

In no one story has there ever been so many instances of a person being in the wrong place at the wrong time. While we read the words of George Watkins as interviewed by Christian Appy we learn that George was the survivor of a long series of untimely and horrific events. It began with him being drafted on June 19th, 1967, despite his blood pressure tending towards being too high for enlistment. Shortly after being drafted, he was pulled out of his assigned military occupation specialty and was thrown into the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. Not even a full year later, he stepped on a pressure-detonated land mine that had already been passed by roughly 40 other men, leading to the loss of both his legs and his eyes as well. In the interview, George states that he had looked down at his watch to check the time, and had he not been looking down he wagered that he may have kept his eye sight.

All in all, after reading George's various accounts during the timeframe in which he was in Vietnam, his recollections have an undeniable clarity to them. It is important to realize that the few months he spent in the field were the last few months which he had his eye sight, and would have been the most easily recalled events of the time for him. When one loses their eyesight, events closer to that fateful day when everything goes dark will stand out more than memories of other years gone by. In his recounting of the events, his memories are vividly depicted in his mind. The morning George stepped on the land mine, it was just after daybreak on an early Sunday morning. These memories were forever etched in his mind as they were the last visuals he would ever have.

Reading further ahead there is one story in particular which pulls on my heartstrings, that of Daniel Redmond, "The doctor who won the war in Indochina." It is not so much his personal tale which disheartens, as it is that of the events and propaganda used to influence the civilians involved in the war. In his tale, Daniel recounts how the CIA used operatives planted in northern Catholic villages to hand out leaflets saying that Jesus and the

Virgin Mary had moved south and that it was the duty and salvation of all Vietnamese Catholics to do so as well. In the interview, he recalls how many of the people relocated from the north to the south had never been more than a few miles away from home. It is incredibly disappointing to witness how an agency backed by the U.S. government turned to twisting religion to influence a population, though it is nothing new in history.

Almost equally disappointing is the story of Thomas A. Dooley, a navy doctor who wrote a bestselling book about the Vietnamese refugees called *Deliver Us from Evil*. While his words may have stretched the truth of the conflict in Vietnam to cast Communism in a worse light than it really was, it was the treatment and stigma surrounding his uncovered sexuality which casts the darkest cloud. Despite his great contribution through his kindness towards other human beings and his skills as a doctor, he was ultimately disgraced by the U.S. government when he was kicked out after his homosexuality had been discovered.

In hindsight, it appears that his efforts to put out a top book on the Communist threat in southeast Asia may have been a great pitch to find personal recognition and validation when he secretly knew that society would not accept him for who he truly was.