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It was March 16, 1968, when a helicopter door-gunner named Larry Colburn, his pilot, Hugh Thompson, and another crewman, Glen Andreotta helped stop some of the brutal attacks on innocent victims at My Lai. Thirty years later, the U.S. Army awarded the Soldiers' Medal for Gallantry to the three men. They flew a OH-23- a little gasoline-engine bubble helicopter, they were aerial scouts. Their job was to use their small aircraft as bait with bigger gunships covering them, they would fly real low and if they encountered anything they would mark it with smoke, return fire, and then let the gunships work out. As the events unfolded on that day in Vietnam, it turns out he was going to be doing something far different then the "norm." Larry describes working the perimeter of My Lai-4, -5, and -6, he remembers seeing the American troops come in on slicks. Larry's bait craft got in front of them to see if they were going to encounter anything and they did not receive any fire. It was market day and they could see a lot of women and children leaving the hamlet. They were going down the road with empty baskets. They continued further around the perimeter and saw a few wounded women in the rice fields south of My Lai-4, they marked their bodies with smoke grenades expecting the medics would give them medical assistance. As they were coming back they started seeing bodies, the same villagers they had seen walking to the market, "they hadn't gotten off the road, they were in piles, dead." Larry recalls the confusion he and his crew were feeling, almost one of those head scratching moments. The American soldiers on the ground were nonchalant, no one was hiding or showed any concern of threat. They saw a young girl lying in the grass, unarmed and wounded in the chest. They marked her with green smoke, meaning it's safe to approach. This is where the picture becomes clear. Moments later Captain Medina came over to the young girl "kicked her, stepped back and finished her off." " He did it right in front of us." That was the moment it all clicked-it was our guys, the Americans doing the killing. That was the "turning point," the very moment where Larry and his crew knew the enemy that day was one of them, an American soldier. They went from killing the Vietnamese to saving innocent Vietnamese people. Their morals as humans, true American soldiers kicked in and took over. Race and war for that moment meant nothing, protecting the harmless and unarmed civilians was now their quest. They went toe to toe with the American soldiers letting them know they were going to spare the lives of the innocent. They began taking them to

safe places, or for medical assistance. Larry speaks of a "cute little child" probably somewhere around four or five years old that was in a ditch filled with probably more than a hundred bodies and blood everywhere. He recalls pulling the child out, covered in blood, checking for broken bones or bullet holes, he/she "appeared to be fine." They took the child to an orphanage. After the chaotic mess was over, Larry talked about how "these guys were really out for revenge." The American soldiers that killed the civilians did not capture any weapons, they didn't kill any draft-age males. The list of dead was around 120+ children under the age of five. Larry says that is something he has struggled with all his life. In 2001, Larry went back to Vietnam to participate in the opening of a My Lai Peace Park and the dedication of a new school in the village. While he was there he was reunited with the "cute little child" he rescued from the ditch. His name was Do Hao and he was now forty-one. If it was not for that "turning point" on March 16, 1968, there would be no reunion. How many more lives would have been viciously snuffed out for no reason at all.



Huu Ngoc was a journalist in Vietnam. He is a proud father of three children. At the time of his interview he was eighty-one, with his eye-sight failing, but his mind sharp as a tack. He explains he is known in Vietnam as the "importer-exporter of culture" because he writes books to present Vietnamese culture abroad and to introduce foreign cultures to Vietnam. He sets down with his hands on his knees to tell a story. He explains that the Vietnamese dream was that the United States would recognize Vietnamese independence. That dream faded slowly as the U.S. helped the French retake Indochina. The Vietnamese began to hate the Americans, especially after 1954 when America supported Ngo Dinh Diem. The American bombing that took place in 1960 forced his children to be evacuated to a village across the Red River. Huu's oldest child writes a letter, "The Americans bombed a neighboring village. We saw fire and thought they had bombed Hanoi. We all wondered if our parents had been hit or not. Did you live or not? We hate Americans." The family was torn apart because of this. They had to all plan a time to meet to have a "family reunion." On this one particular "reunion" food was short as always, Huu brought a rice cake as a special treat for the whole family to share, they all passed it around to each other with no one being the first to take a bite. To Huu this showed the war had "cemented us together," even his children of twelve, ten, and eight refused to think of themselves first. Huu believes the gap between the Vietnamese and Americans is filling in, the feeling of hatred has grown weaker and weaker. He explains Ho Chi Minh's teachings of distinguishing between the people of the United States and those responsible for the war. The Vietnam war left scars in a

lot of hearts and minds for various reasons, and to this day there is still hostility towards race, religion and the country itself on both sides. Its almost as if "hate" was a gene past down through the blood-lines like diabetes or cancer. Huu put an "end" to that. "We no longer hate Americans," he proclaims. Huu talks of the strength and weakness of America and Vietnam and how we need to "marry" the best of both cultures. Huu went through emotional turmoil by being separated from his family, yet he still has the heart and love to put an "end" to the hatred. He experienced first hand, he was there, he is a bigger man to remove the animosities in his heart and heal. It has to end somewhere and if more people could view things like this, there would be a bigger ending to cultural differences. We could learn from each other.

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