

Assignment #2

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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.

killing 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 ^{and} 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. *AWK*

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~~ *being revealed*. 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.

with 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.)

Good paper overall!

well written

This last sentence is probably an overstatement.

(putting too much on one story.)