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Tran Thi Gung (page 15)

"I never felt guilty about the killing I did...since the Americans came to my country, I don't feel guilty." Imagine. You're at home in Eugene, Oregon, possibly preparing a meal for your family and you receive a loud knock on your door. You answer. Several Vietnam soldiers in uniform, armed with weapons, inform you they just killed your father at the old Federal Court House and you must go collect his body.

I was struck by the passion of Tran Thi Gung. At a tender age she rose to the occasion to save her people and avenge her father's death. Tran Thi Gung paints a realistic picture of her experience. She presents herself as an opportunist. She realizes if she waits until the "big" Americans get close enough, she can pick one off, wait until the others come to retrieve him, she can kill more; and finally she gathers the rifles left behind by the soldiers.

Tran Thi Gung also strikes me as a woman who has a tender spot for the underdog. She fights to help the people in her neighborhood impoverished and intimidated by the "puppet soldiers." She keeps her head about her when the unarmed southern soldier recognizes her and she releases him. Tran Thi Gung even expresses sympathy for the captured GI soldier.

This amazing human being tells an incredible story about courage and perseverance. I don't think that there will ever be a point where too much time has passed for her to forget what she experienced.

Henry Prunier (page 38) & **Vo Nguyen Giap** (page 41)

I am disappointed about opportunities missed. I am disappointed the United States did not listen more. I am disappointed that Henry Prunier did not have a seat at the table when the United States of America were making decisions that would affect so many people, in so many places, for so many years. I am disappointed Henry Prunier felt the need to fall silent in his community when he returned to the United States. I am disappointed and ashamed of the United States government.

In a short period of time, Henry Prunier had a unique

experience. He was at the birth of the United States of America's physical involvement in the Vietnam war. Little did he know he was actually sleeping with our so called "enemy". Better yet, he was actually sent by our government to train this small group of warriors for weapon use. Our government introduced "carbines, M-1 rifles, machine guns, grenades, bazookas, and mortars..." that would later be used to kill the United States soldiers.

Thanks to Henry Prunier we see a far different side than the United States government portraits of Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap. We are introduced to a frail and gentle man, Ho Chi Minh, who cares deeply about Vietnam and the people who live there. A man dedicated to the liberation and freedom for his country. A man of the people. A man of hope. We have the opportunity to meet the curious, future commander of the North Vietnam's People's Army, Vo Nguyen Giap. We meet a Vietnam people who welcome and embrace the United States and are hopeful that we will help them gain their independence. A smart, dedicated group of people, willing to do whatever needed to save their country.

Vo Nguyen Giap teaches us the lessons of "...self-determination. That spirit provided us with stamina, courage, and creativity in the face of a powerful enemy." He exposes the United States government as the evil force behind the war, the air raids, the My Lai massacre, and the bombing of a hospital in Hanoi.

The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) knew the real story. They took time to know the people, the culture, and how to work together. They accomplished good will that persevered in spite of all the bloodshed. Fifty years later the General (Giap) and the Private (Prunier) meet again, the orange demonstrates the acknowledgement. After all these years, I think it is a tribute to the Vietnamese people that Henry Prunier has the silk-embroidered tapestry which was a gift from Ho Chi Minh alongside his other treasures.

Unfortunately, the United States government officials still don't get it. As recently as the mid nineties U. S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara quoted as wanting to review the Vietnam war as a "misunderstanding" and "tragedy". Giap response: "...tragedy for you, but for us the war was a noble sacrifice."

Vo Nguyen Giap eloquently speaks of "history is not made with "ifs," but if American leaders had been wiser I think we could have been spared the war." What a shame we didn't listen...

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