

The Turning Point

A great majority of historians believe that the Tet offensive was the turning point of the war, and because of this history teachers everywhere have continually and relentlessly read paper after paper about this turning point. What I would like to focus on specifically instead is the effect that this particular part of the war had on the public back home in the US. The story that touched heavily on this subject and the PUBLIC turning point was that of Barry Zorthian, the head of public and media relations and the “official voice of America in Vietnam.”

In the eyes of the good people of the United States, the war was becoming more and more widely viewed as a mistake. The fact that Vietnam was widely noted as the first “televised war” definitely gave citizens more of an open range to form opinion than the usual babbling politician with promises of victory and honor. Folks got the chance to sit in their own living rooms and see the horror that their sons (and daughters) were facing on the other side of the globe.

The front page of The Washington Post showed a very vivid picture of dead Viet Cong on the embassy lawn. And CBS sent back raw footage of the fighting in the center of Saigon that was run unedited.

(Appy, Christian p. 291).

This realness that was brought back to our nation’s television sets would have been terribly shocking to experience for the first time, and of course stirred many patriotic emotions. The coverage of the Tet Offensive and live broadcasting of fighting on a day that was supposed to be declared a ceasefire gave the public yet another sign that things were out of America’s hands in Vietnam. By the mid-sixties Zorthian’s daily press conferences were widely known as the “Five O’Clock Follies” in light of the routine lies and embellishments. (Appy, Christian p. 290). The coverage of the war gave many people the power to disagree with the route their presidency was taking them, placing raw footage in front of them that couldn’t be twisted nearly as easily as the words of their politicians. It was in fact the publication of the Tet offensive that was the *real* turning point of the war.

The Ending

By the late sixties public opinion was starting to have real life consequences on the decision makers of the war, making situations even more difficult for our leaders. Those feelings of regret and uneasiness were spreading to many of the US’ own officers and commanders. Morton Halperin was one of our own over in Vietnam who was starting to have his doubts. In the March ’68 review of Vietnam policy, the beginning of the end was emerging. In this meeting a question was asked that voiced the now much different views of commanding officers:

The whole focus was to ask the Joint Chiefs how many forces and how many years they would need to assure victory. [Secretary of Defense Clark] Clifford thought that was a perfectly reasonable question. And the chiefs said, “No matter how we answer that

question, we cannot guarantee victory.”

Appy, Christian (p. 404).

Now that those directly involved in the war and those influencing decision were starting to realize the hopelessness of America’s role in Vietnam, things could begin to shift toward Vietnamization and the return of our boys.

By 1971, fully 71 percent of Americans told pollsters they believed intervention in Vietnam had been a “mistake” and, remarkably, 58 percent regarded the war as “immoral.”

Appy, Christian (p. 393)... In anticipation of congressional and public criticism, the administration decided to rely on South Vietnamese combat troops with Americans restricted to flying air support. It would be the first major test of Vietnamization.
Appy, Christian (p. 393).

Just as the strength of the Vietnamese people drove their relentless and passionate fighting, the weakness of America’s doubt was the essential beginning to our withdrawal and the Vietnamization of the war. Many will choose to write of specific events that determined the end but I feel strongly that the force of the passion of both nations were the strongest driving factor in both the persistence and the ending of the war.

Andrew Tignor

Assignment2

11/20/2013

Part 1

“Memorial Day 1968”, By Clark Dougan (pg.304-306) in (“Patriots by Appy”) is the perfect example of a turning point in many people’s lives. Dougan’s story represented a turning point of the effects that the war was having on the people who were just graduating high school and getting drafted right away. Students were constantly hearing about the people who were being killed in the war during school; and they could be drafted to go to war and possibly die like those men. During Dougan’s first year in college the Tet Offensive was raging across South Vietnam. He later left school in late May. On Memorial Day 1968, Dougan stated that as he opened up the (Cleveland Press) he came across a story about a 19 year old named Greg Fischer. The Article hit him really hard because Fisher was a kid he only talked to once at the end of high school. When Dougan asked him what he was going to do after high school, Greg responded he was going to join the Marines since he was going to get drafted anyways. Dougan himself never went off to the war but he did feel the effects of it by hearing about the many people who were dying overseas for this country. Dougan states that he thinks that was when most Middle Americans turned against the war.

Dougan’s story is the correct choice for this assignment is because it shares a piece of how his life had been affected without having to go to war. He seemed to understand what was going on and how the Middle Americans were against the war after the Tet Offensive. The article of Fischer was titled “He was 19-Did you know Him?” It was an amazing turning point for people all across America. The death of so many young people in the war led to many Americans opposing the war. This made it very hard for the government to get the support that was needed from the communities.

Part 2

The best example of an ending is the story by Chalmers Johnson (pg.422-424). His story outlined his opinion about the war and how we shouldn’t have gotten involved. He was ashamed of the lies that were going on in the highest reaches of our government. He talks about how excited the Americans were to have Kennedy as our President. Although he was stuck on the thought that we were in the war for good reasons, he knew we were not. The ending that is brought up is the death of President Kennedy. Kennedy believed that the war in Vietnam was a just cause. The loss of Kennedy led to the loss of idealism and a growing opposition to the war. When Kennedy was killed it had a very harmful effect on our country we were lost after the fact that someone was able to kill our President. This made war difficult for us because of the loss that we were suffering from. It was the end to a better future that so many were looking forward to.

This story was the best choice for an ending because the loss of Kennedy caused a big turn of events for America. Maybe it did not have an effect on the war but it did affect the United States and it still does. It was the end to a greater beginning.

Both of these selections express a number of different meanings from turning points to endings. Both of these stories’ seem to support one another in some ways that happen to

bring interest to this subject that we were presented with.

Part 1

Clark Dougan found his turning point as a young college student fresh out of high school, on Memorial Day, 1968, after reading an article on his former classmate, Greg Fischer whom he had believed he would be drafted because he was not going on to college, joined the marines, which he believed was the best branch of the service. The article was a story of the 19-year-old Greg Fischer who had been killed at Dong Ha in Vietnam. The article that was written was directed toward the American readers on why send our young over to a war and risk getting them killed. Clark realized it could have easily been him killed in the war if he had gone. Although, he only briefly knew his classmate, reading of his death dealt him a heavy blow, as it really hit close to home. Clark admits to never having felt any guilt about not going to war, but did end up writing a series of books on the war later in life. Clark believed it was after the article on Greg, that “Middle America” started turning against the war, and I have the feeling from reading Clark’s story that this was his also.

Part 2

George Evans struggled with his end of the war. Here is a man who had grown up with veteran, helping the veterans, and hanging out with them and his father. His best friend had been killed in the war. After George had spent time in the military in Africa, he eventually ended up in Vietnam. After months of being in Vietnam, he realized he did not believe the war was good, so he decided to become a sort of a rebel, and stopped shaving, cutting his hair, and started making posters against the war. This I believe is where his end of the war for him was beginning. He had started to refuse orders, and when he was asked to sign a paper stating his guilt, and take the Article 15, he refused. Knowing he was about to be court-martialed, he took his R and R that was due him and went to Australia. There he met a group of hippies, and other deserters, and liked the life they were living, and came very close to deserting himself. That would have been his easy ending to the war, if he had deserted, but instead he went back to face the court-martial. This man’s ending came about after witnessing kids being run over by trucks in a “game”, and seeing things that went on he did not believe in, and being in a war he did not believe in anymore.

Camren Bernico

HST 195

Assignment #2

Part 1

Vietnam a war many to this day are confused about and who many admit was a grave American defeat. However how did America lose to such a small country of people whose wealth and technology were laughable compared to that of the USA.

Clark Dougan a man from Parma Heights, Ohio was not a Vietnam Veteran but he exemplifies the state of American society during the height of the Vietnam War (in America). Vietnam was not a war that stood upon the foundation of American Pride and ideals, it was not a war full of embraced heroes and stunning victories. It was not a war where Americans would gloat over a pint and ruddy cheeks the great battle won and the awesomeness of this nation.

Clark Dougan like many in our country at the time represented middle class America, the very backbone of the people. He recalls to us a guy he knew in school who chose to join the Marines during the Vietnam war and who died.

Dougan's town and high school are like many throughout the country. It a school with young men who are either ready to serve or who are terrified of the draft. The fear mixed with the high energy of a country at war forced a town of people to come together in more ways then one.

On Memorial Day 1968 a pro supporter of the war, the *Cleveland Press* newspaper headlined with "He was only 19 - Did you know Him?" It was a question fueled by the outrage and confusion of a nation that had after many years united against the war in Vietnam.

Are you a hawk or a dove? In reading we learned of these factions in our country, which was basically are you pro war or anti war? During the time of Greg Fishers death (the boy who chose to become a marine from the same school as Clark Dougan), the doves had become dominate.

The Vietnam war was plagued by government secrecy, lies, illegal action and more. In so doing the Government had hoped to exact more freedom on how to fight and win what was the Vietnam war. As with all secrets and deceptions the truth does eventually find it's way out.

America fought wars before but never so publicized and the threat of defeat seems closer to home, more real and urgent. People believed in what they were fighting for and knew what it was.

Vietnam then was a war that was shrouded in secrecy where Americans were fed bits and pieces, vaguely, to support the war. It was not until the draft and the deployment of US ground troops that we truly begin to see Americans "wake up" and question the government. As the lies come out, as nothing seems to progress, many hawks turn to doves until we see Middle America whose sons have left to fight and die in a war people have no faith or trust in, turn to becoming a dove.

In all my readings and viewings and thoughts I have come to the conclusion that we lost so bitterly in Vietnam because of the change in union at home and the corruption of the government itself.

The story of Clark Dougan, a man who never even went to Vietnam shows us the viewpoint from those at home. It shows a change of support to a nation divided to that of a nation brought together again under the unity of peace to promote change and end the war. At least so the people then thought and felt.

The rallying of the American People who stood up against the Government in marchers, letters, media and more were one of the biggest turning points in the war on Vietnam. The enemy knew they could play the emotions of the American people and it worked perfectly.

Clark Dougan said it well "I think a lot of World War II vets who had been sitting around the kitchen table saying, "You've got to fight for your country," were starting to say, "Fuck this, It's not worth Greg Fisher's life or his buddy's life". (pg 306 Patriots)

This was the spreading sentiment of the American People. They saw the war as far away, senseless and pointless. They could not understand why their sons were sent so far away to die in this tiny patch of land for a threat that no longer loomed with an iron grip. None of it made sense and the Government lies and shuffling for years made it all the more worse.

America shifted away from a country that appeared powerful, confident, honest. America was very much like the iconic image of Captain America but as the war continued and more people questioned the point of it all, America began to lose the image is fought to hard to have and began to look more like the villain to those of the public and abroad.

Part 2

Morton Halperin was the deputy assistant of defense during the end years of the Vietnam War. As in part 1, Morton was not a soldier but worked in Washington. While he may not have seen firsthand the end of the fighting his story represents the end of the war in it's own way and perhaps the end of things even more important to our country itself.

As I said before it is my opinion that the Vietnam war was lost for America not because our soldiers were weak, our technology lacking or anything to do with the actual fighting of the battle. We lost because of illegal government practices and secrecy as well as because

of the antiwar movement fueled by the media and American civilians.

This quote I feel tells us just how far away and misunderstood the Vietnam war truly was. If those working on the war in Washington are so clueless then imagine the confusion of middle Americans at the time.

"By the way, I refused to have a map of Vietnam in my office until the Tet Offensive. I just had the big wall map of the world you see in many Pentagon offices. People would in and they'd start to tell me something the Mekong Delta or the Ho chi Minh Trail and they would say, "Where's your map of Vietnam? I'd say, "Use that map." Half of them couldn't find Vietnam on the world map and the other half would say, "Vietnam is too small on this map to show you what I want to show you." I would look at them and say, "That's the point!!" (pg. 403-404, *Patriots*)

This was shortly before Tet and people who were being paid to work on the Vietnam war could not even find it on a map.

Morton continues to identify the character of President Nixon and Henry Kissinger during this time of the war. Prior to them coming into power Vietnam had been raging on for many years. LBJ was much like Nixon a man of secrecy, the entire war was shrouded in it. However LBJ was far more indecisive and tried to play by the rules or at least look like he did.

Nixon and Kissinger however seemed to be more comfortable with taking action even if that action was illegal or immoral. This was where I feel the war began to spin out of control, it began this early when these two men met and came up with their master plan.

I consider their coming together the mark of the end of Vietnam not because they pulled troops but because their actions turned the American People upon its own country, because their actions destroyed the image of America.

Morton tells us of approved wire taps of civilians and government officials, illegal operations by the CIA, FBI and more. We come to learn that the war is very much alive back in the USA and that innocent people are being spied upon and worse and that major

military actions was taking place while the rest of the country was blindfolded.

As the American people turn more to Doves, the Media rallies against the war and the lies come spilling out, Nixon and Kissinger seem to spiral out of control. The lies become more common and twisted, secrecy seems almost like delusions and paranoia and the cries of the people fall upon deaf ears as the few in power abuse their power.

It is in this that Government betrayed their country (well a select few now all the government) and in that betrayal forced an uprising of the people. Hanoi however was aware of all of this thanks to the media. Hanoi banked upon the people not tolerating the war, they banked upon a torn and divided American Government. In the end Hanoi was correct and read America like a book, the American People were the ultimate weapon in the defeat of American Military in Vietnam. It is sadly poetic really, the very people against the war and Americans dying in Vietnam only helped to get many more people murdered and eventually lose the war.

The turning point in the Vietnam war was when the American majority and media became anti-war and forced massive civil unrest which in turn severely divided the American Government which many of them now leaning towards the "dove" side.

The end point of the war to me, was when the Government could no longer hide and make excuses, the people had reached a critical point of unrest and were dangerous. While the rest of the world lost respect for America. It was the death of an image and idea of what America was, what it meant and what it could be. It showed Americans and the world another darker side of war and politics.

I can not help but agree with Morton when he says;

"The question that's unresolved is, would the South have collapsed even with massive U.S. bombing and continue massive U.S. military aid in the absence of U.S. ground forces?" (pg. 406, Patriots)

This is the same question I have and the question that makes me wish I could somehow go back in time to change things. The American Government, Kissinger and Nixon got caught with their pants down. America knew it, Hanoi knew it, Saigon knew it, the world

knew it. The American people then ranted and raved and managed to bully those leading this war. Congress began a war against Nixon and wanted his impeachment.

This rapid aggression against Nixon and Kissinger forced their hand so to speak to making poor choices. These poor choices cost the people of Vietnam thousand of lives and destruction. Our rapidly pulling out made us look selfish, weak and bullied by our own people.

I can only wonder that if Nixon and Kissinger had not been caught or if naive college kids afraid of the draft had not protested or backseat war tacticians left war to the military or if congress was not so focused on abusing the war for selfish power struggles then maybe just maybe they could have listened to their military generals such as Abrams who was actually in Vietnam leading and fighting and made a real difference instead of wasting tons of lives for what amounted to a bunch of nothing gained.

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The Turning Point: Wayne Smith

“I was very naïve. . .I volunteered. I believed in it” (Appy 362). Wayne Smith was assigned to infantry and very deeply believed that he was going to help the Vietnamese people. He was a black man in a mixed race war and as far as he was concerned there were no clear lines or sides when it came to fighting a common enemy. In a time when America was still very segregated and biased against black people, he had found somewhere that saw no color. Dr. Martin Luther King was fighting the equality battle here in the states, and Smith went overseas to fight a battle against a different type of oppression. Smith originally has passion about going to war and saving the weaker part of a country from its Communist neighbor, “there was also still a belief that we should go into the military to show the nation that African Americans could make an equal contribution” (Appy 362).

Smith speaks about the horrors of combat but also the camaraderie or “brotherhood” that kept them all together. They were all fighting together, for a cause, against the same enemy, and to stay alive. He thought he was closer to them than his own family and had not imagined that he would have forged these bonds with other men, let alone in a time of war. He agreed that there were racial problems and disagreements but it seems that he was fairly open-minded as he had grown up in an integrated community. In his own words he could see both sides when the lines were drawn. He was only 18 years old, but was a medic so men’s lives were dependent on trusting him. A key point in earning that trust seems to have come when he ran through an area that had been booby trapped in order to tend to injured soldiers. He doesn’t say it, but it would seem that an immense amount of faith would be bestowed upon his peers when they saw him risk his life for the sake of others.

The turning point doesn’t have to do with race or camaraderie however; it comes when Smith realizes the true meaning of war and loses his faith in what he believed he was doing. He talks about body counts and the men taking four separate parts from the same body to seem as if they had 4 confirmed kills. This was what America’s part in the war had become, body count. The higher it was then the better we were doing in the war and it was clear that’s not what Smith thought he had signed up for, “I hated my association with all the lies” (Appy 365). In his final 6 months Smith achieves what he wanted to and goes to different villages providing medical aid and treatment. He returns home to his family celebrating him and flaunting him socially for his bravery and successes in battle. His own community recognizing him as a war hero, but did not know or seem to care what actually he had been through, “I hated America” (Appy 366).

Endings: Steve Sherlock

For many Veterans of the Vietnam War, the war never ended. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, night terrors, flashbacks and other endless symptoms are still very much experienced by those who got to return home. A lucky few may have experienced a sense of closure at least, but even they will never forget. The war technically ended in 1975 with the fall of Saigon but many soldiers still carried it with them as though they had never left. A good example of the possibility of closure is the story from Steve Sherlock.

Sherlock went to Vietnam 7 years before the “end” and had felt mostly neutral, upon his arrival though his thoughts changed and he decided we had no business being there. He signed what was considered to be an antiwar petition and intelligence told him he was betraying his duty. This act got him reassigned to an infantry platoon and he was quickly on the front line of battle. After an ambush he received a bronze star with valor, and shortly after went on patrol with his captain. The patrol resulted in a fight and Sherlock’s spoken conclusion that the Vietnamese were in fact people too.

After being relieved of his combat duties and working on the “Kit Carson” scout program (Appy 427) he returned to Purdue and opened a local chapter of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. During this time the war still an incredibly passionate topic in the states so they called themselves Veterans for Peace, probably to diminish any pro war protesters from harassing them.

The ending for Sherlock comes as closure when he travels to Washington D.C. in 1971 to participate with other veterans in a demonstration. He felt strongly that this peaceful assembly would bring the media exposure that Americans needed to see to accept the returning Veterans rather than protest them so fiercely. He wants citizens to know, “the purpose was to focus public attention on the fact that veterans who actually fought in Vietnam, and had been decorated for it, were opposed to the war and that it wasn’t unpatriotic to be fighting against a wrong and harmful policy” (Appy 428). The Veterans assembled in front of the Capitol and recited their name, units, medals and some words about the war. After they had spoken they threw their medals over a barricade. This symbolized that they took the medals of war to be generic and meaningless, meant to make them feel decorated and honored about what they participated in. The loss of the medal may not have brought on closure or an ending for Sherman, but the demonstration could have. To be gathered among brothers fighting a cause that he truly believed in, to attempt to end a war and bring others home could have been the greatest thing he ever participated in. Finally he believed in something that was good and true, he had peace and companionship during this trip to D.C., something he did not claim to experience while in Vietnam.

“There was an incredible camaraderie and exhilaration. We were all together again but this time it was a peace army. It really did seem like a noble cause” (Appy 428).

REFERENCES

PART ONE

John Douglas Marshall grew up in a military family. His grandfather was S.L.A Marshall, a well-known army general who wrote war books, and spoke in favor of the Vietnam War. As a kid John saw his grandfather as someone to look up to, and someone to emulate. John stated that, “Growing up, I thought more about making my grandfather proud than my own father” (Appy, 328). John went into the ROTC program in 1969 because it was expected of him. His path had been established generations ago, and he didn’t want to let down his family, especially his grandfather.

John described his grandfather as, “the life-loving, cigar-smoking grandfather who lived a few miles away.” (Appy, 328) The closeness that John and his grandfather once shared is best highlighted when John graduated the ROTC. John describes saluting his grandfather and says, “he said, ‘Don’t you dare salute me.’ Then he grabbed me and gave me a big bear hug in front of this crowd” (Appy, 329).

John’s personal turning point came during his first year of service. In that time “His doubts about the war escalated” and “he immersed himself in the literature of pacifism and nonviolence” (Appy, 328). John decided that the war was something that he could no longer support and he didn’t want to be a part of it. He was turning against everything that he had grown up with: the military, his family’s way of life, and their expectations. He knew that becoming a conscientious objector would cause backlash, but he decided that he had to do what he thought was right. He had to follow his own path.

John’s conscientious objection prompted his grandfather to write him a letter saying things like, “It wasn’t conscience. You simply chickened out,” and “You will not be welcome here again” (Appy, 329). Leaving the military wasn’t something that S.L.A Marshall expected from his family, and he wanted his grandson to know that he wasn’t living up to the family name, and therefore he was cutting off all ties.

John knew that his choice would hurt his grandfather, and his family, but it was a choice he was making for himself, not for other people. There’s an Irish proverb that says, “You’ve got to do your own growing, no matter how tall your grandfather was.” In relation to the proverb, John’s grandfather was very tall, but John needed to grow on his own. He had to make a decision that fit best for him. It’s unfortunate that John’s personal turn caused the end of his relationship with his grandfather. John summed it up best by calling it, “another casualty of the Vietnam War” (Appy, 329).

PART TWO

As a young boy George Evans spent his time with his father and other World War II veterans. He spent his days working with his dad, and hanging out at the VFW. He says “I was raised in a family and a neighborhood of extreme patriots” (Appy, 449). His earliest memories were of decorating veterans’ graves on Flag Day. George saw the sadness that some of the veterans carried with them, and even though they didn’t talk about it, he felt it was there. Since patriotism and military service was such a big presence in his life he knew that he would end up in the military one day.

As he got older his father got more controlling and George pulled away. He started to lead his own life. He said, “I had this other life in the streets,” (Appy, 450) thus illustrating that his childhood had ended and he was beginning his own life. In 1969 he decided that he really wanted to go to Vietnam. His best friend warned him against going, but he volunteered anyway. George said, “I liked being a medic and didn’t hesitate” (Appy, 451).

When he first arrived, George was determined to do the best job he could possibly do. He looked forward to opportunities, and learning experiences. He quickly worked his way up to “staff sergeant and the crew chief of the night shift” (Appy, 451). He saw war as honorable, and he held the people that fought in wars to high moral standards. His time in Vietnam changed his ideals, and ended the long standing trust that he held with the military.

Upon his arrival he was instructed to clean up the bodies of two children. The NCO that told him to clean the bodies referred to the boys as “gooks” and didn’t have much empathy towards the situation (Appy, 451). George talks about his reaction to the NCO and says, “He was completely different from the veterans I knew growing up, completely contrary to what I thought I knew about men in war and what I expected of them” (Appy, 452). George realized that not everyone has high moral standards. His good illusions of war, and soldiers had ended. He began to relate to the WWII veterans he knew growing up, and he began to understand their unspoken grief.

He decided that this wasn’t something he could fully support, and that he would show that by not “looking like a soldier” and not caring in general about rules, and regulations (Appy, 452). His disregard got him in trouble with the new captain, and even the threat of a court-martial didn’t matter. George said, “Something in my head said I was done with the military and sick of the war” (Appy, 453).

George Evans had a deep-rooted, and unquestionable respect for every aspect of the military. He saw all soldiers as honorable and having high morals. Going to Vietnam and meeting some of the people that he did, ended all of that.

Dan Duerfeldt

HST 195

Assignment 2

Part 1

Clark Dougan: Memorial Day 1968

After reading part four, this story by Clark Dougan struck me as a turning point in the war. The story starts with Clark as a high school student in Ohio. Because of his plans to go to college, Clark seems to have a disconnected attitude about the war in Vietnam at this time and his only reminder is the periodic obituaries of locals KIA the principle would read over the school intercom. He recalls having a conversation with a classmate named Greg Fischer who intended to sign up for the Marines. Fischer states: "I'm going to get drafted anyhow, so if I'm going to get drafted, why not the best, you know (Appy, 305)?" After graduation, Dougan goes off to college and is "really kind of oblivious of the war (Appy, 305)."

The turning point of Dougan's story seems to be a personal one, but it reflects how many Americans felt at the time. "On Memorial Day 1968, I opened up the *Cleveland Press* and there was an editorial on the front page with the title 'He Was Only 19 – Did You Know Him?' (Appy, 305)" It was a story about his classmate "Greg Fischer and how he died at Dong Ha up near the DMZ. It just hit me like a hammer. I remembered that conversation in the homeroom and it suddenly had this profound significance (Appy, 305)." "I think that was the moment when 'Middle – America' really turned against the war (Appy, 306);" and to Dougan personally. It is clear that reading about the death of his classmate was a turning point for Dougan about Vietnam that was shared by countless others.

Part 2

Daniel Ellsberg

In 1971 Daniel Ellsberg, "a former Defense Department official, released the Pentagon Papers, seven thousand pages of secret documents about the history of U.S. decision making in Vietnam from 1945 to 1968 (Appy, 432)." After reading the study, Ellsberg stated that "it stripped away all legitimate rationales for what we were doing in Vietnam (Appy, 432)." The leaking of the report resulted in the Watergate scandal and President Nixon's resignation. Ellsberg states: "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, 436)." Daniel Ellsberg's story represents an ending or a beginning of an end to the Vietnam war

because U.S. policy makers were forced to change direction as a result of leaked Pentagon Papers.

Part 1

After reading retired general Douglas Kinnard's story I interpreted it as a turning point for a group of senior military leaders (generals). In the beginning he states, "I wasn't disillusioned with the military; I was disillusioned with the nature of the war and what it was doing to our country." After retiring from the military and taking a job in academia and sent out a questionnaire to all 173 army generals who served as combat commanders Vietnam. The responses he received shocked him in their honesty and critical nature. In this story what struck me the most were how the attitude and views of some of the generals on the ground began to change from one of victory to one of skepticism and an overall disbelief in the military and political strategy of the war. Case in point, almost seventy percent of the generals said they did not fully understand the overall war's objective. They knew their own tactical or operational objective but did not know how their effort was helping achieve the larger strategic goal of the war. This begs the question how can we achieve military success if our own military does not know or understand the goals or steps needed for success. Along with unclear objectives, the Army used large units and massive firepower to fight to fight a guerilla war devastated the land and produced many unintended civilian casualties. This "search and destroy" strategy of General William Westmoreland eventually was deemed flawed by most of generals. Under this strategy the war had no front lines and territory was not held so it became hard to tell who was winning the war. The only way of measuring success was "body count" or attrition and if you kill more of them would quit or no longer be able to fight. The whole military strategy was based upon this assumption but proved false. Kinnard states, "The enemy was never going to quit, no matter how many we kill or how good our statistics look. We had the power, it turned out they had the will." It should be noted most military historians and commanders admit the enemy body count was inflated and did not accurately reflect success or failure. This is a time when the commanders began to have self-doubts about a victory in Vietnam and the realization of losing settled in. The war for them had no end in sight and became a waiting game until U.S. pulled out of Vietnam. Once they began to doubt, the thoughts of all the soldiers that were killed on body-count mission it became apparent just how wasteful it all was. To drive this point home Kinnard recounts the time he heard a general talking to a young up-and-coming colonel. They were discussing the body count and the colonel said to the general, "Well, the VC are getting harder to find". And the general replied, "Well, brigade commanders aren't." Meaning, show results or you will be fired and replaced. Within the next couple of days while out on a body-count mission the young colonel was killed. The U.S. was committed to a military solution without firm military objectives; with the flawed strategy of attrition. Overall, the war strategy offered no solution. "Just like the famous quote by President Lyndon Johnson, "If I've lost Cronkite, I've lost Middle America", Washington lost the faith of the generals and soldiers.

Part 2

For the best example of an ending I chose Alexander Haig's story. To me this proved to provide the best reasons why we did not win the Vietnam War. As with all military conflicts it is easy to look back and see the missteps made and there is no guarantee the outcome would be different but I think the resulting conclusion would have come about

sooner. The war was not lost on the battlefield but lost and mismanaged in Washington. As Haig states, "If you don't go in to win, don't go in at all. Either you conduct the conflict with all the available assets the United States has at its disposal to bring about a quick and successful outcome or you stay out. We didn't do either in Vietnam." The war was a proxy war with Russia and fought with half-measures or in incremental responses. The strategy shifted from one of massive retaliation during the Eisenhower years to of flexible response or limited response. As Haig concludes, this type of strategy usually invites rather than discourages escalation. The middle of the road stance that was started by President Kennedy and later by Johnson and Nixon leads credence to this realization. We never really put to use the full might of the military to use in an effective manner in Vietnam, instead fighting a limited war. Approximately, 70 percent of the military battles were fought in South Vietnam. How could we have expected a short and victories outcome without taking the fight to the enemy and denying him sanctuary? Haig relates he was asked to provide a list of military options to use in Vietnam, including the full mobilization of the United States military that was modified by General Johnson and presented to President Johnson. The new list only included the lesser options and excluded the more vigorous actions which aligned with the political thinking of the time. This was a clear failure of the military high command to speak the truth to political leaders and not to do what is expedient. Haig echoes the same thoughts as Douglas Kinnad, in that a lot of top military leaders failed to stand up and say this is not the way.

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History 195 – Escobar

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Turning Point & Ending

Douglas Kinnard's story starts with "*While we had the power, it turned out they had the will* (pg. 321, Appy). United States troops had been in the country of Vietnam for about nine years when Kinnard sent a questionnaire to all the army generals, 173 of them, and received surprising results. Two-thirds of the generals who replied to the survey and seventy percent of the replies said they didn't really know or understand the objectives of the war. What was the overall purpose of the Vietnam War? That question was running through the minds of the U.S. Army generals after nine years of fighting. This could be seen as a turning point for the Vietnam War. If the generals do not know what the objectives are for the war, how could the U.S. possibly keep fighting? How could they have won? The moral seemed to have been at an all time low. The United States went into Vietnam with the notion that this small country could easily fall to the control of whoever storms in. The people were small and meek in the eyes of the world. Kinnard said that America was under the assumption that they could get an easy win by just "hitting the enemy hard enough...Everything was based on that assumption. But the assumption was totally wrong (pg. 322, Appy)". The will of the Vietnam people was greatly underestimated. Another part of Douglas Kinnard's story that could be seen as a turning point was the quote mentioned at the top, "While we had the power, it turned out they had the will (pg 322, Appy)". The will power of Vietnam surpassed that of the American soldiers. There was also a mention of how pressure had been mounted to

Bruno-Hibler 2

"increase the body count (323, Appy)". Kinnard had overheard a senior general talking with a colonel, who was going to be promoted to brigade commander. The senior general told him to get the body count up or there was a chance he could be replaced. That colonel ended up being killed a day or two later trying to get kills (pg 323, Appy). The body count reference was used to show the progress of the war. If more Vietnamese were dead compared to American troops, that meant the United States was winning. But, looking at the big picture, American was not "winning". Once it was realized that the Vietnamese would never give up, American soldiers questioned why they were really there and what they were fighting for. Kinnard's story provided a turning point in the Vietnam War because he brought up the doubt, the admission of Vietnamese will power, and how the Army generals of the U.S. really felt about the never-ending war.

It's appropriate to pick a story from a Vietnamese as an ending to the war. Americans lost lives in Vietnam but the South Vietnamese lost more. They lost their homes and lively hoods as well as the lives of loved ones. Truong Tran was a South Vietnamese who was drafted into the armed forces in 1964. His family was the most important thing to him so he tried to stay close to them while he was serving but that wasn't possible. Tran talked about the relationship and respect between the South Vietnamese soldiers and the people.

There were strict rules set in place when it came to dealing with the local people. The commander “severely punished anyone who was arrogant or stole property because even stealing a chicken or some vegetables could create negative political repercussions... But most of the men in our unit were well behaved and we developed a good relationship with the people (pg. 505, Appy)”. There were not a whole lot of stories from American

Bruno-Hibler 3

Veterans that had accounts like Tran’s about the people. It makes sense though that the people of South Vietnam were shown more respect from their own soldiers, compared to American soldiers. If the war had been in America and the Vietnamese were sent to help, the American people would most likely trust American soldiers and receive more respect because the soldiers were fighting for their own freedom, unlike in Vietnam. They were fighting for freedom, just not their own.

The ending of Tran’s account of Vietnam is more relevant as an example of an “ending” for the war. His story supplies more of a “result because of the war” ending. “Having U.S. soldiers in Vietnam not only destroyed our political cause, it also destroyed our economy and social fabric. Ninety percent of the population had relied on the land, but during the war people could not grow crops and had to move to the cities...Many had to become menial laborers or even prostitutes (pg. 506, Appy)”. South Vietnam lost their freedom, the whole reason why they were fighting. “We also lost because we agreed to fight a war that we could either lose or tie, but not win. The best we could ever do is keep half the country (pg. 506, Appy)”. The people of Vietnam wanted unification of the country so the North would have “won” anyway.

Work Cited

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Part 1

No particular story from Part Four of the Christian Appy book seemed to be the “turning point” in the war. The famine, the fighting, the dying of innocent people just seemed to continue to happen throughout the entire war. No specific story that stuck out as the peak of the war, no one story brought the view of the Vietnam war to the highest level that they could go and then no other stories compared to it. The stories in Part Four of Christian Appy’s book seemed to just continue on in the pattern of death, destruction and mayhem. There was probably a story or two that could have stood out more if there had been more emotional ties to the character, and if it was clearer when to read between the lines of the story than to have to wait and then discover that no one came that close to being a match to what the turning point may have been, but reading just for the sake of trying to find something that just is not there to be found is pointless. A reader should read to understand the authors writings, not to just read for the sake of it being an assignment.

Part 2

The story in Christian Appy’s book that stuck out as the “ending point” of the Vietnam war was the story of Le Minh Khue. This story stood out because of how well she addresses the reader and presents them with her account of the near-end pieces of the Vietnam war. Le Minh Khue was a journalist in the last few years of the war and wrote a collection of fictional short stories about her accounts. This story was the best ending account of the war because it talks about her parents and how the end of the war and the land reform was the ultimate cause of their demise. She used her experiences of being raised by pro-Communists to develop her own understanding of the war and why it happened. What stands out to the reader the best as the ending point was her use of an old Vietnamese proverb; “Deaf people are not scared of guns.” This just struck as a great way to end her account of the war and how the end of the war was really the end of a horrid way of live because now instead of fighting to survive, the people could being to rebuild their lives.

Assignment 2

Part 1

The story given by Douglas Kinnard is a strong example of a turning point in how the war began to be viewed as a “losing proposition” (Appy pg. 322) by him and those in commanding positions during the war. He made a career of his military service and retired as a one-star general in 1970 after serving two tours in Vietnam, but he knew that the Vietnam War was a losing battle by the end of his first tour in 1967. He had volunteered to serve in Vietnam and upon arriving there in 1966 he described himself as “gung-ho” about performing his duties, but by the end of this first tour in 1967 he had “decided that the war was a losing proposition, that it could go on forever. I was glad to go home and be disassociated with it.” (Appy pg. 322-323). He did not want to be involved with the war any longer, but he was called upon to serve another tour in 1969 and once again faced the same focus on “body count” and “kill ratio” that had frustrated him in his first tour.

He shared that his feelings were not uncommon among commanders in Vietnam. A survey that he conducted of army generals revealed that many of them did not understand the objective of the war. Asking questions such as; “Why were we doing this? What was the overall purpose?” (Appy pg. 321) These questions point attention upward toward the President and senior military officers. Kinnard explained that the generals questioned the political reasons given by the President and he expressed his own disappointment in the senior military officers for giving in to political pressure, which he felt handicapped the armed services.

In conclusion, Douglas Kinnard was a man who devoted his life and career to serve his country with an attitude of devotion, but when he came face-to-face with the realities of what was happening in Vietnam, he had a “turning point” and began to question (along with many other generals whom he surveyed) what The United States had to gain from the approach that was being taken in Vietnam.

“I wasn’t disillusioned with the military, I was disillusioned with the nature of the war and what it was doing to our country.” Douglas Kinnard (Appy pg. 321)

Part 2

The fall of Saigon is the obvious physical end of the war and the story about that event by Frank Snepp (Appy pg. 496-504) is one of the most fascinating accounts in the

book so far. However, considering an “ending” to include the end result of the physical, emotional, and social toll that the country was experiencing at that time gives a deeper aspect of what had been accomplished by the war’s end. The loss of the war from a social standpoint may be the most damaging and ongoing affect that it had on American society and the story by Beverly Gologorsky (Appy pg. 413-417) reflects the ultimate loss of the hearts and minds of Americans. It seems that U.S. tactics in Vietnam not only caused many of the people in South Vietnam to side with the communist North, but it also caused the same response by many protesters in America. While The United States was focusing on defeating communism in Southeast Asia, they were being flanked by ideology and communist views were taking hold back at home.

The story given by Gologorsky describes how she went from a seemingly mild-mannered typist for a nursing magazine to being consumed by the anti-war movement. Appy describes her activism as being “all-consuming”, and she spoke of putting all other aspects of her life on hold, such as starting a family, until the war was coming to an end.

There was a hint of the communist beliefs of the people whom she surrounded herself with when she recounted sharing a home with twenty fellow protesters and all of them slept on the floor while refusing the beds. When she asked why, she was told, “That’s too bourgeois.” (Appy pg. 414) This is a term that is often connected with the communist manifesto to describe the materialistic middle class. This is an odd statement if the focus of their protest was just the Vietnam War. She grew to embrace the pro-communist view in addition to her opposition to U.S. involvement. This is evidenced by naming her daughter after Madame Nguyen Thi Binh who was the foreign minister for the North Vietnam National Liberation Front. (Appy pg. 413) She also cofounded a women’s organization called the Madame Binh Brigade.

In conclusion, the end result of the war was that many young people in The United States adopted communist political views because of the war. The same U.S. military actions that turned many South Vietnamese to sympathize with the communist North had the same effect on some of America’s youth of the era. Gologorsky was one of these youth who started out disliking the war, but soon became drawn into a movement that called for political revolution. Appy states that, “She doesn’t want closure on the Vietnam War” so that it is not repeated, but it also seems as though those were the good-old-days for her; a romantic and exciting time of revolution. The end of the war left America more polarized and socially fractured with wounds that would endure for a lifetime.

Part I

I interpreted Bob Gabriel's anecdote entitled "We buried our own men right there" as a story that represented a turning point in the Vietnam War. For me this story expressed some of the psychological trauma and change in morale that many of our troops were going through at the time of The Tet Offensive that ultimately led to a shift of momentum in the Vietnam War. I believe this story also revealed to the reader that some of the soldiers fighting during this time in the war began fighting for their own lives versus that of their battalions. For example, the author of this particular story cites a personal experience that happened during a battle in which he was left to fend for himself by some of his fellow soldiers in his battalion. Author Bob Gabriel recalls this painstaking instance of war in his story. He describes it by saying "...they dropped down the river and split. I mean they just took off. Left me there all by myself." (Appy 300) This personal account of abandonment during battle is pretty disheartening to say the least. It would be one thing if the soldiers that he was originally with had come back for him but instead these men relied on other American soldiers to bring him back to safety. In my opinion the author's fellow soldiers basically left him for dead in this particular situation. While in this particular instance Gabriel was ultimately escorted back to safety his life was still compromised in the very dire situation he was left in. I think this story within a story symbolizes a turning point of the Vietnam War because it made me think that if some of our men couldn't fight for each other's lives than there were no way we could win the war. While I understand that as individuals we generally seem to put a premium on our own well being versus that of others I've always seemed to be under the impression that the military wasn't like this. This is why I think at this point in the Vietnam War soldiers began fighting solely to get home alive versus that of the winning the war against an enemy they hardly knew.

Lastly, I think this story represented a turning point in the Vietnam War because of the psychological trauma some of the soldiers were going through. For example, Gabriel talks about some of his fellow soldiers that couldn't handle the anxiety involved with war. One of the men in his battalion became so obsessed with the notion that he was going to die in combat that the author ultimately shot him in the foot so he could return state side back to his family. To me this was a clear depiction of how some men just didn't want to be at war at all and could no longer handle the mental anguish after seeing so much death and fighting. This combination of a lack of a strong will to win the war accompanied with soldiers who didn't want to be there at all led to a turning point in the Vietnam War in favor of the North Vietnamese and their communist cohorts.

Part 2

While reading all the stories from part five of *Patriots* I became convinced that there wasn't one particular instance that marked the end of the Vietnam War. Obviously there were many different events and actions that occurred during and even before the Vietnam War that could be considered what led to the end of this war. However, if I were to pick one piece of writing I would point to Alexander M. Haig Jr.'s story entitled "Even the tough guys...caved in" to best represent the ending of the Vietnam War. I think this is the best representation of an ending to this war because it identified the politics behind

this war and what drove it to its end. In my opinion it is more than safe to say that this particular story symbolized a political ending of the Vietnam War. By saying this war was ended by politics I am identifying all the different decisions made by the higherarchy of the united States government that led us to never win this war. The author of this story suggests that this war was basically over before it began in the sense that we never made the drastic decisions needed to win this war. Haig Jr. describes this ideal in his story by saying "...you conduct the conflict with all the assets the United States has at its disposal to bring about a quick and successful outcome or you stay out. We didn't do either in Vietnam." (Appy 397) In essence I felt like the author was conveying the notion that while the United States remained committed to a proxy war in Vietnam we never committed to a full on victory in Vietnam. This quotation is what led me to ultimately consider this story the ending of the war. We as a country seemed to enact a tic for tac strategy that made us vulnerable in the long run of the war in Vietnam. This is why I am a firm believer that the Vietnam War was very much a quagmire and a war we never became fully committed to.

This is not to say that the actual fighting that took place in the Vietnam War was over before it ultimately ended in Saigon. Instead it is more of a theory that our political bureaucracy failed to allocate the necessary steps and drastic decisions necessary to win the Vietnam War. This is I strongly believe that the idea of winning the war in Vietnam ended at the start or even before the war. Author Haig Jr. puts it brilliantly by saying "if you don't go in to win, don't go in at all." (Appy 397)

Part one

“I knew I wasn’t supposed to feel admiration. I should be fearful of these people and feel hatred for them. I did have fear-I could feel it in my stomach-but also that surprising admiration.” (Appy, 2003) For Nguyen Qui Duc TET was a very important day. Not only for its historical significance within his country but also because the events of that day would forever change him.

Nguyen Qui Duc was just ten years old when the Tet Offensive took place. He and his family were ambushed in their home. The above quote from Appy’s interview of Nguyen gave insight to how he was struggling inwardly to understand where he stood in his beliefs. He wanted to do and believe as he was told, *“As scared as I was, I had the impression he was a very persuasive and eloquent man. I don’t remember his words, but there was passion in his speech and I was moved by way he talked about the nation.”* (Appy, 2003) He could help feel the passion in the man’s speech and it touched his heart.

Nguyen soon watched his family be torn apart by the same men he began to admire. He watched his father be taken away and imprisoned for twelve years (1968-1980). He saw symbols of his culture, like the bridge over the Perfume River, be destroyed. His comment on that very event seemed to show how his young mind was struggling to understand what was going on around him, *“You expect war to have its casualties and for people to be killed, but even then I thought that if you go so far as to blow up that bridge, a bridge that had so much significance for so many Vietnamese, then you no longer have respect for history and culture. You no longer have respect for the nation.”* (Appy, 2003) By now Nguyen had watched his home destroyed, his family destroyed and now his culture and history as well. His head was spinning and he was trying to process the turn of events as he was ripped from it all. He lived the next 7 years in a refugee camp with his mother before coming to America with his uncle in 1975. He describes this time as a struggle. A time of little understanding for the war and why it was really being fought, and who’s side was he to choose? This time was a turning point for him. It was when he started to realize he was leading what he called “a double life”, a life where he was sympathetic towards the South Vietnamese, and yet friendly towards Western culture.

Once in America he began to assimilate quickly. He watched his actions change and become more Americanized. He began to wear similar clothes and listen to the same music as his peers. He began to change. He began to see the war and America thru different eyes. He once thought that America was a great nation, one that produced peaceful people who loved music and culture. And now he was seeing them fight in a senseless war, and hurt innocent people.

It was very clear that Nguyen was torn between his two countries. I struggle to find how this was a direct turning point in the war, instead I see it as a turning point within a man’s heart. As he points out in his closing statement he has no hatred towards either side. Instead he has a deep understanding for why people made the decisions they did. He understands that there is a price for war. And yet he makes a choice to not harbor hate, instead use his experiences to enrich the lives of others like him.

Today Nguyen hosts a radio show called "Pacific Time," the only nationally distributed radio show about Asia and Asian Americans. The show reaches 165,000 each week on 20 stations nationwide and in Hong Kong. He believes he is not the only displaced Asian who found his/her life changed by the war. He considers them as well as himself, modern day nomads traveling around looking for themselves, instead of just a place to call home. (Vanessa Hua, 2006)

Part two

Endings

Perhaps the most definitive story in this section was that of Judith Coburn's. She was an American journalist whose father was close friends with Clark Clifford, Secretary of defense in 1968. During her interview by Appy she recounts how her father hosted a Thanksgiving dinner that included Clifford and Stuart Symington. Symington was the senator of Missouri. Judith recalls a moment after dinner where Symington was asked to talk about his time in Vietnam. She over hears him comment "Well you know, it's the usual dog-and-pony show." (Appy, 2003) He goes on to explain that one of the Colonel's he met while in Danang was concerned that one day he'd lead his men into battle and he'd turn around to find them gone. Little did anyone know how true a statement that was. Judith learned how true when she herself traveled to Vietnam in 1970.

Judith's job took her to many bases while she was in Vietnam. She would recall seeing and hearing about dozens of men who were against the war. These men were deliberately refusing to follow orders or "sandbagging" missions. She saw dozens of men attempt an antiwar demonstration on July Fourth. During a USO event Judith interviewed many men who were against the war and felt Americans should withdraw. Everywhere she went and looked there were signs of the soldiers refusing to fight and die for a cause they no longer believed in.

She remembers utter chaos. There were Black Panther compounds, prostitution rings disguised as entertainment for the troops, drugs everywhere, corruption at every level, from every side. In her own way she was witnessing an end of war and the beginning of change. Little did she know it at the time but the Vietnam War had been lost. Lost by the American's and Vietnamese alike. Both sides had suffered great casualties and their own people were turning against them. *"Of course there were other missions where people were greatly heroic, but it was pretty obviously that the military was gradually losing control of its own men."* (Appy, 2003)

Judith Coburn had witnessed a beginning of an end. She saw both sides give up and both trade sides. It was clear that for many of our soldiers the war had ended when they laid down their weapons and walked away.

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HST 195
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Assignment 2

Part I: Turning Point

The best example of a “turning point” in Part Four of Appy’s book is the interview with Douglas Kinnard. Kinnard says, “We had made it a war of wills, rather than a war of power. The problem was, while we had the power, it turned out they had the will” (p. 322). The difference between WWII and the war in Vietnam was that there was no noble and well prepared purpose behind the fighting. Commanding officers were given orders, but they did not know or understand the purpose of the actions they were commanding their troops to carry out. There is a definitive difference in how a man fights when he is killing for a purpose – to protect, defend, etc. – and a man killing just to kill. It requires a different mindset; it requires a man to lose a part of his humanity.

Soldiers began their tour of Vietnam with the idea that they were going over to help the Vietnamese; to be the heroes, the saviors of Vietnam. However, after they had spent years touring the country, executing missions, they suddenly became these machines instead of men. The “turning point” was from a nation wanting to save another nation, to a nation who wanted win no matter the cost. The war became a vindictive slaughter which culminated in the My Lai Massacre. Larry Colburn said of the My Lai incident, “The only thing I remember feeling back then was that these guys were really out for revenge. They’d lost men to booby traps and snipers and they were ready to engage” (p. 348). A few short sentences later he says, “They were butchering people. The only thing they didn’t do is cook ‘em and eat ‘em. How do you get that far over the edge?” (p. 379). This reinforces what Kinnard described in his interview with Appy. The soldiers knew and understood what it meant to be a soldier; what they didn’t understand was their purpose in Vietnam. A soldier fights to uphold justice and to protect the innocent, but the soldiers in Vietnam were being tasked to do things that would have been held a tragedy back home. Kinnard says that one of the major portions of analysis was body count. Obvious, right? If a country is losing its people they will change their behavior; but in the case of the Viet Cong, this wasn’t so. America had the power to wipe out hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese, but the Viet Cong were far more resolute. The Vietnam War was truly an issue of mind over matter, but how does a soldier fight the mind?

Part II: Ending

The best example of an “ending” in Part Five of Appy’s book is the interview with Judith Coburn. Coburn began her time in Vietnam reporting on the happenings there, but she ended her time in Cambodia. Ms. Coburn had been kicked out of Vietnam in 1972 and was not allowed to return until 1979; even then she was not allowed to return as a journalist. After being issued a 3-day visa to visit Cambodia by the Foreign Minister (Nguyen Cao Thach), she managed to extend that visa to travel for six weeks across Cambodia and document what had happened there. “There would be these huge welcomes and almost as soon as we got out of the car they would take us to the mass grave where their friends and family who had been slaughtered by the Khmer Rouge were buried” (p. 412). The pictures that she describes of Cambodians asking for lost loved ones, sending letters with her in case she sees them are an end to the myth that the

Vietnam War was confined to Vietnam, or even that it was confined to soldier fighting soldier. The mass graves that Judith Coburn was shown were not filled with soldiers, they were filled with the bodies of women, children and the elderly.

Many events in many ways build up to Tet which forms what many people see as the turning point. When you read an article or saw a news broadcast about the attacks on Tet, people saw only one thing and it is not good. But what leads to that thought? Is it how people are being shown this news or what was said immediately after? After spending a lot of time coming over Christian Appy's book *Patriots*, part four "The turning Point" I believe the turning point was most felt in Barry Zorthian's experience as "the official voice of America in Vietnam". He really showed me how difficult it must have been for him and reporters to find proof of our "Winning" the war in Vietnam. As he said, "What do you write about in that situation? You write about what you see." And amidst the many organized attacks there was raw unedited footage of dead VC on the lawn of the American Embassy.

The quick spreading news and footage of the raw bloody carnage sent the feeling of defeat not triumph all over the world. Along with that comes the renewed view of our efforts in Vietnam, government officials and congress. The credibility and trust in them was also being lost. Progress was being claimed but I think this was because they measured their success on "the body count" and not of gained control or cleared up and secure areas. The biggest testament to this point was his account of Long An Province. He had gone there five times over the years and the briefing was roughly the same from his first visit to his fifth. "The same areas were being cleaned up and made secure, and the same degree of progress announced and yet the province still wasn't cleaned up". This simple review gives me pause for the truth. That truth is the turning point of the mind that says "we can't win this war".

As an officer at 35, Frank Maguire went to Vietnam and served three tours as an adviser to the Vietnamese. Who better to put the "end" of the war into perspective? He was there to help out the people of Vietnam, and in the beginning it seemed to be going well. However the good memories were being replaced with fresh new horror stories. In the beginning Americans went there with good intentions and good hearts in mind. However, I believe we all have a general understanding of how too much war can change people. Too often men he talked to would tell him things like the helicopter pilot after bragging about the "fifteen or twenty sampans" that he killed. After Maguire questioned him to find out if the people that he killed were VC. The pilot simply responded "Who the fuck cares?" Later Maguire reflects on what he was told when he first arrived in Vietnam. "When you call for artillery, remember who's on the other end. We're not here to mutilate or kill these people". Maguire was right when he said that somewhere along the line that kind of thinking got lost. No matter what the cause was in the beginning... it was over the moment our soldiers lost that sense of thinking of the Vietnamese as people worth respecting.

Part One: The Turning Point

The turning point of the Vietnam War, in my eyes, would have to be the My Lai massacre on March 16th, 1968.

The story that Larry Colburn told about what he saw and how he reacted to the situation on March 16th, 1968 caused me to see the My Lai massacre not only as the turning point for Larry Colburn, but a turning point for the entire war as well. I see it as a turning point for Larry Colburn because he had to face his own men on the battlefield so that he could protect the families of the South Vietnamese hamlet.

I also see it as a turning point for the war because it showed that the war turned from trying to bring stability to a torn up country and its people into somewhat of a free-for-all with many people wondering what was really going on in Vietnam and why our soldiers would commit such atrocious acts against innocent people.

Part Two: The End

I feel that the “end” of the Vietnam War happened in 1966 with the major demoralization in the South Vietnamese and U.S. militaries. This demoralization caused the desertion rate in the South Vietnamese and U.S. militaries to quadruple from 1966 to 1971. Not only were the desertion rates extremely high but many enlisted men were also “fragging” their officers. From 1969 to 1971 there were a total of 730 reported “fraggings.” Along with this also came an increase of drug use among many of the soldiers. I feel that this decline in the discipline of the military was the end of the Vietnam War.

Assignment #2

Kristin Sledge

Larry Colburn never claimed to be an angel. In fact, he opens his account in Christian G. Appy's *Patriots* with this statement, "We we're pacifists. We did our job and when we had to kill people we did." (Appy, *Patriots* pg 346) But his turning point came for him upon a realization that a sweep through a village was turning into an unwarranted massacre. He recalls seeing women and children on their way to market with empty baskets; but upon return from the sweep of the village, those same women and children were in piles of the dead. His realization that it was the American's doing the killing didn't come until later though when he saw Captain Medina kill a young girl who was wounded and asking for assistance. He saw this and realized that we had become the enemy.

In his story, he seems like he tried to rationalize this killing to himself by claiming that the soldiers had lost many of their comrades and had grown so weary of losing men that any Vietnamese was good enough. If they could not get soldiers they would settle for civilians. Something that these soldiers had not counted on was that such acts as these were simply delivering the survivors to the Viet Cong cause. This was a turning point for the Vietnamese people; allowing them to see that the Americans were not there to help them, but instead to win a war.

For Thompson, Colburn's pilot, his turning point came for him when he saw the civilians attempting to flee to a bunker in order to find shelter from the American troops. At that moment, he was not on America's side, but instead on the side of the innocents being slaughtered. He even went so far as to tell Colburn that if the troops made any sort of move against the Vietnamese as he escorted them out of the bunker to shoot the American troops.

The final turning point that I found in Colburn's story was that of the young child he saved from a pile of bodies. Though the child was covered in blood and a blank stare upon his face, he had seemed fine. Colburn went back to Vietnam in 2001 he was reconnected with the boy, now a 41-year-old man. Despite Colburn's hopes that the boy would be too young to remember anything from that terrible day, the man remembered everything. This was a turning point for the boy, in my opinion, because he now had to not only live with, but cope with the memories of that day for the rest of his life. I would be interested in reading his account to see when in that day was the turning point for him between "I'm going to die" and "I just might make it through this".

When I think of an ending I think of a defining moment, one that cannot be missed as the conclusion. When it came to the stories in the "Endings" section of *Patriots*, there were defining moments; but more often than not there were more than one that would define an ending. Upon reading Daniel Ellsberg state "It was the first time I had come face-to-face with Americans willing to go to prison for refusing to collaborate in an unjust war. I thought, we're eating our young." (Appy, *Patriots* Pg. 433-434) it signified an end for

young Americans accepting the draft as their duty. During WWII, to me at least, it seemed the draft was seen as a civic duty or an honor, serving the country that serves you. When it came towards the end of Vietnam however, I can't say I blame Randy Kehler for being more willing to go to prison than to be shipped to Vietnam.

This was not the only ending to be found in Ellsberg's story. Though he wanted to work for the president and saw it as the highest calling; Ellsberg himself felt an ending of his "knightly calling". He came to this conclusion after a trial for American soldiers who murdered a Vietnamese agent under suspicion of him being a Viet Cong double agent was dismissed. He knew of the lies that were being told by the White House in order to keep their noses clean and "at that point I decided I just wasn't going to be part of this lying and murder anymore. To me it wasn't just the lying, but that it had been lying in the service of an unjust war, and killing in an unjust war is unjustified homicide, mass murder." (Appy, *Patriots* pg. 434) He was going to do what it took to let the people of America see that this war was unjust and not worthy of American lives, and the Pentagon Papers were going to be the medium he accomplished that with.

Finally, there was the beginning of an end for Richard Nixon through the Pentagon Papers. While Nixon was not worried about what the public would have found out about Johnson or Kennedy he did have to worry about his own plans for the war to be made known. He let his fear control him and overreacted to the publication of the Pentagon Papers which brought them to the public eye. Ellsberg recalls, "There wasn't much reason to believe it would have a big effect unless Nixon overreacted to it. Which is exactly what he did...It didn't become big news until it became a court case" (Appy, *Patriots* pg. 435). In a way, Nixon's ending went hand in hand with America's belief in their politicians having their best interests at heart. Nixon's overreaction and manhunt, according to Ellsberg, were the only things that truly linked Nixon to the Watergate scandal, causing the end of his presidency.

So many endings from one five page story, who would have guessed the major domino effect that was possible all from a young man refusing to go to Vietnam and die for nothing; it truly is amazing how someone's bravery and refusal to stay quiet can ripple through foundations as strong as a country's entire government. Who knows if Vietnam would have ever found a conclusion without the realizations of Kehler and Ellsberg.

Matthew Schroeder

Joe Escobar – HST 195

November 24th, 2013

Assignment 2

In Christian Appy's book *Patriots*, the collection of interviews in Part Four, *The Turning Point*, signify a range of actual turning points in the war people experienced. From soldiers to journalists, civilians to the president, each has their own view on what they see as being the turning point of the Vietnam War. While reading through part four, the massacre at My Lai really hit me as being a major turning point of the war. Not a turning point in terms of getting upper hand in military strategy towards winning the war, but a turning point in the minds of soldiers and Americans back home. Appy summed this up quite well "millions who had believed the war a misguided policy or a tragic mistake began to consider the possibility that it was fundamentally unjust and immoral." A message that has been stated several times through the readings was that the war would be won on the streets of the United States, not in the jungles of Vietnam. The My Lai incident was just another nudge on the minds of the American people that the war was wrong and that we should have never gotten involved in the capacity that we did.

The accounts of Larry Colburn on the incident (massacre) at My Lai seemed to give a very detailed, graphic, and truthful picture of what happened. His role in the war being an aerial recon scout gave him, more so than many others, an accurate window in the events that took place. During his scouting mission on March 16, 1968 he witnessed U.S. soldiers killing unarmed, wounded Vietnamese civilians at point blank range. "Then we saw a young girl about twenty years old lying in the grass. We could see that she was unarmed and wounded in the chest. We marked her with smoke because we saw a squad not too far away. The smoke was green meaning it's safe to approach. Red would have meant the opposite. We were hovering six feet off the ground not more than twenty feet away when Captain Medina came over, kicked her, stepped back, and finished her off. He did it right in front of us. When we saw Medina do that, it all clicked. It was our guys doing the killing." (Appy 347) What Colburn witnessed that day for by all accounts in his interview was the transformation of U.S. soldiers into cold blooded killers.

The thought process of many of the soldiers involved in the mass killings at My Lai probably varied greatly from as simple as these were my orders and I will carry them out to the best of my ability, to these people have killed so many of my friends and everyone one of them deserves to die. While these thoughts might have been going through the soldiers minds at the time, In the years that followed as the news of what had happened at My Lai began to get out, this event clearly shows a turning point in the way Americans back home viewed the war in Vietnam.

Similar to trying to find the turning point of the Vietnam War, trying to find the ending of the war is just as difficult. This difficulty comes when looking at the ending of the war from many different points of view. While reading through the interviews in Part five which is titled Endings, my understanding of what really represented the ending of the war began to expand. As mentioned in our instructions for this assignment, from a historical and numbers standpoint the end of the Vietnam War was the fall of Saigon in 1975. But when you think about how a war is fought, it is obvious that a war cannot be fought without people, and the support of the people in fighting the war began to wither away long before 1975.

In Judith Coburn's interview she talks about many of her experiences as a journalist during the Vietnam War. However before she ever went into Vietnam she had some idea of just how bad things were. During a conversation she overheard between her father, the secretary of defense, and a U.S. senator, she learned how of just how much control military leaders had lost over their men. Senator Symington recalled a conversation he had with a colonel in Vietnam "I'll tell you, mainly I have the feeling that one day soon if I lead my men into battle I might turn around and they won't be there." This recount of how far the leadership in Vietnam had fallen felt like a sign that the end was near. The end being that the soldiers fighting the war had had about enough. They were tired of being sent into battle with a high probability that they would be killed or severely wounded for a reason they could not comprehend as being just. For this colonel simply being left behind would have been great compared to some of the other methods enlisted men were using to get rid of their commanding officer. The Henry Rollins case was another example Coburn described as being a situation where enlisted men openly refused orders from a commanding officer and got away with it without penalties. Rollins punched his superior after being given an order to put his uniform hat on. In one of the first court martial hearings ever Rollins was tried by a jury of his peers and subsequently acquitted of the charges.

Since the Tet offensive in 1968, the morale of the U.S. soldiers in Vietnam was declining at an increasing rate. It was quite amazing to read the history of the war as it progressed and alongside read interviews from people such as Coburn who describe downward spin of operations in Vietnam. While these experiences cannot be said to be the same throughout the entire American military in Vietnam after 1968, it is amazing that we were able to keep the war going for as long as we did. The will for many soldiers to continue fighting the war ended long before the U.S. finally pulled out of Vietnam ending the war.

Part One: The Turning Point

To me, a story that is a great example of an important turning point in the Vietnam War comes from Clark Dougan. It is a short story, but I feel that it exemplifies one of the most important turning points for Americans. Clark tells us about a boy that he knew in school. His name was Greg Fischer, and he was just a typical high school boy that played sports, just like Clark. When Clark asked Greg what his plans were after high school, he said that he was going to join the marines rather than go to college because he was, "going to get drafted anyhow, so if I'm going to get drafted, why not be the best, ya know?" After graduating high school, Clark Dougan goes to college and admits to being, "really kind of oblivious to the war," until he picks up a copy of the Cleveland Press one day. The article titled, "He Was Only 19 - Did you Know Him?" was about Greg Fischer's death in Vietnam. This was a very important turning point for him, because it made him really think about the fact that every death in Vietnam is likely some normal person from home that had a normal life. Dougan thinks that this article created a turning point in "Middle America," turning them against the war. While this one article probably did not have as great an impression on all of the rest of America, I believe that these same kinds of situations happened to many people, where they had that realization that "troops" in Vietnam are really their neighbors, and their friends, and their store clerks, and so on. These types of realizations increased the general opposition to the Vietnam War from the American people, which is why to me, it is an important turning point in the war.

Part Two: Endings

A story about an ending that I think is important is the story by Truong Tran. I think that it is important to learn about how the other side felt, which is why I love that this book has both American points of view and Vietnamese points of view. In his account, Tran talks about how because of the "help" from the Americans, South Vietnam could not have won the Vietnam War. In fact, the opening quote of the story is, "We could either lose or tie, but not win." He further explains that if the Americans had been successful in defeating the North Vietnamese, all that they would have one is Southern Vietnam since the southern Vietnamese only really fought within the South, rather than trying to take over the north. On the other side, Northern Vietnam was guaranteed the north, even if they lost. As Tran put it, "The best we could ever do is keep half the country. On the other side, the communist could either win or tie, but not lose. Since we were never able to fight in the North, the worst they could do is keep half the country." Not only did having Americans fighting for South Vietnam destroy any hope of unification between the north and the south, but they also just completely destroyed the south. Below the 17th parallel, the Vietnamese suffered economically and socially. Most southerners made their livings from their plantations. Not only did Americans take them from their rural land and relocate them, but they also destroyed the potential that the land had for growing crops with their chemical warfare. The point that I believe that Truong Tran is making is that not only did the Americans not help them, but they actually hurt them in their supposed pursuit to fight for them. He is also expressing that at the end of the war, the south was left with less than they started with. I think that it is important to realize that the loss of the Vietnam War was not just a major loss for the United States, but also for the Southern Vietnamese people. Their livelihood was ruined while Americans got to return to their untouched homeland.

In part four of Appy's book, Nguyen Qui Duc's story best illustrated a discernible turning point. As the son of a South Vietnamese government official, Nguyen described himself as living a double life, overwhelmed and conflicted by the different cultures and ideologies infiltrating his country. It took a terrifying night and a life changing experience for him to truly have a stance on the war. Nguyen depicted his confused self by saying, "I was friendly toward Western culture, went to a French school, and had contact with Americans. But inside I was struggling to understand why the enemy was fighting. Did they have a real reason (297)?" At ten years old, one can only imagine how confused he must have been, living an affluent life supporting the South Vietnamese cause and then to suddenly start questioning if the enemy did have a legitimate reason.

The turning point of Nguyen's story took place the night that Northern soldiers stormed his house. He chronicled his young ignorance to the war when he said "All night we heard explosions and kept thinking they were just New Year fire crackers. We could not believe that Communist soldiers were fighting in Hue itself. It didn't even enter our mind (295)." It's hard for me to fathom how him, his parents and the people around them actually thought that they were completely out of harms way. This was a war that consumed the entire country of Vietnam, where government officials and people of power were prime targets. Especially with his father working for the South Vietnam government, his family would be perfect ransom for Northern soldiers. His mixed feelings at that point were further detailed when he was describing being lectured by one of the Northern soldiers and he said, "...there was passion in his speech and I was moved by the way he talked about the nation. I knew I wasn't supposed to feel admiration. I should be fearful of these people and feel hatred for them. I did have fear – I could feel it in my stomach – but also that surprising admiration (296)." Picture this young boy huddled in this crowded room looking up at the North Vietnamese soldier with obvious fear but also a hue of wonderment as the man talked with great intensity and devotion, as he sits there contemplating "what do I stand for?" At ten years old he surely was unaware of the politics of the war and the reasoning's behind it but Nguyen undeniably struggled with what his side, the South Vietnamese, stood and fought for. This is evident because otherwise he wouldn't have constantly been questioning if, just maybe, the enemy did have plausible reasons.

It wasn't until ten days after being captured that Nguyen's thoughts toward the North Vietnamese became more clear and he seemed to take a defiant stance on the war. He recounted the turning point for him when he said, "On the way, we saw that the bridge over the Perfume River had been blown up by Communist soldiers. It was lying in the water. I was so shocked. That bridge was an incredibly graphic symbol of Hue, a symbol of the whole nation (296)." It's evident that the bridge meant something personal and deep to him as his words are tinged with sadness and resentment, even years later, as an older man reflecting back on what he saw that day. His anger towards the Communists for destroying the bridge, their national symbol, is shown when he said, "You expect war to have it's casualties and for people to be killed, but even then I thought that if you go so far as to blow up that bridge, a bridge that had so much significance for so many

Vietnamese, then you no longer have respect for history or culture. You no longer have respect for the nation (296).” It seems as though losing that bridge would be like the United States having one of our national landmarks obliterated, such as; the Golden Gate bridge in San Francisco is significant to West Coasters or the Brooklyn bridge is momentous to East Coasters.

At the end of Nguyen Qui Duc's story he compared himself to a modern day nomad reasoning that “So much of my life has been colored by having to leave my homeland. When I go to Vietnam I am not seen as Vietnamese and it hurts. And I could never be what other people see as American (297).” He had to learn about war at such a young age and just how destructive it is, that it seems to have haunted him the rest of his life, making him uncomfortable wherever he went. It's appalling that his own native country refused to recognize him and held a cloud over his head in which he had no control over.

Morton Halperin's account was the best example I read of an “ending” of the war in Part five of Appy's book. Morton seemed to have his doubts from day one on U.S involvement in Vietnam as he expressed by saying, “Many things troubled me. When we were bombing the North, it wasn't doing any good and was probably interfering with efforts to stop the war. And we did not understand the depth of corruption of the South Vietnamese government and the fact that it had no credibility in its own society, that it was comprised of people who had fought on the French side and worked with the Japanese (403).” Hindsight 20/20, Morton was correct and had his fellow colleagues saw what he saw so early on, the outcome certainly would've been different.

Unfortunately for Morton he was under a paranoid Nixon administration that would do just about anything to test the loyalty of his people, even as far as wiretapping Morton's phone. It would seem plausible that Morton was wiretapped solely because he was against Nixon's ideology and approach towards Vietnam, which is a complete preposterous and immature handling for people of such stature and supposed intelligence. Morton's concerns were legitimate and ultimately realistic. To counter the mindless way in which the U.S was fighting the war Morton suggested, “ The data was very clear that you could drastically cut American casualties by having two – year combat tours because the critical factor in U.S casualties was how long the commissioned officer had been in command of the unit (403).” In context, that seemed like a reasonable and valid suggestion and at least he was thinking of ways to cut the American casualties so our men could come home safely, most of the other politicians wanted to keep drafting more men to feed into the war. Sadly, Morton said, “There was no interest in fixing any of that stuff (403).”

Morton touched on the subject of the antiwar movement and I really appreciated what he had to say about it. He said, “I always thought the antiwar movement was totally irresponsible because of the assumption a lot of people had that you could negotiate this magic thing called neutral, democratic, independent South Vietnam (406).” It's ludicrous that people believed that we, the U.S, could go into Vietnam and force a divided nation into one common belief. It was arrogant thinking like that, that had the war doomed from day one. I understand that during this time the thought of Communism was terrifying for

many American's, however I truly don't think Vietnam was our battle to fight. Just as the United States had went through it's very own civil war, Vietnam was experiencing it's own. The difference was that nobody else got involved in America's civil war, it was the North vs the South with the country trying to figure it out for itself. Unfortunate America allowed it's fears and need for control to step in and lead the way into Vietnam, costing many young lives and was ultimately a lost battle. Morton's statement sums it all up when he said, “ ... the U.S is powerful enough to survive in a world in which not only China and North Vietnam are Communist, but also this one more tiny sliver of the Asian mainland (406).”

Rhonda Garcia Mondragon

Assignment #2

Families at war

John Douglas Marshall

"You will not be welcome here again" (pg. 328 Patriots) is what S.L.A. Marshall (SLAM) told his grandson John Marshall in the Patriots book. John Marshall went into the ROTC following what his family "expected" him to do. Having a grandfather that was a brigadier general, was something to be proud of, a true role model for any child, he was like a real super hero that was seen on television, in newspaper articles, and even wrote his own books. One would say keeping a military family happy is the best way to not become an enemy. I only know this by personal experience coming from a long line of soldiers, national guards, and naval officers. SLAM gave the commissioning speech for his grandson John's ROTC graduation, but SLAM did not allow his grandson to salute him instead he gave him a huge bear hug in front of the entire audience. I believe that the hug for SLAM shows how proud he of his grandson, it represented the pride and joy he felt, because his grandson John was following in the family footsteps my becoming a member of the military. What SLAM didn't know is that his beloved grandson was hiding a secret that would cause a major turning point in their relationship; and this moment of compassion would be the last that they would spend together. After a year of service, John's antiwar feelings increased immensely while anticipating the call to be sent to Vietnam. So John "immersed himself in the literature of pacifism and nonviolence ---Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Thoreau." (pg. 328 Patriots). His feeling towards war made him come to the decision that would turn his family against him "I can no longer deny the calling of my conscience. . . regardless of my family heritage . . . I can no longer hide my true beliefs beneath my uniform." (pg. 328 Patriots)He withdrew from the army and was granted an honorable discharge. After John's letter for discharge was approved he wrote letters to both his family and his grandfather explaining his decision. John did not hear from his father for more than a year, but he received a letter from his grandfather. In the letter it started by addressing John as "Dear Mr. Marshall," and he knew at that moment the repercussions of his withdrawal from the army had started. SLAM's letter continued with "That the Army seemingly prefers to give you an honorable separation means nothing to this part of what was once your family. . . We know why you quit. It wasn't conscience. You simply chickened out. You didn't have the guts it takes. No male among us has ever been like that and the women, too, thank heaven, are stronger. That means you don't belong. You will not be welcome here again and you are herewith constrained not to use our name as family in any connection." (pg. 329 Patriots) Unfortunately, John's decision had a repercussion that made his grandfather disown him. I would think that SLAM felt a great betrayal and disappointment from the decision that his grandson had made not only to the family but to the nation. I have found by personal experiences with my aunt who is a retired Sergeant and her husband my uncle a Lieutenant Colonel of the National Guard that they are lacking in communication skills and don't really know how to interact with civilians as they would call us. Although just these few examples does not mean that all service members are lacking when it

comes to communication, maybe they just have a harder time sharing feelings since their job has trained them to become more cut and dry to follow out orders. Sadly, John never saw his grandfather again; he didn't even attend his grandfather's funeral, because he figured he wasn't welcome to go. Years after SLAM died, John the grandson that was once rejected by his grandfather tried to reconcile his relationship by investigating accusation that were being written about SLAM. John traveled a total of twelve thousand miles around the country to find the truth and history about his grandfather. After doing this he was able to forgive his grandfather and actually named his daughter Samantha in his honor.

Nguyen Ngoc Bich

Trying to end protesting

Nguyen Ngoc Bich was the ninth child born out of ten in Vietnam. Bich attended college at Princeton, Columbia and Kyoto University of Japan. Bich studied Asian history and literature, and worked as the director of information at the South Vietnamese embassy in Washington D.C. Bich went around from city to city giving speeches at different universities where he would give information on the war and answer questions from the public. His mission was that of ending the misinformation that was being fed to the American public about what was happening in Vietnam. Some of his speeches were rudely interrupted by anti-war protesters. During a speech at Purdue University the protesters would interrupt Bich's speech; every time he tried to say something they would chant "HO HO HO CHI MINH, THE NLF IS GOING TO WIN." There was only one remedy for this and Bich actually did it on stage in response to the protesters. He lay down on top of a table and acted like he was sleeping. Well the protesters didn't know what to do and some other crowd members started to chant "LET HIM TALK, LET HIM TALK". The protesters in response started to Chant "TALK, TALK, TALK"; but Bich remained in the position of his false slumber. Not knowing what to do with this sleeping guest speaker they left, which allowed Bich to continue on with his speech and answer questions from the public. The questions were at sometimes mind bogglingly gullible that people would believe the information that they were reading. For instance, just because you read an article from The New York Times doesn't mean that it is completely true. The war that Bich was trying to end here in the United States was that of misinformed Americans and anti-war protesters.

Part 1

Throughout every major American conflict there has been a “turning point” in a war. The War of Independence had Washington crossing the Delaware, The Civil War had the battle of Gettysburg, the First World War had the unexpected joining of the Italians to the cause, in the Second Great War we had the Battle of Stalingrad, and in the Vietnam War we had what was known as the Tet Offensive. Its easy to say what was the turning point in a war from a military point of view, but what about through the eyes of those involved? Could the turning point be different for those soldiers who fought and gave their lives for the cause? In many cases these events are not going to be the same. In Christian Appy’s book *Patriots* there are many interviews that all have to do with the “turning point” in the Vietnam War, the interview I feel most signifies the “turning point” is the interview with Douglas Kinnard, Kinnard was a General and later created an interview much like Appy did. Kinnard sent out questionnaires to all 173 generals who served in Vietnam (321) Kinnard preformed this questionnaire in mid 1970 but I still think this was a very ponient interview regardless of how late in the war it was. Kinnard states that many of those he interviewed admitted that they didn’t know why they were there in the first place, or what their objectives were (321) This just goes to show you that people including those high up are starting to question why they are there. At the beginning of the war, people seemed to think they were there to stave off the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. But as time went on that objective became not to be the case, and most started to question it. Kinnard also said he was astonished to find out that most Generals were very critical of the media (322) For the first time in American history the media was especially critical of the War, they has always been protestors of war but not like this, the Vietnam War was the most heavily protested war in History. “The Generals felt that the media was undercutting the war, and they were reporting things just for the headline factor”(322) This was also the first war to be heavily filmed, for the first time Americans were able to have the war in their living rooms every night, the violence, the poverty, all welcomed you into your living rooms every night after dinner. The major issue Kinnard saw was how they saw the North Vietnamese, they didn’t consider them a real threat, South Vietnamese economy was bursting at the seems, mainly due to all the US dollars floating around in the economy, and that burst of economic growth overflowed into Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia

, thus the threat of South Vietnam being that one domino that caused all the others to fall to communism wasn’t a real threat anymore. (322) It was all of this that I feel makes this story the turning point, while Kinnard did his questionnaire late in the war it was easy to see that the “turning point” happened far earlier but it wasn’t clear until then. No one really knew the objective of the war, they fought to stop communism from spreading, most generals were concerned with body counts like Julian Ewell.(323) They struggled with the media and how they were being portrayed, but that’s it. It wasn’t clear objectives of taking a piece of land like in previous wars, this was a war without clear lines, without distingshion, this was a war that had blurred lines that people jumped on and over all the time. Its safe to say that’s its difficult to determine an exact “turning point” in the Vietnam War, for most it was Tet, but its going to be different for each person, I really feel that the “Turning Point” happened after Kinnards questionnaire, after that we learn just how the generals really felt and what they had to deal with while they were in the

war, whether it be other Generals, the Media, or their fellow Soldiers

Part 2

Much like in the question of the “turning point” in a war there is also an “ending” to every war. The War of Independent had Yorktown, The Civil War had the signing at Appomattox Courthouse, The First Great War had the Treaty of Versailles, In the Second Great War it was the dropping of the Atomic Bombs, and in Vietnam it was Saigon falling to the communists. All these events signified the end of a war but is it really the end? Could the end have happened sooner? Again just like in the question of “turning point” we must discover what the real “end” of the war was, what was it and when was it? Most Historians agree that the “end” of the Vietnam War was the fall of Saigon but do those involved actually think this to be true? Could the end have happened before 1975? In the Christin Appy book *Patriots* there is one interview that really strikes me as a true “ending” to the war, in the App book he interviewed George Evans, Evans grew up in the streets of Pittsburg and his father was a blue collar worker who was the leader of the VFW, he grew up surrounded by veterans of WWII. Every year he would participate in Flag Day every year, he remembered placing the flags on all the graves of the Veterans and hearing stories about the men from his father and his fathers friends.(449-450) Evans was part of that generation where he knew the threat of communism and trusted and loved his government. He also didn’t want to disappoint his father, who was a WWII veteran. He finally ended up going to Vietnam and realized his perception of our Government was completely skewed. “I had certain expectations of my government but they were exploded almost immediately” (451) People like Evans began to realize that their government wasn’t being completely honest with them, nor were they treating the soldiers like they thought. The hospital that he walked into he saw “so much needless pain and suffering” (451) He was then told to “clean up the gook’ when he pulled the curtain he saw a young Vietnamese boy who was about eight or nine, he was dead and his brother laid right next to him, neither had a scratch o them, no bruises(452) It was then that Evans realized, this wasn’t the same war that their fathers have told them, this war was much different, there wasn’t the honor that their was in wars previous. Many civilians went into the war with Patriotic dreams and ideological views of heroes and doing what’s right for America, many of these young boys who signed up listening to stories of their fathers, of war, of becoming a man, and doing what’s right for ones country. So many signed up or was drafted, regardless of how they got there once they got there many realized this was not their fathers war, this war was completely different, and once they realized that the war was over, if you don’t have the support of the men fighting you have lost the war, many believe the Vietnamese won the war because of their loyalty towards Uncle Ho, they loved him and all were willing to die if need be to serve the common good.

Part One: Nguyen Qui Duc “I was living a double life.”

Nguyen Qui Duc talks about how his father was taken and held prisoner for twelve years. He said they had lived a sheltered life and thought the war only existed in the jungles and fields but it moved into towns. He thought of the soldiers as horrible people as others had described them. His father was supposed to lie about who he really was to save his life. “There was such a magnitude of fear and finality. He talks about the Hue Bridge being blown to pieces and it was an incredibly graphic symbol for these people. Many songs and poems revolved around this and to see it gone was devastation to him and his people. The respect for this bridge was gone and the Vietnamese people lost respect for their nation. Duc talks about feeling conflicted and not sure how to react to the contradictory influences out there. He saw American soldiers be jerks and hurt people and then there was the one that taught them stuff. What was he supposed to do? He grew his hair long and listened to Jimi Hendrix just to fit in with the hippie culture. This was a turning point in how to deal with the war and American soldiers, just be like them and fit in to survive. It was at that point when listening to Santana in the day and at night you listened to antiwar songs of the Vietnamese, that he says that is when you know you are an adult.

Part two: Frank Maguire “The whole attitude was, stand back little brother, I’ll take care of it.”

Frank Maguire served three tours in Vietnam. He thought by going back, he was helping these people and improving their lives. He helped build schools and other much needed buildings to get them going in the right direction for their country. They were trying to Vietnamize this country and it wasn’t working, only because the Americans did everything and didn’t teach the Vietnamese what to do. When they would ask questions, they were portrayed as ungrateful bastards. Part of the ending point in this war was the HES reports. One could put whatever they wanted in this report and people would listen even though most of the time it was lies. He would change the numbers and

the charts to make it look like they were winning the war, when in actuality they were losing. By the third tour in 1970, Saigon was dead as a city. “There was a lot of frenetic gaiety. I felt defeat and loss everywhere.” Vietnam was slowly becoming America with the girls and everyone getting drunk. The State Department approved all of this and they provided the hotel. He feels they shouldn’t have been there in the first place, but felt they owed it to them, because the Vietnamese people made a commitment to them. “I think it’s a national trait that we always feel we know what’s better for everybody. It was an attitude of misguided benevolence, that we know what’s good for them and they don’t really understand what’s happening. We really wanted to win their hearts and minds, except we could never find one or the other.”

tyler Kennedy

hist 195

The turning point(s)

There are many examples of turning points in the war in Vietnam and they range from a military turning point all the way down to the individuals involved weather in the valleys and jungles of Vietnam to the avenues and alleyways of America. There is great debate about where and when the turning point took place and I personally believe that it took place around the time of the tet offensive in 1968. I also believe that it took place in the hearts and minds of many soldiers that were there, policy makers here in the states, and the people on the home front who for the longest time had supported us military action in south East Asia.

Ive come to this conclusion after reading a few letters in the 4th section of Christian Appys book “patriots”. The assignment said to chose a story that had the best example of a turning point, I found many but the most compelling one to me was Bary Zorthian

A good example of how the turning point happened at the home front was from all the images of battles taking place in the country being broadcasted directly into the television sets of American citizens. Vietnam was the first television war where graphic and sometimes uncensored images were a constant reminder of the horrors many young Americans could and in some cases would soon face. One of the more graphic images of the war that I still see floating around today is when general Ngyuen Ngoc Laon executed a VC prisoner of war. This was talked about by Bary Zorthian, the director of joint United States public affairs office from 1964 to 1968.in his contribution to Appys book, Bary said that there was some back ground to what happened. He said that one of the general’s good friends had just been killed by this particular VC. The background doesn’t really justify what happened, but it did give you a sense of just how brutal this war or any other war was or is.

As the images were being pumped into the minds of America feelings about the war began to change, as the percentage of people who supported the war

began to slip below the 50% mark. It seemed that no matter where people went the war was topic of discussion, on such example was life magazine who in June of 1969 ran a special that showed the faces of 242 men who were lost in Vietnam in one weeks time. At the time there was some confusion, many Americans believed that all 242 soldiers had been killed trying to take what would later become known as hamburger hill. Either way it was too late, by this point the war in the public's eyes had taken an irreversible turn and it was only a matter of time before tensions would boil over on the home front.

So with that being said, the turning point happened in the year or so that followed the tet offensive and I believe it took place here at home and not in south east Asia.

To determine when the war in Vietnam really ended varies depending upon who you ask. It involves in depth thinking and there are a few answers you may come up with. Some say it was when the united states pulled out in 1972, others may say it was fall of Saigon in 1975, and some of the men who fought there say that the war will never really be over, and that it lives on in the minds of those who served and the memory of those who didn't quite make it home. If you ask the chemistry major taking this history course he will tell you he thinks the war ended in 1971 at a war protest in Washington dc. This war protest was unlike the others because this one involved decorated Vietnam vets throwing back their medals in outright opposition to the war.

The idea for this being the end of the war comes after reading about Steve Sherlocks time in the army and his participation in the anti war protest. During his time in battle he was relieved of command for believing that the communists vc he was killing were people not unlike him. Due to fierce dehumanization (something that normally happens in war) his superior felt like he was unfit to lead. How does this all tie into the ending of the war? Or at least the beginning of the end? Moral among the soldiers at this time was very low, so very low in fact that soldiers lacked the military discipline that they had been taught in basic training to the point that enlisted men were getting into fist fights with officers and in some cases would even "frag" a superior. To frag someone is to throw a fragmentation grenade nearby, this

causing an injury with no way to trace it back to who threw it.

Low morale among the soldiers ultimately led to the end of the war. Many soldiers had no will to fight and in some cases would on some missions, just sit out in the jungle for a few days and then call in for a pick up, having not completed the mission. That was discussed by Christian Appy in his book and he later went on to say that wasn't always the case but it certainly did happen. Soldiers no longer wanted to be a part of it; by this time many Vietnam vets didn't support the war and organized the protest in Washington in 1971 where they threw back their medals that they had earned on the battle field.

The end of the war happened in 1971 when the veterans of Vietnam decided that they no longer wanted the medals they had earned in the war, that they had lost friends to receive and no longer supported what was by now a lost cause in Vietnam.