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Bob Gabriel never really wanted to fight in this war but did because of his honor, his respect of his father. Gabriel was sent out on Christmas Day 1967. He recalls how when he got there they had a "Mad Minute", this is where everybody fires at the same time as much as they can for a minute. They do this in case the Vietnamese happened to be rushing the line. I cannot imagine sitting there in the dark knowing that there are people all around me trying to kill me. Gabriel talks about how a young man named Larry Herbert came into his tent one day saying that it was going to be his last, and it was. There was so much danger out there and so many traps that they never knew when they would hit one. Poor Herbert jumped into a hole that a fellow soldier had dug days before only to find a trap and his death. Gabriel talks about how they could not get any air help because the weather was not good enough. When the Tet Offensive started and Hue got overrun, Gabriel's group was sent to cut off the North Vietnamese's supply line. On January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1968, 70,000 North Vietnamese soldiers launched the Tet offensive. Vietcong guerrilla fighters violated the temporary truce they agreed to honor around the New Year celebrations.

The story that influenced me the most was the words of Morton Halperin. Halperin talks about how the government began to talk about how this was a unwinnable war. Which I believe made them begin to question what was going to happen as this war proceeded on. This war has had so many people involved and no one really knew what was going on there were so many people left out of different loops. There were some many people second guessing their decisions because they did not want to make the wrong choice. Henry Kissinger hired Halperin to be senior official in the National Security Council. Halperin would resign in September, 1969 he would be the first of several aids to resign. Kissinger did not trust anyone. He would set one staff member off against another making for a very negative work atmosphere. This war had so many lies and misleading information tied to it that it makes it hard to really know what the truth is. There were so many people saying so many things and Nixon really wanted to end this war with honor he tried to end the war on October 22, but Nguyen Van Thieu stopped the process in its track. Nixon concluded that only force could persuade Hanoi. Beginning on December 18 and continuing for 11 days the US did air attacks on military targets. This plan was a psychological plan to shock North Vietnamese back to the table to make plans to end the war. In January 1973, the Americans and North Vietnamese worked out the last details of the settlement. All parties involved in the conflict signed the final agreement on January 27 in Paris

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Brian Hein

History 195

November 28, 2009

#### Patriots Journal #4

The turning point for the war in Vietnam centered on the aftermath of the Tet Offensive. This was the beginning of the end of the United States involvement in the war and eventually led to the fall of the South Vietnamese government. In the days leading to the fall of Saigon there was another story from the *Patriots* text that seemed to exemplify the American leadership throughout the war until its end.

In the story told by Barry Zorthian *Then-boom!-Tet comes along* (pg. 290-5) we see the impact of the Tet on the members of Congress and the American public shown through the media. There was a loss of faith in the military when after having been told only about three months before Tet by Westmoreland in a speech that "the beginning of the end was in sight and that in the next two years we should be able to reduce our troops in South Vietnam" and this "was interpreted as claiming enormous progress." The statement about the end being in sight was profound, but not in how it actually happened.

Up until the time of Tet the public was being told such things as "we never lost a battle." Then when the Tet occurred "the sudden shock of these attacks, and the fact they hit so many places at the same time, was a tremendous blow to U.S. public thinking and particularly to government officials and Congress" drastic change in the perception of the war took place. This change in the public sensitivity led to "The administration's inclination to move in new directions" and was "strengthened by mounting evidence of public dissatisfaction with the war" (Herring pg.240). These new directions included peace talks with the Hanoi government, Vietnamization, and the eventual de-escalation of the U.S. involvement.

The effect of the Tet Offensive was felt everywhere in American, it changed the perception of the war for the public and was felt all the way to Congress and the President. All of these factors added up to the "turning point" of the U.S. involvement in South Vietnam.

The story *There was classified confetti all over the trees* by Frank Snepp provided a good look at the ending of the war. His story tells us what was happening at the U.S. embassy during the final days of the war. This account, to me, not only told of the ending of the war but also showed a similarity to how politics affected the actions taken by the U.S. during the war.

Having obtained intelligence there was to be a "major offensive" the North Vietnamese struck the "MR-1 [the five northern most provinces in South Vietnam]." Snepp flew up to MR-1 and saw first hand South Vietnamese retreating into the sea off of Danang. When informing the U.S. Ambassador South Vietnam, Graham Martin of what he saw he replied "I don't believe you, Your intelligence must be mistaken." Then even after the South Vietnamese army had "been routed with virtually no resistance, Martin cabled Washington proposing a five-year economic plan for South Vietnam. He had drifted into a complete dream state." Despite the building evidence of a defeat of the Saigon government there was a refusal to believe what was happening all around him.

With the approaching North Vietnamese army, Snepp wanted to form an evacuation plan for the Vietnamese who had assisted the CIA and the U.S. military. With no formal plan for the evacuation there was panic to try to get out before the fall of Saigon. Martin, still thinking there could be some form of negotiated settlement, still refused to allow a tree to be cut down near the embassy which would allow for

more area for the evacuation helicopters to land. There was no doubt all Americans would have transportation out of Vietnam, but it seems those Vietnamese who had helped the Americans were not given much concern by Martin. An instance showing this occurred when at the hotel the C.I.A. operated out of it was discovered that there were still seventy Vietnamese translators at the hotel and the person in charge of evacuating them had evacuated himself leaving all of them there. Later "after the Communists took over they machine gunned most of the Vietnamese in that hotel." This story told the finality of the Vietnam War signaling an end of the war for the U.S., the fear that driven all of the administrations finally became a reality, the U.S. had lost its first war.

This story seems to parallel the approach the U.S. had to the war. The administrations were so singled minded, they believed they all knew what was the best plan of action and refused to deviate from this plan, even when there was evidence to the contrary that another tact would be better. Also, it seems the Vietnamese people were always thought as being second class, not warranting equal status by the U.S. government.

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Chad Schultz

November 27, 2009

Journal # 4

After reading part four, I felt as if there were two separate turning points in the book. My first personal opinion on a turning point was Memorial Day 1968, the author was talking about classmates and how they were oblivious to the draft. They had no interest in going into combat nor cared until one day when they were reading the newspaper and in one particular article it featured classmates of the author. The article stated in the Cleveland press "He was only 19: Did you know him?" Later in the article they had an insert from the young man and it stated "Open this if I didn't come back from Vietnam." It had informed his family about his life insurance and where to address his money. The Cleveland Press was known as a very conservative newspaper and a vivid supporter of the war. This would be something previously of no concern to the Cleveland press and in which they would be particularly oblivious to but they were blatantly making a statement now. So were many other individuals who were previously standing by the War and were the crutch for supporting and continuing the war. They were fed up, like many other individuals at this time and started realizing many innocent young soldiers were being harmed and/or their lives were being lost due to something they have no control over. The media was trying to react and reach out to Americans to stop the violence. I think that this was a turning point in the human psyche, it initiated some sort of distortion between the continuation of Vietnam and the war being fought.

After continuing on with part four I came across My Lai. This was a very difficult time in which it seemed as if they had given up some sort of direction and basically turned into guerrillas (the soldiers and their tactics). They were in comparisons in the book to "Street thugs" (soldiers) that would take everything no matter the situation. During My Lai many individuals were sent on "search and destroy" missions in which body count would measure their success as soldiers. They were not only killing the opponent but innocent civilians that had supposedly been notified that they were in a free fire zone. As I read more into the article it stated that the innocent civilians were not being notified and this was evident to the soldiers. They knew, but back home this was becoming more apparent and people were creating their own opinions towards the war through this new found awareness. As the media exposed more and more of the war this was creating less of a blanket around the war itself and producing fear and anger. I think this was the actual turning point in where Americans actually took their own opinion and stood up. They were sick of being controlled and lied to and decided to take a stand. Of course this would create much chaos, but eventually the troops would withdraw slowly from across seas. My Lai was a very chaotic and disturbing end to a horrid realization to how the war was being operated.

The ending point in the Vietnam War itself was Saigon point. This was when the Vietcong felt they could reach agreement with each other and end the war. This was when we actually declared withdrawal for our troops and we agreed. All troops evacuated and Saigon point was the official conclusion to the war. The South

Vietnamese Government had announced their surrender in 1975. In the story the author stated "We are here to hand over you the power to avoid bloodshed". This clearly was stating that South Vietnam was surrendering concluding a long and tumultuous war in April 30, 1975.

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I feel the turning point of the Vietnam war is referring to event such as the Tet Offensive, where the North Vietnamese showed that they weren't scared of the U.S. military. They wanted to show they they were a force worth fearing and wouldn't give up at any cost. It was the turning point for the U.S. army because they were over budget with the war costs, as well as having sent excessive number of young men to go to war; much to the disinterest of most U.S. civilians at the time. The United States government could tell that the war was inevitably going to end up a stale-mate. This was a loss in the minds of President Johnson and many of the congressmen's eyes.

At the beginning of the Vietnam war the U.S. thought it was going to be an in and out job, very quick and painless. With enemy victories such as the Tet Offensive and others, the Vietnam war started to look like power and dominance was slightly flopping to the other side. The fire power the U.S. once had was diminishing slowly, fatigued by the Viet-cong army.

The ending in part five is referring to the "ending" of president Johnson final term and the cut of troops being sent across seas to Vietnam. The "ending" is symbolic to the slow demise of Johnson's presidency. He didn't want to end the war this way and he didn't want to end his term as president coming up on the losing end of an extremely costly war. Johnson came to realize it was the end when both the populace and the majority of congress started to disapprove of sending more troops and spending more money. The disapproval for president Johnson and the war were eminent at almost every college across the country. This massive display of protest eventually led to the announcement of president Johnson ending his term.

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After the Tet offensive events happened the "turning point" seemed to be on the horizon for the Vietnam conflict. In Christian Appy's book *Patriots* part four there was a particular part that instilled this belief for myself and it was titled "You Look Like A Gook." "Among the war's many complexities, U.S. forces sent to Vietnam carried with them all the attributes of a nation divided by increasing racial turmoil" (355). The tensions among Americans of different races were nearly as strong as the ones that interacted between them and their enemies. These interactions only worsened by the long lasting war in Vietnam that was dragging on making the lives of everyone hard and strenuous. "Thus, Vietnam proved not only a foreign war, but in certain ways an internal one as well in which America's most tortured racial struggles were played out by young armed men in an environment permeated by violence" (357). The war was simply getting worse for the U.S. due to the strain on its soldiers from everything from long tours in Vietnam, racial tensions happening in U.S. and everywhere Americans were, and the growing dislike for the continual ongoing conflict in Vietnam. The men and women whom were not white were simply confounded that they could put their lives on the line for a country that would not see them as an equal to a white person.

In part five of Appy's *Patriots* I found the best example of the "ending" of the war to be during the part of Frank Snapp "There was classified confetti all over the trees." "When I got to the top I could see the headlights of the North Vietnamese Army on the edge of the city—pearls of light as the entire one hundred and forty thousand troops that had marshaled around Saigon moved in". This happened as more troops were pulled to protect the U.S. Embassy in Saigon and little were left to protect other major cities. The North Vietnamese and the Communists had pushed the Southern Army back and "sliced the country in two just north of Nha Trang." Martin the Ambassador from the U.S. wanted not to defend North of Saigon. As the North's troops began to attack Saigon with artillery many of the Americans began leaving. "In many ways the war ended just as it had been conducted by the Americans, with an often total disregard for the lives at stake."

At the end he talks about the forgetting of the human stakes as he watched thousands of Vietnamese that were just left in the city of Saigon while the Communists pushed in. As well as his Vietnamese lover that killed herself and his young child waiting for his response to be evacuated.

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In my opinion, the story that best explains the "turning point" of the war is by Barry Zorthian. He was, "in charge of all media relations and served as the principal public relations adviser to the U.S. ambassador and the commander of U.S. forces." (Appy 290) He was in Saigon during the Tet Offensive and knew firsthand what had happened and what the affects were. His story best explains the turning point, because he describes the lasting effects of how Tet changed America and our view of the war. General Westmoreland gave a speech in 1967, during which he said, "that the beginning of the end was in sight and that in the next two years we should be able to reduce our troops in South Vietnam. Well that was interpreted as claiming enormous progress. Then-boom! - Tet comes along after all those reassurances that things were improving and the impact of those multiattacks was devastating. If I were in Congress I'd feel the same thing- what the hell are you saying?" (Appy 292) The American public was being fed bullshit and they just didn't know it, until something like Tet came along and gave them an opportunity. Walter Cronkite even said that the war is in a standstill and we're not going to win, which then persuaded LBJ to say that if he had lost Walter Cronkite, then he had lost Middle America. Zorthian even recommended to Washington that they go to the Vietnamese government and said, "either get your act together and start performing better or our responsibilities to our citizens and our country require us to pull out." (Appy 293) Our government was shaken and the public was no longer supporting LBJ, like they had before. More people were starting to ask questions and this put pressure on LBJ and others in Washington. People started realizing that we probably wouldn't win this war and started looking for a way out. The Tet Offensive was the turning point in the war and because Zorthian was in Saigon during these attacks, I believe that his story best explains the turning point of the Vietnam War.

The ending of the war can best be explained through a story by Nguyen Ngoc Bich. He was the director of information at South Vietnamese embassy in Washington D.C. from 1967 to 1971. He also gave speeches at numerous colleges during the late 60's and 70's, which was during the peak of the campus protests, and spoke in defense of the South Vietnamese government and its U.S backed war against Communism. Bich was usually faced with protesters and antiwar groups, who would often disrupt his speeches. After a speech, he was approached by a few students who wanted to talk to him. Following their talk, one of them said that they had never had a real discussion with anyone about the Vietnam War. Bich does come across universities where there were people who were supportive of the war, but the majority of colleges were filled with protesters and antiwar groups. Especially after Kent State and other similar incidences, people really started to ask questions. Bich recalls of being asked by one man, " why should my son die for your country?" (Appy 420) The people were not feeling the same as they had years earlier. With LBJ's public support was decreasing and the want to get out of Vietnam was increasing. The less the public and the people as a whole support a war they are not if favor of, the more likely it is that they will loose. There were many questions raised about My Lai and Lt. Calley. How can innocent civilians be murdered and only one person go to jail for a few years. I believe that this story best describes the ending of the war, because he gave speeches at many colleges around the nation and was confronted with antiwar protesters almost everywhere he spoke. The peak of campus protests happened during the late 1960's and early 1970's. These were young Americans stepping up in numbers to deliberately speak against a war they knew was wrong. If the people are not behind their government and especially a war that their government is involved in, then it is almost certain that victory will never be reached. The antiwar movement, changing

public opinion due to new information, a change in power in the government and many other things led to the realization that the Vietnam War was a mistake. I think that many people were deceived into believing some sort of propaganda and when they finally saw the truth they were pissed. They started asking more questions and protesting against the war escalated, which was the beginning of the end for the United States and Vietnam.

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There were a lot of great stories in the Appy book in both parts four and five. Most everyone will agree that the turning point in the war was after the Tet Offensive. This bombing brought the war to the American people and could not be denied. The turning point story I chose is by Clark Dougan. To most this story probably doesn't hold a lot of significance, but to me his story showed the distant reality of the war that most Americans seemed to have. Growing up Dougan talked about a young man in his home room class that mentioned he would go to war. Like many middle class, poorly educated young men, their fate was Vietnam. Dougan talked about how he would go to college instead.

The gap of those who were drafted is expressed in his story and runs deep in a lot of the young men who were drafted. The young man who went to Vietnam and Dougan weren't close more like acquaintances, but it's amazing how barely knowing someone can make such a huge impact on you. The death of the 19 year old boy that Dougan went to school with brought the distant war to his front step.

I saw this story as a great representation of the turning point in the war because the "average American" who didn't go to war (Dougan) was finally struck by the reality that there was a war going on and something needed to be done. When a tragedy, like the death of someone from your home town occurs, it gives you a different outlook on yourself like; where you are in life, where you've been and the difference in choices you've made. The 19 year old boy who died could have been Dougan and that realization was demonstrated well in his story. Dougan's turning point (realization of the war) is a scaled down version of how death affects people.

In the video and the Herring book, they both talked about how Tet brought the reality of the war to the American people. The story by Dougan is just that; a small town affected by the war because one of their own was killed. The media like mentioned in other sources really brought the gruesome war to reality, the headline in the paper for this boy's death was "He was only 19- Did you know him?"

From part five, the ending the story I selected is one from a soldier; George Evans. His experience isn't heroic in the sense that he helped save many people's lives and helped end the war. His story could be seen as unpatriotic and arrogant. Evans grew up surrounded by military influence by his father and WWII veterans. He joined the air force by the influence of his best friend. Toward the end of Evans' tour in Vietnam, he was sloppy. He was disrespectful toward those higher up and refused to groom himself. After command leaders changed in the hospital he was working at the new commander wanted to teach Evans a lesson. He wanted Evans to cut his hair, wear the proper uniform and obey the military way of life. Evans refused and even became mouthy toward the commander. He refused to obey orders and was court-martial. Typically when something like this occurs in the military, punishment would occur fairly quickly, but Evans was allowed to go on R and R. Once going through his trial, he barely received a slap on the wrist, being simply fined \$74. Evans could have been knocked down in rank, lost pay, been un-honorably discharged or put in the Brig. This leniency in punishment to me showed how the war was beginning to end and America realized we needed to get out because we were wrong. Everyone seemed to be run down from the war that punishment wasn't high on the priority list anymore. The negotiations in Paris and hopeful troop withdrawal were much more important. The fine that Evans was issued, seemed almost like the judge was agreeing with what Evans did, but the law is the law and some sort of "punishment" had to be done.

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There are so many to choose from. I would have to say that in Part Four, the speaker with the best example of "Turning Point" was from Larry Colburn. (pgs.346-349) Here is an example, to me, of how the war was failing on all fronts. Larry was telling how he and some colleagues helped to rescue innocent Vietnamese civilians who were being murdered by American soldiers at My Lai. Larry describes how they courageously put their own life on the line to protect these Vietnamese women and children.

He tells how they were prepared to open fire on the American GI's if they tried to attack them for helping. He witnessed women being murdered, and knew he had to do something. Larry states that they were putting out flares for medics to signal that it was safe to come help. He soon realized that the flares were helping to assist the GI's in knowing where there were people who were still alive. I can not even imagine the guilt that you could carry with yourself after witnessing such a thing.

The reason why I chose this particular speaker was because I can see several of the ways that Americans were at a "turning point" from this one event. The massacre at My Lai, although not very publicized at the time, would prove to be significant its own way. Once the world learned of this massacre later on, a long and very public trial of Lieutenant William Calley, which led to a life sentence, once again brought out public outcries to end the war. (Herring290) There was also the fact that in this particular case, you saw descent amongst the military. Which was becoming more and more common later on in the war. There were many more reports of officers trying to kill one another. (Herring301)

There was also other accounts from another person, Michael Bernhardt, (pg349-353) who states that more higher commanding officers knew and directed this massacre. If all of this information had come out during trial, I can only imagine how much public opinion would lean more towards mistrust and disappointment from the American people. Just from this one instance there are two very compelling stories of how this one time in history had changed two lives forever.

From Part Five, my example of an "Ending" comes from Steve Sherlock. (pgs425-429) His story truly reflects that of an ending to me. In his story he speaks of going to Washington DC with other veterans to oppose the war. He states that once he got to Vietnam in 1968, it only took months for him to realize that we (Americans) should not be there. (pg425) His story is one of many where he starts out being in support of the war, only to change his opinion once he actually saw the effects of the war. Steve was literally punished for trying to be compassionate during a time of war.

Steve speaks of how he and a friend of his wanted to set up a local chapter of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. (pg427) This was helpful to him to be able to be around other people who had been through similar circumstances. He was thrilled to see so many veterans come out in support in Washington DC. He recalls feeling conflicted about throwing his medal away. He had a sense of brotherhood with the men that he had served with, but he was truly opposed of the war. The fact that so many veterans were willing to put themselves out there and admit to all of the wrongdoings that they had personally seen and done, signifies the beginning of an end to me. There was also students, media, and other politicians there for this protest. I can not imagine that the world seeing men who actually fought in the war standing up to oppose it, helped public support or opinions about what exactly our

goal was in Vietnam.

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The Tuan Van Ban story(pg302), is a short story with not a lot of detail but I think, best describes the turning point of the war. This is a short story but I think it summarizes the Tet Offensive and the North Vietnamese fighting style through out the war. You have this young man, infantry lieutenant, who was seeing his first action and it just happens to be the start of the Tet Offensive. Then some of his men, also seeing there first action, so excited they couldn't sleep and they are about to began one of the biggest operations in military history. We all know how big the Tet Offensive was and the aftermath in America, politically, military, and socially. So you have these young men, who have no idea that they are about to part of history and who know they can't win a dragged-out battle but they must destroy as much as they can and then get out, pretty much they are in a no win battle and they still give it all they have. Overall this story reminds me of the Revolutionary war, you have the British, who are the unstoppable army. Then you Americans, who just like the Vietnamese, are the army that should just lay down and has no chance of winning.

The Nguyen Khacc Huynh story(pg 468) describess, what I think, the best way to describee the ending of the Vietnam war and probablyy not for the reason that think. You have this story that is about the peace talks and treaty and that usually means the end of a conflict or in this case the Vietnam war. You have these peace talks and then you have the Americans back away from the talks and start bombing in a last ditch effort to win and get what you want. As the story briefly describes the peace talks of the 4 parties, the US government, the Hanoi Government, the Saigon government, and the Provisional Revolutionary Government, the last paragraph you have the story teller talking about McNamara saying both sides missed opportunities for peace, but I think it is really telling us that even in peace the Americans can't admit they made a huge mistake and sending in the last bombing effort was just a way to get the last laugh or the last word.

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With the Tet Offensive of 1968 being an indisputable turning point of the Vietnam War, the aftershocks of this crisis supplied just as many problems and debates within the military as the actual event itself. There were now more difficult decisions to be made regarding the proposals of both escalation and withdrawal, while at the same time watching casualties in Vietnam reach its peak. With the help of extensive media coverage overseas, the decision making for Lyndon B. Johnson and his administration became stressful as they scrambled to maintain the support of the newly influenced public. Despite all the military-related setbacks in Vietnam, the next turning point of the war would not come directly from the country of Vietnam; instead, it would occur on American soil, as the increasing number of antiwar riots developed into a national focus.

While the Tet Offensive provided to be one of the defining moments of the war as a whole, it caused a wave of predicaments that greatly affected the American society. Due to the public's awareness of the war's brutality and the realization of our actual status, the protesting became more organized, more unified, and more abundant. The attention of the nation had split between the actual war itself and the uprising of what is now considered a social turning point within United States borders.

In the *Patriots* textbook, the story told by Peter Kuznick best exemplifies the scenario from his own personal perspective. At the time Kuznick was a college student at Rutgers University who supported Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a student activated movement that focused on organizing student radicalism and advocating the "New Left." Kuznick describes how in 1968 he attended the National Democratic Convention in Chicago to participate in the planned protests. He was well aware of the fact that there was a high possibility of violence based on what he had heard coming out of the city, especially since "the Daily Machine and the Chicago Police had given sufficient indication that the last thing they had any respect for was the first amendment right to gather and protest in public." (Appy, p. 313). But the risk of violence ended up much higher after the sudden assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in April of that year, and because of the responding uprising the police were issued shoot-to-kill orders. The story that Kuznick recounts illustrates how the police force seemed to have nothing but pure hatred toward the organized protesters and were constantly looking for excuses to attack. And when there was an opportunity to attack, it was executed with utter brutality. When he arrived in Chicago he says that there were constant fights right from the beginning. The police, with layers of jackets, shields, gas masks, and weapons charged against the completely unarmed and unprotected protesters. They deployed tear gas and used their clubs at will, beating the civilians mercilessly; even the national guardsmen were there, attacking with their bayonets.

The violent riots in Chicago that year had in a way paved the road for future organized protests and had a great influence primarily on students throughout the nation. As Peter Kuznick states, "Chicago had a radicalizing effect on campuses. It was a real dividing line. In the spring of '68 I felt that on most campuses antiwar students were a distinct minority. But that fall the movement mushroomed and there was a pervasive radicalization." (p. 316). These events, combined with the Tet aftermath, the sudden drop out of President Johnson from the upcoming election, and all the way through the Kent State shootings a couple years later, mark the prominent turning point of the Vietnam War era. From a social standpoint, and from an American standpoint, this increase of protests, riots, and overall change in perspective of the

war are a decisive moment for our country in particular during the Vietnam War.

The Vietnam War formally ended in 1975 after President Richard Nixon began a process of de-escalation and "Vietnamization" few years earlier. Before this though, the United States was under significant political turmoil as the Watergate scandal forced the President to resign in 1974, and his successor, Gerald Ford, was then forced to deal with the fall of Saigon in the first year of his presidency. When the North Vietnamese forces took over the capital of South Vietnam on April 30, 1975, the Vietnam War was officially over with the United States on the losing end. However, the end of the war isn't what the official date says on paper. To me it is more appropriate to classify the end of the war at the beginning of the end. By as early as 1970 many of the troops in Vietnam were as opposed to the war as any protesting dove back home in the United States.

Judith Coburn was a war reporter who arrived in Vietnam in 1970. She remembers how much the Tet Offensive of 1968 had crushed the morale of the many soldiers fighting in Vietnam. There was a distinct lack of effort from troops and on many occasions they were overtly refusing to follow orders. She says, "They'd drop a group of guys in the jungle and they'd just sit there of a couple days calling in fake coordinates, smoke a little weed, and wait to get picked up." Coburn then goes on to exclaim that "it was pretty obvious the military was losing control of its own men." (p. 408). There was also more of an apparent lack of respect for authority among the soldiers. Judith Coburn's story includes how the military had given up on policing regulations regarding uniforms, but when one sergeant major asked a soldier where his hat was, that soldier turned around and knocked him to the ground. There was an increase in the lack of control and discipline throughout the military, primarily because they flat out did not want to be in Vietnam anymore. Even Vietnam War veterans in the United States had become opposed to the war and there was the formation of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW).

The declining levels of commitment were not limited to the American troops; the South Vietnamese Army was just as apathetic. Coburn explains how they were not loyal to their government because they knew it was corrupt and controlled by the Americans, and only joined their army so they wouldn't go to prison. They had become completely dependent on the U.S. forces and as the military began withdrawing troops it was more difficult for them to succeed in any engagements. The plan of Vietnamization, where the South Vietnamese Army was supposed to do a greater and greater portion of the fighting, was not going as well as our government had hoped due to the lack of dedication.

The end of the Vietnam War was in essence a five year process and by as early as 1970 the majority of people were fed up with the ongoing and unnecessary killing that was taking place. Americans especially wanted to be done with Vietnam and even a great amount of our country's own soldiers had checked out after being shaken up by the Tet Offensive. Nixon should have faced the facts and ended it five years sooner to avoid needless casualties, instead of the long drawn out procedure that it ended up being. As a result, all of those deaths in the latter years of Vietnam were consequences of our government's procrastination of reality.

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Due date: Saturday, 28 November 2009, 09:10 PM

Last edited: Saturday, 28 November 2009, 09:02 PM (368 words)

To me the best example of a turning point in the war would be "You look like a Gook" by Vincent Okamoto. He is a Japanese man who has a family with a long military history. All of the men in his family were military men. So after his two older brothers served in WWII he naturally enlisted in Vietnam. Both he and his family were proud. He says "my mom and dad would write saying: do your best, do your duty." At first it comforted him but after awhile nothing could. Seeing villages and civilians blasted to pieces he said was not what he enlisted to do. I think that a lot of soldiers felt this way and that was a huge turning point in the war. If a soldier does not agree or like what he is fighting for why would he still fight? So many soldiers gave up or turned against the war. Some even joined an anti-war group called VVAW Vietnam Veterans against war. An example of the ending would be "Prisoners of War" By John McCain. He mentions that because of the Anti war movement, "it took a long time before America became united again. There was a lot of anger and hatred." America becoming unified again signals to me the end of the war because the Vietnam war was more than the combat. It also had to do with the people at home. People involved in Anti-war movements, and families. I keep getting pulled back to part four for this ending part even though it was supposed to be part five. The above reference was from part five but this from part four I felt I had to add. "Families at war" by Lam Van Lich. He had been away from his family for 29 years and when he got home they didn't recognize each other. Not even his mother believed it was him until she saw his birth mark. Having family home may have marked the end for some, but possibly to the soldiers or people that have lost family members due to the war it may never end.

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Personally I believe that A.J. Langguth's account of his time spent in Cambodia with the ARVN signaled the true turning point in the war. It's really not what he said or how he said it, but his accounts of the ARVN in the war in Cambodia. He mentions that the ARVN were so poorly equipped and supplied that when they made contact with the enemy, they couldn't pursue the enemy and finish the job. It makes one wonder. By the time Nixon announced his opening of a campaign against the Communist forces in Cambodia, "Vietnamisaztion" was already in full swing. The process of rearming and retraining the South Vietnamese to fight against North Vietnamese/VC forces was happening rapidly, but Langguth's account of his time with ARVN made it clear that the process was simply not happening rapidly or efficiently enough. This "Vietnamization" was simply a way that the American armed forces could withdraw from Vietnam without any guilt. They could say they tried, but all the blame could be put towards the Vietnamese. But can anyone blame the South Vietnamese for failing? Langguth mentions that South Vietnamese soldiers were not payed very well, hence they were very poor, and that medevac was basically a joke, due to the fact that the Americans loaned the Vietnamese only a 100 or so helicopters. (While we had over 3,000) It was truly a sign that the American armed forces were giving up. Previously, the American public was becoming quite sick and quite tired of the war, but in Langguth's account, it seems that the American and South Vietnamese armed forces were becoming just as exhausted and fed up.

Frank Maguire's account of hi last experiences in Vietnam truly signal and ending point to our involvement in Vietnam. The way he describes the deterioration of the professionalism of the various aspects of life in Saigon proves that everyone knew the end was not only coming, but that it was very much in sight. Our blatant disregard for the Vietnamese people. Our objectives at that point were made very clear: we simply did not have any. The recklessness and the carelessness of the GI's signaled that it was well known that we were going to pull out, and fast. Frank mentions an almost joyful, party like atmosphere in Saigon, in which a hotel ran by the state department had girls for every room. We were basically intoxicating ourselves for the coming painful defeat. No one simply cared anymore, the enthusiasm for staying in Vietnam was simply gone. Frank mentions that ARVN soldiers would simply just up and leave the battle field to go home and tend to their wounds. Frank mentions that, "I wrote a report and said that the local Vietnamese troops had picked up all the nasty habits of unemployed mercenaries of the Thirty Years War." Even the south Vietnamese were lost as to what the objectives of the war were at that time. The largest and most militarily sophisticated nation in modern history had been brought to it's knees, and Frank describes how we (and the South Vietnamese) dealt with it in the **end**.

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The Douglas Kinnard piece is my choice on which submission best describes the "turning point." To me, the intro line says it all; "While we had the power, it turned out they had the will." Couldn't have said it better myself. While the US and South Vietnam were able to beat back the communists during the Tet offensive, the media coverage drove home to the American public that the costs of deterring Hanoi from its conquest of the South would require a level of sacrifice far higher than what was anticipated. Brig. Gen Kinnard also speaks to the flawed mind set of senior US field Commanders as to the "body count" method of counterinsurgency.

Gen Kinnard doesn't stop the field commander level either; he also justly criticizes the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for their lack of moral courage to tell LBJ and McNamara that only by a mobilization of the reserves could America win the war. The unwillingness of US leadership to exert the same level of military effort and political capital in Vietnam that it had shone during the Korean War is summed up neatly in this article.

For me the Frank Maguire article in Part 5 best describes the final years of America's direct involvement in South Vietnam. His '65-'66 tour in Quang Ngai is described in the most positive terms with the 2nd ARVN division's civil action programs and local security efforts. Maguire's '67-'69 tour with the AirCav highlights the ramping up of America's direct military intervention after the Tonkin Gulf resolution. Maguire's third and final tour in '70-'71 illuminates the rampant anarchy and corruption that was rife in the South Vietnamese government and armed forces.

In closing I find that it is no coincidence that both of my selections for this assignment were written by career army officers. Both men were able to offer dispassionate and well thought out views on both their personal war time experiences and in their critiques of America's military and political policy. This level headed approach in their writing stands in stark contrast to many of the other submissions made in the book by anti-war activists or Vietnamese communist party functionaries.

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I believe that the account that really underlines the Turning Point in the war is Michael Bernhardt's (p.349). I fully understand that the Tet offensive was called a turning point in the war, but there were still some who fully supported the military, and thought that Americans can do no evil. Michael Bernhardt's account is about what happened at the My Lai massacre and it also revealed flaws in the U.S. military. Michael Bernhardt was assigned to Charlie Company, the company responsible for the massacre. He saw that this company had no military discipline and they did not follow orders from superiors. During the My Lai massacre between 347 and 504 unarmed Vietnamese civilians were killed by members of Charlie Company, but the public did not know this information until the next year (1969). The Tet offensive was a major strike against the U.S. because people thought the war was coming close to an end, and many people were starting to get discouraged. The people who were still supporting the war after Tet '68 saw that the U.S. military wasn't perfect and superiors couldn't even control their soldiers. When the public saw what had happened at My Lai, I think that people that supported the war before started questioning whether we should be there or not because it was turning their kids into criminals. I believe that the My Lai massacre was the turning point in the war because it revealed the deteriorating behavior of many U.S. soldiers.

The account that has the best describes the ending of the war is Le Minh Khue's (p.508). Khue was a part of the North's Volunteer Youth Corp, and saw many U.S. air strikes. What really stuck out in her account is when she witnessed the liberation of Danang. When she saw the southern soldiers they were "fleeing the city in their shorts and undershirts." Could you imagine seeing people who you have viewed as an enemy for many years waving at you and mingling with you? A war that had been fought for 25 years was finally coming to an end, and their goals of a unified Vietnam was coming into view. Khue said that a lot of people from the North thought that the South was big and luxurious but they realized that after the U.S. supported so much of the South that it was left as an impoverished city. Although the end of the war was a huge monumental moment for some, it may have been a disaster for those who depended so much on the U.S. for assistance. I believe that this account best shows the end of the war because it represents how many of the South Vietnamese Soldiers felt during and after the war.

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#### Journal #4

It is difficult to pinpoint a more important turning point in the Vietnam War than the events surrounding the Mai Lai Massacre and what these events represented. Although there were many other atrocities throughout the war, this event more than any other, represented a boiling over point, not for the American public, but for the military; the soldiers themselves. "They were butchering people. The only thing they didn't do is cook and eat 'em. How do you get that far over the edge?" (Appy, pg. 349) The question that helicopter gunner Larry Colburn poses is a complex one. What is not complicated is the fact that wars can be won without the support of the people back home, but they cannot be won without the support and effort of the soldiers doing the fighting. By this point in the war we had lost that. Many outfits were acting like more of a rogue, mercenary army, going even as far as killing their own commanding officers. "...fragging reached unprecedented proportions in the Vietnamization period; more than 200 incidents were reported in 1970 alone." (ALW, pg. 301) Mai Lai was the opposite symptom of the same disease. Here the soldiers involved followed a madman into hell. "They were briefed the night before and I've heard it said that they were going in there to waste everything. They didn't capture any weapons. They didn't kill any draft-age males. I've seen the list of the dead and there were a hundred and twenty some humans under the age of five." (Appy, pg. 348) Our military was operating from a place of ambiguously based rage and more than ever with an overwhelming lack of general purpose. When you lose the public's heart, it makes things difficult; when you lose the soldier's heart, it is the beginning of the end.

Finding the point in the Vietnam War that one could call an "end" is much more difficult. Given that the objectives were so vague and the scoring (body count) so arbitrary, it becomes tricky to decide the winner, much less when this winning occurred. In spite of this it cannot be denied how critical the releasing of the Pentagon papers to the New York Times by Daniel Ellsberg was in ending this war. These papers were "evidence of a quarter century of aggression, broken treaties, deceptions, stolen elections, lies and murder." (Appy, pg. 434) One of the more obvious reasons that this led to the end was that it put in clear black and white print what the truth really was. This re-ignited and added to the resistance movement and gave many antiwar proponents the evidence needed to justify their beliefs. The real damage done by the releasing of these damning papers was in Nixon's reaction to their release, not so much the papers themselves. "If Nixon hadn't issued injunctions against the newspapers it would have sunk like a sub." (Appy, pg. 435) He gave them their power. Another key error in Nixon's responding to this release was in his going after Ellsberg by a group known as "The Plumbers". The Plumbers were a covert White House Special investigations unit that Nixon formed in response to the Pentagon Papers being leaked. Some of it's members were later involved with the Watergate Scandal. This helped ultimately link Nixon directly to the Watergate Scandal, which obviously ended his presidency in disgrace. "And without Watergate I think Nixon might have been able to keep up the bombing of Vietnam indefinitely. I think Watergate shortened the war by at least a couple of years and possibly much longer." (Appy, pg. 436) What is ironic is that the ending of the war didn't ruin a presidency (as LBJ and Nixon feared it would), but the ruining of a presidency ended the war!

Due date: Saturday, 28 November 2009, 09:10 PM

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For my account in Part Four of Christian Appy's "Patriots," i chose A.J. Langguth. His story shows a great account of "the turning point" in Vietnam. He was a journalist, who covered the war for The New York Times. In this account, he focused on the invasion of Cambodia, and the emotions it caused for many Americans and South Vietnamese. He states that Nixon's announcement for the invasion of Cambodia was a new escalation of the war. This however, i believe was not an escalation of the war. This is due to the fact that in order for this invasion to happen, Nixon pulled out many U.S. ground troops and replaced them with ARVN soldiers. This was a drastic step for Vietnamization of the war, which to me, is the biggest sign for the turning point in the war and the withdrawal of all American troops in Vietnam. The ARVN continued to lack strength and hope, and the withdrawal of American troops for the attacks on Cambodia did not optimize thier outlook. The South Vietnamese started drafting people against thier will's, in a futile effort to strengthen the army. Forcing someone to have pride in thier county and lay thier life on the line for it was impossible. Pressing soldiers into service did not help the ARVN. Now by 1970, the few American GI's that remained were no more anxious to fight than the South Vietnamese, causing the massive turning point in the war; Vietnamizaion.

For my account in Part Five of Christian Appy's "Patriots," i chose Truong Tran. His story shows a great view from the Vietnamese side of the "end" of the war. Having served in the South Vietnamese military, he states many problems and reasons for having the war come to a defeated end. His main argument for having lost the war was the fact that having US soldiers in Vietnam was a direct destroyer of political, social, and economical structures. Vietnam was greatly supported by the farmers in the countryside, and with US troops in Vietnam, many fled to the cities to gain jobs and money. This corrupted the foundation on which Vietnam had worked over for so many years. He also makes a brutal statment saying that the South lost the war because they could either lose or tie, but not win. He was convinced that the best they could do was keep half the country. The North had such a persuasive drive, that the Communist would always have the North, and could only do better. All the fighting happened in the South, causing the South to believe that they could only either keep thier half of the country, or turn it over to the Communists. This realization brought the war to a drastic end. The idea of never being able to win was planted in the minds of the South Vietnamese, causing thier will and moral structure to crumble and give in to Communism. I believe the mindset of the South was the main factor in bringing the war to an end. Attitude is everything, and if you think you're beaten, you are. The day that thought went through their heads, it was over.

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I think for me, the story that told it point blank was the shortest story in this section. It was by Philip Jones Griffiths (pg 294) You're not safe in those cities. We brought people into the cities to protect them. We told the people already there that they are safe in the cities. Then Tet happened and not only did the VC kill people in the cities we destroyed whole areas of the cities to kill the VC. Unfortunately by destroying whole areas we killed a lot of civilians to get a few a VC. In Phillips's story he said that if you looked at a map of Saigon in 1968 and asked "where is the highest concentration of pro-American Vietnamese? " it was District Eight. And that was one of districts we destroyed to kill a dozen or so VC. That type of action is a major reason why the South did not trust or really want us there. Why should they fight if we are going to do it for them. The government was corrupt, people were being thrown in jail, tortured, and executed and the we let it happen.

When you watched the video Vietnamizing the War (1968-1973) we tried to get the South Vietnamese Army to take more control in the fighting. We tried to get them to fight for thier country, win battles and look victorious for thier countryman to show unification. It seemed to me that they did not want to fight, and time and time again were handed defeat. Unless the US came to thier rescue. I think that after Tet all that the South wanted was the US dollars and for us to stay as long as possible.

I think that in part 5 the best example of the ending of the war was Frank Snepp's story. He seemed to sum up what happened during the whole war; and that was disblief and nonprepardness. Here you have intel. reports that are telling you what the north is going to do and nobody is reacting. Nobody comes up with a course of action for egress until it is to late to be effective. You have people who are helping us out right to the end and we don't save them. Granted some of the people were just to deep under cover or to far out in the bush to get out but we still left to many good people behind. But hey we got the most corrupt and elite out in time. We should have helped the ARVN out by providing more air support or naval fire to slow down the North. If we would have reacted to earlier attacks in the northern providences it might have made the north rethink trying for Saigon and the south. I understand that we just wanted to get the heck out and be done at that time, but still you do not feed your so called friends to the wolves. The US could have kepted naval support off the coast and B-52's within fairly quick stricking distance of Vietnam. Every time the north made a move south you hit them back hard. Maybe the south could have kept a DMZ and had thier own free country, That is something that we will never know because we never tried.

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After reading and analyzing all the stories in part four of [Christian Appy's Patriots](#), I found that two conflicts arose that could have been the turning point of the war in Vietnam. One was of course the Tet Offensive that [occurred](#) on [January](#) 30, 1968 and the other was the My Lai massacre on December 5, 1969. Although, two very different events. The Tet Offensive was a large scale [assault](#) on numerous cities and [buildings](#) by the NVA, whereas the My Lai massacre was lead by American [soldiers](#) on a revenge killing of more than a hundred children, women, and elderly [vietnamese](#). After reading more [thoroughly](#) I believe that the My Lai massacre changed [America's involvement](#) by people closely watching the battalions falling [under misguided](#) leadership, I still believe that the Tet [Offensive](#) holds true [the course](#) in which changed our involvement in Vietnam.

Tet had a tremendous impact in our [involvement](#) and was a turning point in the war, in many ways. One account that stood out in part four of Appy's patriots was the story of Barry Zorthian. From reading some passages in the Herring book I found some [similarities](#) with what Zorthian says about the impact of the media. After the Tet Offensive the media seemed to view the war in a [negative](#) light. The attack on the U.S. Embassy was covered more by the media because they [were](#) staying in the surrounding area. "What do you think about in that situation? You write about what you see." (Appy, Zorthian pg. 291) After the attacks on Tet, the [American](#) view had [publicly](#) changed and congress was viewing our [involvement](#) differently. At the time right before the Tet Offensive General Westmoreland was assuring congress that the U.S. could pull out of Vietnam in less than two years and that the end of the war was near, and then Tet occurred. This shed light for the American public and congress, that in truth, the war was not dying down, but escalating. Zorthian seemed to [acknowledge](#) that we could have pulled out as early as 1969 if we had taken the deal we ended up with thereby saving thousands of American 's lives that fought after Tet and until the end of the war in 1975.

When American finally did pull out of Vietnam it wasn't until six years later, after the Tet Offensive. America finally came to a negotiation that [was](#) offered numerous times including in 1969. The war seemed to take on a life of it's own. One account that seemed to show the ending to the war was of Judith Coburn. After the Tet Offensive a lot changed in the military including Nixon implementing one year tours for soldiers. Racial tensions stirred, there was lack in leadership, and soldiers were begging to AWOL. " Numerous outbreaks of racial [conflict](#) in units in [Vietnam](#) and [elsewhere](#) drew attention to the breakdown of morale and [discipline](#)." (Herring pg. 301.) In this disregard for rank and leadership caused I [believe](#) a stalemate in our fighting and therefore we could no longer progress. In Judith [Coburn's](#) account she mentioned a man named Henry Rollins who was one such officer that punched a sergeant major in his face for telling him he was out of uniform, which became a [regular](#) instance on some bases.

With Nixon now in office, and the corruption that was Watergate which ended the Nixon [Administration](#). It goes to show that with the lack of proper leadership including the President, that more lives were lost and the [corruption](#) continued until we finally pulled out of Vietnam in 1975. Judith herself witnessed the Easter Offensive and was

eventually kicked out of Vietnam because of her reports that were written about the unnecessary shelling from American destroyers that killed hundreds of refugees fleeing the attacks. Even after all the bombing attempts throughout the war, the cost, and loss of life seems sad. Reading that maybe we could have pulled out sooner, then we did gives me a sense of wonder of what the hell was going on? In the end did we ever really know what we were doing over there? It proves that even before the Tet Offensive we had illusions that the war was coming to an end when it was just escalating. Illusions that we were going to pullout in a couple of years, when it turned out to be six. Moral of soldiers fell and ultimately caused soldiers not to fight their potential. A president who lied and ultimately made the war worse. It almost did seem like a domino effect, but for the U.S. Judith Coburn went back to Cambodia and Vietnam years later and went to village after village seeing the mass graves and wondering how such a beautiful country with such humble people witnessed the bloodshed so many years.

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I believe both sections four and five exhibit stories that support a turning point in the war. Many would regard monumental turning points in history as only those that made the history books. However, I believe even the stories that did not make the history books in their own way had an influence in the turning point to ending the war.

The first story I chose was from part four by Tuan Van Ban. His story was from his experience in Vietnam. He told a story of one in the battlefield, "Dug foxholes and waited". He discussed how the sound of bullets flying in the air, the sound of men dying for a cause they felt worthy to fight for. The reason I chose this story, was simply that I believe even the small acts in battle assisted in the overall advancement in the turning point to ending the war. The men and women who died for the cause added to the body count drawing attention to the actuality of war. When Americans realized the reality of the war, they were outraged demanding actions, demanding answers, and demanding the ending to the war.

The second story I chose was from Nguyen Khac Huynh. The reason I chose this story was simply that he made some very valuable points. The first point I would like to discuss is when he stated, "We are not afraid of exposing our own mistakes, but we don't think we missed any chance to make peace". I found this statement interesting, I believe both sides made mistakes and lives were lost in the process. War is an fortunate reality; however, if future lives can be prevented by learning from our mistakes then lives are not lost in vain. Huynh's disbelief in American tactics were shared by many. As he stated lives could have been saved, had peace talks been pursued? Huynh later admitted McNamara stated, "both sides missed opportunities he wants to distribute the blame for the war equally on the shoulders of both parties". This is a true statement; perhaps this was another point in the war that supported the decision in which decisions were made to end the war.

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Due date: Saturday, 28 November 2009, 09:10 PM

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For me this was the hardest assignment yet. This assignment made me look at things in a different way. I also had to look at things as my parents might have. The part that I have chosen out of part four was Memorial Day 1968 by Clark Dougan. I chose this because I am from Ohio myself and felt that it touched me the closest. I believe that this story showed why people felt the way they did about the war, ether if it was for or against it. This story also showed how the media's views changed as the war went on and how people seen things the media was showing them. This story starts off about two boys in high school and the different roods that they took. Dougan himself even said in this story that they sensed that they were pawns in something larger than they knew (p.304). Dougan went off to college and his friend Fischer joined the marines. The thing that showed me the turning point was in the beginning they would name off the men that died in Vietnam on the intercom at school and the students would give a moment of silence and when the Dougan was older and in college and home from college he opened the paper to see that his friend had died. The article started out by saying "He Was Only 19-Did you Know Him". Then the article went on to tell of a letter that he had left and how to use his military life insurance. I found it touching that his only thoughts was on his sister going to college and that his skates be given to Joey. I think this opened people's eyes to why they did not want to have their children or young men in Vietnam and add fuel to the fire to get the United States out (p. 305). This was also shown in text of America's Longest War on pages 298 and 299. This was shown most by the Kent State Protest, that involved the National Guards and where buildings were burned as well as students killed and injured.

For part five, I chose The World Was coming To An End by Frank Maguire. This story showed me how even the American soldier was getting tired of the war and how they started to back lash. they would not fight and wrote their own anti-war signs. they even at points would just make up stuff to make it look like we were winning. In my opinion when the soldiers were done then we were already out of the fight. This to me was the beginning of the end.

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