

PART 1

There were obviously a multitude of examples of "turning points" in the section of the book with the same name. One example that stood out a lot in my mind is the apparent turning of the American media from semi-favorable, to reproachful with regards to their reporting of the Vietnam War. Despite there being numerous examples of this in this chapter, its first major appearance is in Barry Zorthian's story "Then - Boom! - Tet comes along", in which Zorthian is relaying a quote supposedly said by President Johnson: "If I've lost Walter Cronkite, I've lost Middle America" (p. 393). The quote was in response to Walter Cronkite's reporting that the "war was at a standstill, and we're not going to win" (p. 393)

I find this quote and this story in the book extremely interesting for many reasons. Firstly, should Cronkite, "The most trusted man in America", have been reporting opinions like that? Was he overstepping his bounds when he did so? Or was he trying to deliver the facts in a way that people would best be able to understand. Secondly, did this quote actually have an impact on Johnson and the way he governed? Cronkite is certainly not an elected official, and yet his words can sway a presidency. I do understand certainly, that it wasn't necessarily Cronkite that Johnson was worried about, but rather, getting/ maintaining the support of the American People. I find myself wondering how much the American Media, whether intentional or not, can and/or did influence outcomes during the Vietnam War, the first 'Televised War', through their reporting.

Another great example of this kind of turning point is found in Clark Dougan's story in which he talks about a local newspaper:

The Cleveland Press was part of the Scripps-Howard chain, a conservative syndicate that had strongly supported the war. So it was remarkable that this newspaper would run such an angry editorial about an American Casualty. (p. 306)

Again in a story by Douglas Kinnard, a two-tour Vietnam General:

"The media got bad grades, but I think a lot of it was undeserved to be honest. I think after the Tet Offensive the American people very rightfully saw the fruitlessness of the whole thing. And while the media did become more critical after Tet, early on much of the media had supported the war..." (p. 322)

Quotes like these found in other stories show how reporting, both on a local scale and nationally, can and did switch polarities.

PART 2

Interestingly enough, I found far fewer examples of 'Endings' in the chapter 'Endings', than I did in 'Turning Point'. It would seem that most of these stories are just stories that take place toward the end of the war, and not about actual endings in themselves. I did come to one major conclusion however, a reoccurring pattern in this chapter and most of the others before it. The Vietnam War put an end to the glorification of American warfare. This is best portrayed in George Evans' story "I didn't know there was a bad

war". In it, like so many others before it, we see Evans' transformation from ignorance, to patriot, to renegade. Here Evans talks about the men his father worked with, being veterans of WWII, and how he himself was expected to serve. "Everything you'd seen and heard your whole life made it feel inevitable and right that you would do your time in the service." (p. 450). After being sent to Vietnam Evans begins to oppose the war and starts to protest. "I still took my job seriously, but realized that the war was not a good thing. I felt betrayed and really angry." (p. 452)

I think one of the things that makes Vietnam stand out greatly in my mind as opposed to other wars I've studied throughout history, is that so many other wars became fervently intertwined with patriotism and national pride. You recall reading about London during the blitz, or the American Revolution. Vietnam seemed to have had the opposite effect. American soldiers that were there ended up resenting their own country, hating it even, more than the combatants they were supposed to be fighting. I find this unique and interesting, although obviously sad.

Towards the end of Evans' story, he recalls contemplating desertion in face of court-martial, but decides against it. It's become blatantly apparent at this point that he no longer has much faith in his commanding officers, or the country he had signed up to serve.

Arvind Raman

HST 195

11/23/14

Assignment 2

1. In part four of Christian Appy's Patriots book, I found the "From Johnson to Nixon" section most useful and interesting to comment on a turning point. The War had begun during the Kennedy presidency and now becoming a problem for soon to be President Richard Nixon. The interview that I saw that best described an example of a "turning point" was John Gilligan's interview. At first Gilligan was pro war, but after his trip to Cam Ranh Bay, his views changed along with some of his colleagues. "I began to think, jeez, this ain't the kind of war we're used to. Of the dozen of us on that trip, about nine came home opposed to the war (p310)."

That definitely felt like a major shift in attitude towards the Vietnam War. Visually they saw that the amount of resources they implemented, this was going to be a long messy war. Also it was never a measure of how much punishment the enemy should endure, but at what cost and at what worth was this a just war? This was a turning point to get our troops out of Vietnam as quickly and safely as possible.

2. In part five of Christian Appy's Patriots book, I found the "We Really Believed" section most entertaining and important towards the ending of the war. The interview I enjoyed the most was Steve Sherlock's. I found a couple examples in his interview to be compared to the "ending" of the war. In the beginning he states how he is a supporter of the war, but as he gets drafted and eventually gets his orders to ship to Nguoc Ngot he disagrees with U.S.'s involvement in Vietnam. I find that very pivotal in the sense, that as an active person in the military, he understood the human compassion for the Vietnamese. When they came across the person with the rosary, that hit home, because just cause their communists they share similar religious beliefs. Having your heart vested in the situation brings an end to the reason why you are doing what you have to do.

At the end of the interview, Sherlock goes into detail about the protest in Washington, also where he throws his medal over the Capitol fence. When he goes back to Indiana he starts up his own chapters for VVAW Vietnam Veterans Against the War. He understands the generic meaning of the bronze star, even though he received it for a tremendous bravery, this was an act that everyone was enduring, and the reward didn't seem so special. When he threw the medal over the fence that was an "ending" in its own. Throwing the medal was Steve Sherlock's way of coming to term with the war, his involvement, and his understandings of the unnecessary amounts of bloodshed from both sides.

Bryan Lewis

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HST 195: History of the Vietnam War

Assignment Two

Part One: Douglas Kinnard

Douglas Kinnard's story shows multiple turning points: for generals, the military and himself. All three are tied in together following the same theme, the unclear objectives set for the war. Many generals didn't really see any clear long-term goals, often just attempting to complete their objective given to them for the day. The war being more about "body count" than territory made it a war of attrition with a difficult measure of victory. "We had made it a war of wills rather than power. The problem was, while we had the power, it turned out they had the will." (Appy 322).

Douglas' story starts with showing the confusion of the generals who replied to his questionnaires as a turning point. He claimed "that almost seventy percent said that they really didn't understand the war." (Appy 321), yes they knew what their individual goal was, but on the larger scale they didn't know what they were fighting for. They felt as though they were fighting for the sake of fighting, "What were we really trying to do, whose bacon were we really trying to save?" (Appy 332) shows a general's clear discontent with the lack of an objective in the war. This caused troop morale to decline and the desire to go home intensify. Douglas also shows a turning point for those higher in military command; Harold Johnson lost heart in the war after Johnson refused to call up the reserves wanting to resign but feeling that his action would have achieved nothing such as the generals feeling their missions often achieved nothing.

Douglas was originally so eager to help in Vietnam that he volunteered for his first tour in 1966. As a chief of operations analysis he attempted to measure the success of the war, and without a clear frontline he saw how blurry the war itself was; not being won through territorial lines but through morbid statistics such as "body count" or "kill ratios". He began to see that the war wasn't about who was more technologically advanced or who had a better strategy, but who was willing to fight it out longer, who had the will. This "body count" was something that helped turn both the American soldiers and populace against the war, with soldiers not wanting to see their friends die next to them and parents fearful of their children coming home in coffins.

Douglas' turning point when he returned for his second tour in 1969, seeing that the idea of "body count", how many people you could kill trickled down the line of command; the generals essentially telling the troops "you better get off your ass and get some kills or you might be replaced." (Appy 323) and as a result sending men to their deaths. This senseless idea of going to kill people only to be killed yourself frustrated Douglas.

Part Two: Troung Tran

Troung Tran's story shows the ending of the war to be the major commitment of the United States and escalation of the Vietnam War. The arrival of American troops helped to rally people against South Vietnam, making their military more dependent on the United States. Also with increased fighting the Vietnamese economy was destroyed, driving Vietnamese farmers to desperate acts such as prostitution to survive. He shows one more way in which the war was over from the beginning with the attitude of South Vietnamese soldiers.

The arrival of American troops was a major factor in the ending the war, mainly due to Vietnamese's proud sense of nationalism. Vietnam had been fighting off invaders for nearly their entire history, eager to earn their independence from a long oppressive China in the earlier years. This sense of nationalism continued throughout their French and Japanese occupations, seeking help wherever they could to liberate and unite themselves. So when more troops began to arrive "The North was able to mobilize southerners as well as northerners to fight what they called the American invasion." (Appy 405).

As the fighting increased the bombing destroyed the country land where the majority of the population lived. As American troops used defoliants to clear the jungles and prevent the VC from hiding, they also destroyed the Vietnamese way of life. With most of the population living off the land this destroyed their economy, no longer able to grow any plants many of them moved into the cities. Living conditions in cities were often just as poor, with people being forced become menial laborers or prostitutes. This economic destruction made the South dependent on the United States government rather than a country willing to fight for itself.

The fierce nationalism of the Vietnamese people didn't transfer to the ARVN's willingness to fight for one main reason, they didn't need independence from the North, they wanted unification with them. Truong's statement "People might not want Communism, but the Communists could at least promise national unification." (Appy 506) shows the view of the people; they just wanted peace and independence, something that the escalation of American troops didn't seem to offer. This effectively ended the war by disheartening the army.

"We also lost because we agreed to fight a war that we could either lose or tie, but

not win. . . Since we were never able to fight in the North, the worst they could do is keep half the country." (Appy 506) The Vietnam War was never a winnable war, as Troung Tran story shows us, the Vietnam war was over with major American commitment.

Word Cited

Appy, Christian G. *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides*. New York: Viking, 2003. Print.

Dennis Calciano 11/23/14 His. 195 Turning Point and Ending Point of The Vietnam War
Part 1: Turning Point I would like to take a look at Barry Zorthian, and how I think he had a realization and made a turning point for himself. Zorthian is one of the higher ranking media officials for you U.S. that consistently reported conflicts happening in Vietnam. In his story he talks about the attack on the American Embassy and how that was portrayed by the U.S ambassador Bunker. Zorthian had given Bunker briefing notes to all the updates on different cities that were attacked by the VC. Quoting Bunker in his own words, "He said it was true that the offensive had had quite an impact psychologically, but that was the only lasting impact they might have." Zorthian then goes on to say that Bunker's coverage of the story were just false optimism by the government. That Tet was shown as more of a defeat for the U.S. and the South Vietnamese forces. This being untrue because a lot of South Vietnamese cities were successfully guarded from attacks and really set back VC in there fight. These falsified facts made the government officials and congress look unworthy in there hopefulness for unity in Vietnam and back home. This was Barry's turning point because in his reporting he had realized that a lot of what the government was saying about the Tet Offensive was myth. It even started to affect that way that the American public saw him, making his words less credible. Quoting Zorthian, "There was this picture that we didn't talk facts." He realized what was being said by American military officials was effecting his self image and how people perceived his word. In a way he figured out how the government can embellish the stories of the media to make themselves look better. Whereas the media back home portrayed the Tet Offensive as a big loss for America in the War. Part 2: I would now like to talk about Alexander M. Haig JR. and how to me he best represented the ending of the war. Haig served as an officer and a political adviser who had close ties to President Nixon and Henry Kissinger. Later Nixon appointed him chief of staff and as a four- star general making him every bit more influential in political/military affairs. Haig goes on to talk about all the proposals that he wanted to set forth in Vietnam that would increase retaliation of the U.S. Army. Not much of his arguments were landing until Eisenhower was elected and came in with completely different style. They thought that using increased retaliation of there military could bring out a truce that would be favorable for the United States. "Theres a lot of blame to go around, but you've got to understand that all these things that happened in Vietnam were contributed by uniformed top leaders who didn't have the strength of their own convictions and declined to stand up and say this is not the war to do it." (Haig 399) This quote from Haig is talking about how U.S. military officials wouldn't stand up and speak there minds about which direction the war was going. This made decision making really one-sided in the political party. To me this represents a unwillingness in the war effort for any reconsideration of tactics happening in Vietnam. This shows how one sided that politics can be and how it can greatly affect a country in a time that is detrimental. It was said by Haig that a lot of political advisors, no mater how smart, were always ideologically with the president on any terms of war in Vietnam. To me this represents the end of the war in a sense that it was a lose. Because not even higher military officials could sway the outcome of what was happening. Haig than goes on to talk about an interview with Nixon were he claims that not winning the war was one of the biggest mistakes of his presidential run. Many of Nixon's staff were opposed to any more retaliation in Hanoi to try and settle with a treaty that was broken by North Vietnamese officials before hand. Its sad that the final word for making a strategic military difference is one sided and its pretty much the presidents final say in it.

Dez Hansen

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Part 1

Imagining being an adult or soldier in the war is one thing, but imagining being a child living in a place where there was so much chaos and violence is something completely different and heartbreaking. Nguyen Qui Duc was only 10 years old when the Tet Offensive began and his father was taken and imprisoned by North Vietnamese soldiers.

His story is heartbreaking, but also very insightful. For the most part, children will follow their parents example and believe in the same things they believe in, at least until they get older and become adults to think for themselves. Nguyen Qui Duc began to think and feel and ask questions much earlier in life than most children who did not grow up in a war would. He states, "I was living a double life... Outwardly I was part of the elite who believed in the cause of the South Vietnamese... But inside I was struggling to understand why the enemy was fighting. Did they have a real reason?" (Appy pg 297). As a child the idea of communism probably was confusing and difficult to understand, and the war really didn't have a "real reason."

The "turning point" for him came when his father was taken away from him and he saw first-hand the brutality from both sides. This allowed him to really question the reasoning for the war and his part in it. It obviously was very difficult to live in such a conflicting place and time. On one hand he wanted to believe in his country like his father had, but he probably didn't understand why they were wanted to fight against their own "people."

In the text after his story he states, "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. The older I grow the more I think I don't belong anywhere" (Appy pg 297). Despite seeing all the violence and experiencing great loss at such a young age, Dec has found peace within himself from his "turning point" and has made a successful life for himself.

PART 2

Chalmers Johnsons had a personal "ending" to his involvement of the Vietnam War. Chalmers grew up in a "family and neighborhood of extreme patriots" (Appy Pg 449). Chalmers explains that going to war and fighting for your country was something that was just expected from his generation of kids. No questions asked. As Chalmers grew older he began to contemplate and really analyze the stories old veterans would tell. He believed that there was underlying sad feelings from the vets, "I could sense things they would never admit to each other" (Appy Pg. 450).

Although being warned by a good friend (whom ended up dying in Vietnam) that he should not get involved with the war, Chalmers insisted on going anyways. Determined

to make something out of his life, Chalmers took his job very seriously. “I did everything I could to learn how to be a good corpsman” (Appy Pg. 451).

The exact point where Chalmers wanted to end his involvement with the Vietnam War was when he was working at a hospital in Cam Ranh Bay and had to clean up two dead Vietnamese boys who died from a disgusting game that some American soldiers played. Chalmers said, “He [referring to the staff sergeant] 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 pg. 452).

Although war is ugly in all cases, it seems like the Vietnam War was especially cruel and violent from both sides. When Chalmers stated in the beginning of his story that he believed the veterans he grew up with had a “deep sadness beneath everything,” perhaps they also witnessed extreme cases of violence and that is what they were hiding. The difference with the old veterans that fought in WWII, however, may have been that they had an exact justification and patriotic reason for fighting, whereas with the Vietnam War the majority of soldiers were just doing what they were told.

Six months later, Chalmers started to take a stand and rebel by changing his appearances to not look like a soldier. Although being threatened by a new captain, Chalmers continued to rebel. “Something in my head said I was done with the military and sick of the war” (Appy pg. 453). Chalmers may have had a different state of mind and maybe not have wanted to “end” his involvement if the war he was involved in didn’t have “so much needless pain and suffering” (Appy pg 451).

Clark Dougan's story in Christian G. Appy's "Patriots" provides a critical turning point for not only Dougan himself, but for mainstream America. The description of Dougan's classmate, Greg Fischer, was unremarkable, as was the conversation between the two of them regarding Fischer's decision to join the marines, and Dougan's decision to go to college. Fischer's reasoning for joining the military was marked with practicality, which was probably more common than grandeur dreams of heroism. His lack of ceremony in choosing the military, and his admission, "I'm going to get drafted anyhow...why not the best," were fairly common sentiments among men his age. In this way, Fischer could have easily resembled your best friend, your son, or your husband.

Dougan claimed that the editorial in the *Cleveland Press* about Fischer's death was "the moment when 'Middle America' really turned against the war" (Appy 306). By 1968, antiwar activists had already established a presence throughout the country, but struggled to rally general support because of their extreme beliefs and often-disorderly conduct. The staunchly pro-war effort was quickly losing credibility due to huge casualties, dishonesty from the government, and growing taxes. "Good," middle-ground citizens undoubtedly found it difficult to reconcile their growing distaste for the prices of war with their patriotic duty of supporting their country. Extremists on both sides were failing to sway this group, because they were strictly appealing to them from mountainous moral grounds. Middle America seemed largely overwhelmed or disinterested in debating foreign policy issues. Most people in 1968, as they would be today, were primarily concerned with the implications the war would have at home, yet neither political party was successfully appealing to these concerns.

Greg Fischer's death and the subsequent article, "He Was Only 19—Did You Know Him?" broke down many of these barriers. It successfully humanized the war, with no apparent political motivations. Dougan summarized the probable feelings of many in middle class America when he said, "I had gone off to this cloistered college while he was going off to die in Vietnam...I understood how easily it could have been me" (Appy 305). Fischer's undistinguished nature, as portrayed by the *Cleveland Press*, was interchangeable with the common American perception of a good kid. Fischer joined the military as what he considered a practical phase in his life. He was willingly performing the service that would have been asked of him anyways, and died in the same way it was perceived that he lived: unremarkably.

Though this story was likely contained to the greater Cleveland area, it clearly represents a turning point in the willingness of the American people to support the war effort. Through publication of articles like this, the American public realized that this was the very real ending for thousands of young soldiers who would never come home and resume their lives. More importantly, they began to understand that the same unremarkable ending may eventually be written for their own loved ones. It became easy to ascertain good from bad: no self-righteous morality was needed to determine that it was bad for a 19-year old boy from Ohio to be killed in Vietnam. In this way, the political issues surrounding the Vietnam War became more relatable and understandable to the general public. The lack of popular support from Middle America would eventually prove to be very powerful, and help to facilitate the withdrawal of troops from Vietnam.

Different perspectives from the war would argue that it was over at vastly different times. Truong Tran's story represents when the war was lost for the South Vietnamese people. Rather than focus on a traditional end to the physical fighting, his perspective is interesting that, "When the United States decided to land foot soldiers in Vietnam...it put the South Vietnamese at a political disadvantage" (Appy 504). He argued that from then on, it was easy for the Viet Cong to mobilize the countryside, because there was an invasion on their home soil. In a way, it could be understood that the South Vietnamese lost the war through the process of Americanization. Heavy American military presence and its relationship with ARVN could have potentially spurred some of the pro-communist propaganda that was so effective in the countryside of South Vietnam. It was counterproductive that South Vietnam suffered debilitating losses at the hands of the US due to bombings, defoliants, and free-fire zones. It is conceivable that as a whole, the chances for a South Vietnamese victory were reduced by American military aid. Though they were provided with technologically-advanced weaponry and military strategy, they lost the simple necessities of life. In Truong's instance, for example, his grandfather lost his entire coconut farm to defoliants. "This is my only source of income for my old age," he told Truong, "and now it's gone" (Appy, 504).

By Americanizing the war, the South Vietnamese were pulled into a battle that neither the North nor the South would have been capable of fighting on their own. With American intervention eventually came Soviet and Chinese aid for the North Vietnamese. American expectation was that our superior military training and resources would give South Vietnam the edge. In reality, it could be argued that it provoked Communist intervention on behalf of the North Vietnamese, which escalated the war past a point that Vietnam ever would have reached on its own. Obviously, the end result was that the withdrawal of the US from Vietnam meant that South Vietnam was unable to sustain the level of fighting, while North Vietnam continued to receive the same level of support from their Communist backers. There is no apparent way that an isolated and broken South could have been victorious in the type of war that American had waged.

Truong made a compelling argument that South Vietnam lost the war partly because, "we agreed to fight a war that we could either lose or tie, but not win." The Communists, on the other hand, 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 of the country" (Appy 506). The South Vietnamese nursed a handicap from the beginning. A war is psychologically over when the hope for complete victory disappears. For the South, complete victory never disappeared, because it was never truly an option to begin with.

Whether it was the My Lai Massacre, the Tet Offensive, or the Kent State Shootings. The “turning point” in the war in Vietnam had been felt across the globe at many various points. Vincent Okamoto’s own personal turning point had to do with how much he had done and given to his country to only result in anguish and frustration and questions left unanswered. Vincent, like any proud American man, signed up to serve his country. While serving in Vietnam there were three separate engagements when Vincent was shot and wounded. One battle in particular, while wounded he had still managed to fight back the enemy, even calling in an airstrike while the Vietcong pressed on him and his men. Standard practice had been that those who fought on the frontlines could only be wounded so many times until they are given a safer job in the rear. Unfortunately, after the Tet Offensive in 1968, the requirements to be taken away from the fighting had grown vastly. Vincent was just one of countless soldiers that had gone through the most intense and awful skirmishes that could be asked of any human being for the sake of their country. In this case he had gone through multiple the battle of August 24th being the worst night of his life as he is quoted in Appy’s book. He had done everything possible to defend himself and his men from the enemy, and at the end of it he was not eligible to be relieved from the frontline. As anyone would tell you there is only so much punishment one can take before there is a mental break that makes one ask, “What’s the point to this?” Vincent had fought to the point of brushing close to death, with nothing more to show for it than a trip to the hospital; resulting in a return to the “weeds” in a couple of days after. There were no definitive achievements in this war compared to the previous “good wars” America had been involved in. For Example: WWII there were clear-cut advancements and gains from these battles fought. In Vincent’s case he had held off enemy, bled, and felt horrors of unimaginable terrors. When returning to the fighting, Vincent would see no new advancement or news regarding that anything had been accomplished aside of him not being killed yet. He altogether couldn’t function anymore when it came to being a grunt, with all his work and no sort of reward to show for it. There wasn’t anything personally these men could have done to make the war a surefire win. When the North Vietnamese went into a fight, they were willing to sacrifice and give their own lives if that means one day their country could be free. Americans were usually drafted to fight a war they didn’t understand in a country they didn’t know because they were told that communism was coming for the world. Vincent’s turning point in the war came when he started working for the Phoenix Program. Not only was this program flawed, it usually resulted in casualties and not of the Vietcong. Perpetuating the cycle of those who suffered unjust actions by the American side of the war, to join up the Vietcong and fight for their cause. Vincent’s turning point was when he realized that there was no winning an unwinnable war. And when he realized that he was fighting a war that asked for so many to die with no understandable reason for it.

The end of the war had happened before President Nixon went on TV and officially declared that America’s fight in Vietnam had officially come to an end. Daniel Ellsberg releasing the Pentagon Papers had become the beginning of the end to Vietnam. Ellsberg could no longer take the suffering that he and so many other politicians felt, the guilt and

anguish felt of sending men and women to their deaths in the Vietnam War. After deciding to break away from the lying and deceit in politics, Ellsberg copied the seven thousand pages of top secret documents on the origins of the war. After taking it to congress and having it rejected by congress, he started to give out pages to newspapers like The Washington Post and The New York Times. Resulting in these releases, president Nixon had set in motions the set of events that led to the discovery of the component in the uncovering of Watergate. Watergate had shown the American people on an entirely new platform what kind of lying and deceit can be done by the President and his men in the government. The morale in Vietnam and all feelings of Vietnam had never been any lower, but this solidified that it will never recover. Many analysts were even led to believe that even if America had won the war the damage left by all those years of fighting in an unnecessary war could never truly be healed. Ellsberg unknowingly triggered the unraveling of the Nixon's administration, which caused Nixon being forced to adjust where the War in Vietnam was going. Pieces had been set to escalate the war, but since the release of the Pentagon Project, this disassembled all structure to any continuation of the war. Leaving only one choice for America's involvement in Vietnam; to leave and begin the long and incomplete healing of America's longest, bloodiest, and most devastating war. There had been immense pressure of peace to finally come to Vietnam, that eventually the people had gotten what has been asked for more than ten years. All in the result of Nixon being called a loser rather than a traitor of his country. This story represented to me the end of the Presidents being worried about who's the first one to "give up". Realization that these men were willing to sacrifice all the countless hundred thousands of lives because they didn't want to be the first one to back away from America's first war they didn't emerge victor. When it was finally admitted what was being done, that's when the story finally came to a close for good.

The 1968 Tet Offensive was the major “turning point” of the Vietnam War. The tale that Barry Zorthian shares marks a significance turning point of the war, in my eyes. I believe this to be a turning point because it shows the collapse of support from within the media and high-ranking government officials. Certain events that happened within the time frame of the Tet offensive were very damaging to the creditability of officials leading the war. As the “voice of America,” Zorthian tells his first hand experience of the Tet offensive. Furthermore, he explains how the media overlooked the fact that the U.S. and South Vietnamese troops successfully fought off the Viet Cong fighters. Also, he shows us how common it was for the media to misinterpret or manipulate someone’s words to make them sound misleading or as Barry states “fatuous,” meaning silly or stupid. It was easy to see why the attacks on the U.S. embassy received the most attention from the media, because that was where most of the higher-ranking personnel worked. General Westmoreland was probably the most sought after interview, due to his prediction prior to Tet. His premonition was the enemy was planning a massive offensive for the holiday. Westmoreland was harshly scrutinized for his speech in which he complimented his troops for their “bravery in fending off the attacks.” If Tet itself wasn’t damaging enough to the U.S. perspective and support of the war, the brutal televised execution of a VC fighter by South Vietnamese police chief General Nguyen Ngoc Loan was definitely one of the final blows. At this point, he basically handed the war over to the communists on a silver platter. Although, what the media seems to continue to lack is the other side of every story. For example, as Zorthian states, “the media didn’t show how that particular VC just killed a close friend of Loan’s, one of his officials” (Patriots 292). Zorthian also talks about Walter Cronkite, who at that time was one of the most watched and trusted news anchors. Sources claim that president Johnson was watching Cronkite on a CBS newscast during the Tet offensive, and is believed to have said, “If I have lost Walter Cronkite, I have lost middle America”(Patriots 290). In chapter six of Herrings “America’s Longest War,” he also describes how Cronkite, who was once a pro-war advocate, watched in disbelief and said, “I thought we were winning the war.” This is a perfect example of what a strong influence the media had on not only the war protesters, but also it’s supporters and leaders. Continuing with Zorthian’s story, he had to return to Washington for a briefing. As he was driving to his hotel, he compared the streets of Washington to the streets of Saigon because of all the rioting from the MLK assassination. Racial problems had a larger impact on the outcome of the war then most realize. The death of MLK had huge ramifications on both sides of the war, and the North Vietnamese used it to their advantage.

From my perspective as a military veteran, Charles Cooper’s second entry in Appy’s “Patriots” book part 5 is a “beginning to the end.” Charles starts out talking about how poor of quality the new troops were and he politely thanked the Johnson administration for “project 100,000”. Cooper states “ they were just flooding us with morons and imbeciles. In reading the footnote to “project 100,000” you cant help but feel that Johnson took 100,000 men from the bottom of the barrel, the men that they thought were least likely to succeed in life, and just threw them into the war as if to “squirt lighter fluid on an already lit fire.” As a witness and testament to the ineffectiveness of combat replacements I know for a fact that they are usually the poorest quality of soldiers. Not the sort of man you want walking behind you with a loaded rifle. Cooper talks about how one of his rifle companies was ambushed and lost 13 men and a couple days later lost a

few more. This was at the hands of a child with an AK-47. The following night Cooper gave permission for some of his men to go on a night ambush, to later find out that they slaughtered the village where that child lived. Stuff like this happens in every war. For example, shortly after I returned from my deployment, I remember seeing reports on the news of a U.S. Army soldier who had gone MIA in the middle of the night in Afghanistan. The reports say he took nothing but his rifle and some grenades and began killing villagers where some of his men had died. In a media briefing Cooper states, “ we are fighting a war and the fog of battle up here is so thick that you cant cut through it.” The fog of battle he is referring to is the confusion and complacency that sets in when you have been exposed to such a high level of excitement and trauma. You then become dissatisfied with yourself and become careless. I have seen this happen to many close friends and it is not a pretty sight. Cooper’s story to me is an ending because, it shows how sick and tired the men at battle are and how much bitterness they have for the country of Vietnam. He describes them as having a “kill everything attitude.” When men loose their focus and concentration, the war goes downhill really fast. If the government had paid closer attention to how their troops were responding to the war, they would have realized they should have ended it a lot sooner.

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HST 195-History of Vietnam War

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Turning Points and Ending of the Vietnam War

When it comes to determining when the turning point of the Vietnam War was or when it ended it depends on whom you ask. Everyone will have a different opinion on both of these historical events. An interview with the neighbor across the street, who was a marine and served in Vietnam, when asked when he thought the war ended he said, "It ended when it started." He also made a statement that you were fighting people you could not see because they were hiding underground making it a difficult war. In the PBS series, *The History of the Vietnam War*, episode 1, it stated that it was "a war against an elusive enemy."⁽⁴⁾ In theory, the turning point of the war can be factored on several events and not necessarily on one single event.

Some historians consider the Gulf of Tonkin incident that L.B.J. used to escalate the bombings of North Vietnam and our involvement in the war as a turning point. ⁽³⁾ In Christian G. Appy's, *Patriots*, Barry Zorthian, thought that the attacks from the Tet Offensive were a blow to U.S. public thinking, government officials, and congress. ⁽¹⁾ (p. 291) The lack of support from the American people with all of the antiwar demonstrations and students on college campuses across the U.S. protesting against the war even some of the demonstrations that started out as peaceful protests quickly turned into violence. Kent State for example, ended in the deaths of four students and nine wounded, can be considered a turning point. ⁽¹⁾ (380)

The speaker, Douglas Kinnard, quote in the Appy book, can express the turning point of the Vietnam War by saying "While we had the power, it turned out they had the will." "I was disillusioned with the nature of the war and what it was doing to our country, I was disgusted with the whole thing, I'd had enough." As a scholar, he wrote a book based on a 1974 questionnaire he sent to 173 army generals who served, as combat commanders in Vietnam, seventy percent did not understand the war's objectives or overall purpose, and why they were involved. The generals were critical of the political leadership and thought that they lacked logical strategy. They were even more outraged by the media with ninety percent had negative views of the media who had undermined them, and turned the support of the home front support. The media was critical of the war in which they did not understand the war but reported things just to make headlines.

(2) (p.321-324) The Aim video also pointed out that the war was not lost on the battlefields but on printed page, the television, and it is the media that shapes what we think. Aim brought up the point that deception was the deciding factor of the Vietnam War. (5)

Robert McNamara stated in the Herring Book that our intervention and involvement in Vietnam was wrong and that the war could not be won while misleading the American people with false reports of the “great progress in every dimension of our efforts,” in Vietnam. (2)

In the speaker’s story, he brings up many good points representing several turning points in the war not only from his perspective but also from military leaders, the media, and the American people as well. Kinnard thought that one of the great failures of the war among the general officers was not in the field but in Washington. He thought that McNamara and Johnson should have called the reserves to mobilize the home front if they didn’t they would not have their support and we should get out to “avoid needless casualties.” (1) (323)

Other turning points not mention that could be considered, as an ending of the war was the lack of interest and support of the American GI’s. Charley Trujillo, in Appy talks about how they practiced the search and avoid. When told that the enemy was coming from one direction they would say “Roger that” and go in the other direction. (1) (p. 369) In the PBS series in episode seven, it talks about the moral decline of the soldiers and the fragging incidents where they would try to hurt their officers. (4) There were times when officers went into battle and in turning around; they would not have the soldiers behind them.

An ending of the war can be best illustrated by the release of our POW’s in the story of the Prisoners of War (II.) The POW’s was the only thing that had not lost credibility with the public. The Jay Scarborough story when returning to Vietnam he was captured by the North Vietnamese Army in March of 1975 along with 11 other foreigners, most of them were American missionaries. When the war ended on April 30, 1975, they continued to be held in captivity until October 1975. “They were the last foreign prisoners released from the American war.” (1) (p. 472)

After reconsidering the question about when the war ended my neighbor said that he thought that, the war ended “when they returned our prisoners.” This response coming from someone I know personally who served in Vietnam I would have to concur that this finalized a very long and controversial war.

WORK CITED

Part 1

In Part four the story that best describes a turning point in the war was Samuel Huntington's page 319-321. He brings up a point that would have given the U.S. a great reason to end their interests in Vietnam. Samuel Huntington was a consultant for the Johnson administration. He had been to Vietnam in 1962 and again 5 years later during the summer of 1967. He was mainly there to gain perspective to the urbanization happening in Vietnam. He had been told eighty percent of Vietnamese were living in rural areas but upon his visit he found that to be untrue. Many Vietnamese moved into the cities where it was safe from the free-fire zones and to make money based on the new job opportunities due to the Americans presence. Samuel's view point turned when in Vietnam the second time. He said, "It seemed to me that the need for us to be that much concerned with Vietnam had declined considerably because the Southeast Asian economies were beginning the process of development in Thailand, Malaysia, and, to some extent in Indonesia. The Communist efforts at insurrection in these other countries had not succeeded and hence the danger of South Vietnam being the domino that would bring others down was greatly reduced." A point that stood out from an observer not fighting in the war and one that seems to be overlooked or forgotten about. This whole war was described as necessary because of the "domino effect" that Eisenhower spoke about in 1954. Eisenhower talked about the falling of Vietnam and its profound influence on other countries if it fell to Communism. Later, Kennedy also gave the same rational for the war. We were in this war to prevent other countries from falling victim to Communism, yet in 1967 there was a turning point where those countries were no longer at risk. Vietnam would have fallen to Communism if we left then, but the "domino theory" would not have been proven accurate.

Part 2

The account in part five that best describes an ending was George Evans, page 449-455. His story describes an example of when the War stopped being about "The domino theory" or the spread of Communism and became something completely different. George Evans was raised in a patriotic neighborhood surrounded by men who fought in WWII. His father and his father's friends led by example the standards, morals, ethics and values that were expected of you to be considered an honorable American Veteran. He was shown growing up a high regard for those who fought for our country, a high regard for human life and what it meant to have a high standard of honor and duty when faced with war. George enlisted with intentions of being in the "buddy program" with his best friend. When his friend failed to pass the physical, George entered the Air Force alone and became a medic which was a job he liked. It was sometime in 1969 when George got to Vietnam. He said, "it didn't take long to see how screwed up things were". He had high expectations of his country and government, but saw the war and the U.S. Government was only causing "needless pain and suffering". He had beliefs that his fellow comrades would be good people fighting for a good cause and what he saw was "completely contrary" to what he expected of them. His story stands out because the injustices he saw going on caused him to rebel against the war. On one of his work days

early in his tour, he had been told to “go clean up the gook”. He found a pair of young Vietnamese boys age 8 or 9 dead on tables without any indication as to the cause of their death. Later, he found out that they were the casualties of a game going on called “gook hockey”. Guys were gambling on who could hit a kid in the road when driving through towns. This story depicts the end of our fight for freedom on behalf of the Vietnamese. Our soldiers were no longer in Vietnam to help the South and fight to stop the spread of communism. Many other stories tell of killings of civilians, but George decided to rebel against the war by refusing to wear regulation gear and defy his company commander. His story is just one of many that describes the mentality and loss of objective that was going on in Vietnam in the late 1960’s. To end his story George did get his day in court and left with a seventy-five dollar fine but he is ok with that. George continued to do his job honorably even when he realized the men at war were not fighting for Vietnam’s Freedom any longer.

Larry Colburn—Part 1

My Lai Massacre, March 16, 1968, the day more than 500 civilians, including women and children, were “savagely murdered” under the command of Lt. William Calley (*Herring, pg. 267*). Herring reports, “This exposed the hostility some Americans had come to feel for the Vietnamese.”

Helicopter door-gunner Larry Colburn and his pilot, Hugh Thompson helped to stop some of the killings at My Lai. As they flew, they spotted a few injured women in the rice fields and marked those areas with smoke grenades because that signaled the medics to respond. Later, Larry and Hugh witnessed Captain Medina walk over to an injured woman they had marked with a smoke grenade, kick her, step back, and finish her off (*Appy, pg. 347*). It was at that moment that Larry Colburn realized, “It was our guys doing the killing.” This represents a turning point for Larry Colburn. It became a turning point because at that moment he realized his fellow Soldiers were killing civilians. He was strongly against that type of killing and he was working to protect civilians. After seeing the 120 humans under the age of five on the list of dead, Larry confides to Appy that has been something he has struggled with his whole life. Because Colburn was clearly committed to his duties in the Army and was not afraid to kill people as part of his job, we can interpret this as a strong turning point. In his eyes, it was unjust, unfair, and not necessary.

With that being the turning point for Larry Colburn, and some of his after-massacre feelings, even the conviction of Calley did not likely yield closure for Colburn. However, he returned to Vietnam in 2001 to participate in the opening of My Lai Peace Park and a new elementary school (financed by American VOW). While in My Lai, he had the opportunity to reunite with the child he saved from the ditch during the Massacre (*Appy pg. 348*). Larry had always hoped Do Hao was young enough that day he would not remember anything about the horror of the Massacre, but he remembered everything. Turns out, when Larry reached his rifle into the ditch that day, not only did he save the life of a child who probably would have otherwise died, he provided himself future closure to a day he had long tried to forget.

Steve Sherlock—Part 2

Doubts, anti-war, growing objections, confused neutrality. These are a few words to describe Steve Sherlock’s feelings about the Vietnam War. By signing the petition that said, “Fuck War,” this represented an *ending to an inner war* for Steve Sherlock. He knew then that although he continued to kill and fight as directed, he desired something far different. With an inner conflict, and without understanding the political puzzle, Steve still had a feeling that the United States should not be in Vietnam. Therefore, if the U.S. should not be in Vietnam, then “it was wrong for us to be killing people there (*Appy pg.*

425).”

Steve Sherlock’s signing the petition represents an ending to an inner conflict of war vs. anti-war. There continued to be value in being a Veteran for Sherlock, as there should have been (and should be). It is reassuring to know that Sherlock was met with people who understood the value of veterans speaking against the war. My sense is that this support would have been helpful in taming the inner conflict that may have surfaced again throughout the years. For example, he struggled with the contradictions of doing his best, but hating the war, between having the “brotherhood of the unit in the field, yet knowing that the war was wrong (Appy pg. 429).” Although to him his medal represented he had done a ‘good job,’ and he did not necessarily see it as a badge of dishonor, he was still willing to participate in the ceremony of throwing it over the barricade at the Capitol in 1971 because it also represented opposition to the war itself.

After signing the petition and knowing his feet stood on the “anti-war” side of the fence, I am sure there was a sense of relief to a degree. There are probably a lot of protestors that would never understand how he went on and continued fighting in the war, however I find it honorable and believe there could still be that inner energy of doing a ‘job’ for America.

Part 1

The death of Greg Fischer in 1968 represents a turning point in Clark Dougan's view of the Vietnam War. As Clark was growing up, the war seemed distant and unreal. Even though the obituaries which could be heard over the high school intercom were a constant reminder of the war that was raging in Vietnam, humor was used as a coping mechanism to make it seem less dramatic. For example, during graduation kids started, "whistling the theme song to *The Bridge on the River Kwai* – the movie about British prisoners of war...[which] was followed by a very low, teenage, guttural version of 'The Caissons Go Rolling Along'" (Appy, pg. 305). And like so many other kids, Clark went to college without much knowledge about the Vietnam War, and certainly without any strong opinions about American involvement. Finishing up his freshman year, an article on the front page of the *Cleveland Press* stopped him short. It was that Memorial Day in 1968 on which he found out that a high school classmate died in the war. Greg and Clark had homeroom together for three years. Though they never knew each other very well, realizing that Greg was never coming home, dramatically changed Clark's perspective. He understood that, though he had chosen to go to college, it could easily have been him who died at war. Even the most simple of statements can make a huge impact. In a letter Greg had written in case he didn't come back from Vietnam he wrote, "P.S. Don't forget to give Joey my hockey skates." This highlights that Greg was just an ordinary kid. Clark saw the article in *Cleveland Press* as asking, "How many more people like Greg are we willing to waste?" (Appy, pg. 306). Approximately 11,465 soldiers who died in Vietnam were under the age of 20 (National Archives). How many of those kids truly understood what they were getting into? Charlie Sabatier admits that he was pretty naïve when he went to Vietnam at 20 years old (PBS ep. 4). This is not to say the Greg was also naïve, but Clark's story represents a time when he, and other Americans, began to relate to those going to war and see them more as kids than young men like those who fought in WWII when the average age was 26 (National Archives).

Part 2

There are many endings woven into Troung Tran's story. There was the end of his grandfather's income, the end of South Vietnamese nationalism, and ultimately, the end of his life in Vietnam. In Troung's opinion, the arrival of American foot soldiers put South Vietnam at a political disadvantage. "We could not tell our brothers and sisters that we were fighting for ourselves as long as the American soldiers were in the country fighting for us. We said we were fighting to save the country from Communism, but that was too abstract and people could say that at least the Communists were Vietnamese," (Appy, pg. 504) This 'Americanization' also destroyed the South Vietnamese economy and social fabric. The people were no longer able to grow crops and live off the land, so they were forced to move into the cities. For example, Troung's grandfather owned a coconut plantation which was killed by the defoliants used by Americans. Looking at all the dead trees he said, "This is my only source of income for my old age, but now it's all gone," (Appy, pg. 504). This grave news made Troung very sad and led him to become a part of the regional forces of the South Vietnamese Army in 1964 so that he could stay near to his grandfather and care for his younger siblings. Years later, as the Communists mounted their final offensive, Troung worked hard to get his

family from Qui Nho to Saigon, and eventually to the United States where they would be safe. When he discovered that the United States would not evacuate his younger brothers and sisters, he had to trick an American worker and push his sibling up the stairs onto the plane. Although one of his younger brothers had his arm broken by a soldier, at least he still had his life and a future in America. Regarding his perseverance and tenacity in saving his brothers and sisters along with himself and his family, Troung said, “I had promised my father I would take care of them [his siblings] regardless of what happened. How could I leave them behind?” (Appy, pg. 506). And thus, his life in Vietnam ended. Though he immediately thought of how he could go back to Vietnam in the future, after 26 years he still hasn’t returned home.

Part one: Turning point

In part four of Appy's book, Nathan Houser's story stood out to me as a good "turning point" example for him personally. Growing up, Nathan had a surrounding of conditioning from school and media to fear communism. He did not agree with communism but did not have the intense fear that most did. He even tried to see it from their point of view, empathetically. He seemed less likely to be influenced as easily as others when it came to media and his surroundings.

A turning point in Nathan's life was the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

When he heard on a radio interview with the Dallas chief of police say that he knew of this man Oswald and that he had done some work for the FBI, Nathan started getting a funny feeling. He said, "That's the last I ever heard of that chief of police and I immediately distrusted the official stories coming out about what happened. That's when I began taking a critical stance toward our government." Nathan was beginning to see that you can't trust everything.

Another turning point for Nathan that he even stated himself as a turning point was when he went to Washington as a political intern for Senator Vance Hartke. It was a turning point because he aspired to be a politician. Only then was he able to open his eyes fully of the true political world though. Around the same time things were starting up in Vietnam, he began gaining some important insight of how things really were. "So much of it seemed artificial and self-serving". He also said (regarding the war), "I began to feel there was a whole lot of duplicity and lying going on". Because of his revelations, his original aspirations of becoming a politician changed. After all that had happened, his fear of the Vietnam War draft was too much to handle and decided he needed to leave. After being accepted by the Peace Corps, he soon discovered it had become a supporting branch of the U.S. foreign policy. Because of this he backed out since did not agree with it. Nathan decided his only choice was to run off to Toronto Canada. The discovery of lies and his distrust ultimately led him to leave his own country. "A sign this country has grown up will be when there is a memorial erected to the war resisters".

Part 2: Ending

In part five of Appy's book, John Douglas Marshall's story stood out to me as a good example of an "ending" during war for him personally. John was born into a family who had certain expectations regarding military and war. The fact that his own grandfather was "one of the staunchest defenders of American policy in Vietnam" put a lot of pressure on him to continue out the family heritage. John even said, "Growing up, I though more about making my grandfather proud than my own father". John joined ROTC only because it was expected by his family but all along he had a completely different philosophy from them.

John's expanding view from literature of pacifism and nonviolence of Ghandi, Martin

Luther King, and Thoreau convinced him that war is wrong. He went along with what he felt he was supposed to do but it ended up but could only fake it for so long. John could no longer live a lie and finally took a stand about his views regarding the war. He applied to be discharged from the army- stating "I can no longer deny the calling of my conscience, regardless of my family heritage." I find this to be such an honorable and brave action on John's part. The war itself was not ending, but it would end in regards to his involvement in it. It would take such risk and courage to finally face a passionate family who could ultimately disown someone for such decisions. Knowing very well the consequences that lay ahead with his family, he still did what he felt to be the right thing. It cost him his place in his family, and he did not even attend his grandfather's funeral. Doing the right thing and the easy thing do not always coincide with one another unfortunately. John's decision to discharge from the army was definitely the turning point in his life. He was predisposition to be on a particular path but ultimately decided on another one and made the change for his life regardless of his family.

For part one I chose to write about John Douglas Marshall and talk about his personal turning point and what I think we as readers can draw from that. The real center piece at the start of his story is a letter he got from his grandfather S.L.A Marshall who was a famous general who appeared on T.V. When John applied for an honorable discharge under grounds of being a conscientious objector he was making a drastic decision for his future. while some objectors to the war might have come from families with similar beliefs John was turning away from what his family viewed as a strong and proud military tradition. John had gone to be trained to be an officer because it was simply what was expected. As a way of showing how much of a change in his life this truly was he tells of his grandfather giving him a hug at his commencement ceremony and the two of them seem rather close. When we get to the letter though what we see is a man who disowns his grandson and accuses him of cowardice. The turning point in John's life as we hear in the letter is clearly when he gets discharged from the military. It is a sad story of a man losing a part of his family simply because he doesn't believe in going to war and holding to what he thinks is morally right. while I know the question doesn't ask for us to draw wider conclusions from the story I think after reading John's story it is easy to think of many other young men having to face similar situations across the both countries (like in some of the other stories we have looked at). while all conflicts we are involved with will lead to controversy it is important to note that the only other war we hear about being this divisive among families is the civil war although that is for very different reasons. the point is that i think the Vietnam war was a very important turning point in the lives of an entire generation of people who were forced to choose how they would play a role weather it be as soldiers and support, or as draft dodgers and conscientious objectors and how those choices would effect there lives moving forward. I know I could have chosen a story that spoke to turning points in the overall war but I think when looking at history you can find a million what if scenarios that could be "turning points" I chose to focus on the story of one man because I think it can give a much more clear cut picture of the change we are really talking about when we look at turning points.

For part two I chose to write about John McCain's story about his eventual release from the Vietnamese POW camps that he was held at and his actions there after . I chose this story as what I view as the end to the War for two different reasons. For starters it is written by a prisoner of war who was released from his captivity with the other men even though he was offered the ability to leave sooner . It is a man sticking with the rest of his men until the end when they finally were released which is an important part to the end of the war in general the way I see it. Then the major reason I chose it is because of McCain's support of normalizing relations with Vietnam. As you said any of us could simply write about the fall of Saigon as the official end to the war. I think only once all prisoners are released and relations normalized can we really call a conflict over. The ending to the war happened with the fall of Saigon in 1975 but the end to the conflict and that part of our history is when we were able to take the lessons learned from it and move forward as a nation. John McCain did a good job of saying the things that he thought came out of our defeat such as Reagan being elected and that for me is one of the reasons i believe his story best exemplifies a true ending to the war.

It is always difficult to find a point where one can with any kind of precision state that something as complex as the war in Vietnam changed in a fundamental way. So I choose a story that showed one of the more tragic turning points on the book, where the war changed into a killing field and men into butchers. The interview that demonstrates this change is provided by Michael Bernhardt, he presents his view of what would lead up to and became the My Lai massacre, and through his eyes we see as his company's experiences in the later period of the war twist everyday men into monsters. I selected this story as a good example of a turning point because it has the entire process of the men's character shifting, during which a reader can see this company becoming monsters instead just jumping to the worst event without providing context. This change was no single event, but a series of ongoing influences ending in an act of savagery. Bernhardt details before the massacre just much at this point his company had turned into a bunch of roving thugs with firepower, at one point describing an officer raping a native woman in public. It is things like that which indicate it was here where things started to turn, because before this they had not done anything truly inexcusable, overly aggressive definitely, but not inexcusable. But when the leadership was setting this kind of example it eroded the core morality out of that company. I do not know if as he said, "If he'd been replaced the whole damn thing wouldn't have happened" (Patriots p.351), but it is clear this is where the last of the morality of these men is fading away. The most definite point where we see the change from a man who fights for his country to a killer is the massacre itself. These people became fired up on revenge and with a complete lack of concern who they are killing, just murdered civilians. The actions of these men are at this point in no conceivable way about winning the war or following orders, what was started by poor leadership and lack of discipline has manifested in a slaughter. However there was still something that could have made this a terrible act rather than a turning point for this company's sense of humanity, what they did afterward. They could have come forward and acknowledged that their actions had no justification. But no one wanted to own up and state what they did was wrong, they wanted to bury it.

The story that best communicated an "ending" to the conflict was that of Frank Snepp. An ending point to the war is much easier to properly define than a turning point, of which there were many. There can be only one ending, and for this story it is the ending of any hope that the United States' goals for South Vietnam could ever come true. Not the ending of the war necessarily, but the final efforts of the US were willing to provide. Near the end of the story, when the last helicopter leaves the tarmac, in that very instant it struck me that it was the end. This account was also a very good point to select as the ending of the war to me because throughout the story any hope that the US going to interfere beyond that point is steadily diminished. As much as this class is about the war in Vietnam is about how the United States and Vietnam interacted, so really when the South surrendered was not the true ending for this class's material. Most of our focus is about the effects this had in the United States then what was going on in Vietnam at this point overall. This moment of finally throwing in the towel is where the saga ended for me, South Vietnam falling was just the after effects of this moment and an inevitable consequence of our actions. Another thing that led me to select this story besides it containing the final chapters of half the focus of this class, is how the interviewee, Snepp reflects back on the attitudes of the top brass throughout the story with sense of finality. At no point in this story is even a glimmer of hope that this is going to end with a possible

reversal even presented, it reads like a check list of harried office worker trying to evacuate everyone and anyone who entertains victory is presented as out of touch with reality. No overly emotional accounts that dance around the issue, this man sounds like an accountant from a company going under. In addition Snapp provides an excellent example how the opposite of his view, that of possible victory, is completely out of touch with reality. It was moment where Ambassador Martin is desperately wiping off the ash of classified documents off his limo because it's "a sign of flagging American will" (Patriots p.501). All the combat troops have left, everyone trying to leave the country, and classified documents are literally raining on his car. The man who is the sole person advocating victory and he is interpreting this as merely a sign of flagging will, you cannot get much more divorced from reality then that. Overall this story was a good ending not just because it was about the United States evacuation, but more the tone of absolute defeat makes it stand above the rest.