a personal turning point for Tom Grace but also can be seen as a turning point in the attitude and overall political awareness of America's youth against the war in Vietnam.



George Evans' story starts by focusing on his very patriotic upbringing. He was raised around veterans and taught that service to your country not only honorable but necessary and looked forward with pride to the day that he would be able to fulfill his duty. George believed in his country and was not raised to question its authority or doubt its intent. Speaking about his childhood he says "But you just can't exaggerate the pull of the military on kids from neighborhoods like mine. Everything you'd seen and heard your whole life made it feel inevitable and right that you would do your time in the service." This was George Evans' reality.

After volunteering for service and finding his passion for medicine while serving in Africa, George learned that his best friend, Billy Dick, had been killed while fighting in Vietnam. To George, this was

a devastating event. In the last letter he had received from him Billy said "I don't care what you do with your life, but do not come here. Stay out of this war. Just forget it. This is the most awful place on earth. There's nothing heroic about it. It's worse than I thought." At that point, George still believed in his country and the justification for the war in Vietnam so he headed there to find out first hand what it was really like.

Once in Vietnam, George quickly realized that America, the country he knew and loved was not a reality. He says "I had certain expectations of my government by they were exploded almost immediately upon entering the hospital in Cam Ranh Bay. When I walked in, I realized that the country I was from was not the country I thought it was. There was so much needless pain and suffering." This was the beginning of the end to what George Evans had always felt and know of his country.

After being giving the job of cleaning up the body of a Vietnamese boy, George became aware of a horrible 'game' that U.S. soldiers were playing for entertainment called 'gook hockey'. George continues on about the staff sergeant who had given him the heinous task of tending to the dead child, "He was an awful person. He was completely different from the veterans I knew growing up, completely contrary to what I thought I new about men in war and what I expected of them."

This outright disregard for human life caused a small rebellion in George. He started to defy authority, the authority of his once beloved American government. After a confrontation with his commander, George realized "It was if I'd become a different person. I was saying all these things I never would have said before. Something in my head said I was done with the military and sick of the war..." This was the exact moment that George's childhood America disappeared forever. His personal experience finally outweighed his childhood impressions of the military, bringing his respect for it to an end.

tie to 'the end' theme

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