

Adam Mellott 5/21/2015

The Turning Point

After reading Part Four in the Appy book, there were two real moments in time that signified a change in the direction of the war. The first came from the outcome of the My Lai massacre. Although the Tet Offensive seems to be the most obvious turning point, the results from My Lai created such a significant public opinion and caused the “on-the-fence” war supporters to cross over to the “I’ve had enough” side. Even though it was stated that “one poll found that 65 percent of Americans claimed they were not upset by the massacre” (344), it caused people to take a closer look at the body counts and war crimes discussions began to surface. According to Appy, “the evidence from the My Lai indicated that at least fifty American officers, up to and including generals, had significant knowledge of the massacre,...and all had supported the cover-up...” (345). On a personal note, reading about the the My Lai massacre was actually frustrating to a point of anger towards the soldiers that performed the atrocities and it was really tough even reading about it. Jumping up to the 10,000 foot level, the realization that these soldiers were placed into situations and being shot at by adults and even children would have given anyone nightmares. Not knowing who the enemy was or where they could possibly be would have made anyone paranoid. It would have been a horrific place to be and would have made fighting extremely difficult and caused some extreme outbursts, like My Lai.

The second creates the feeling of soldiers giving up. This comes from the story of Charley Trujillo “*It sure as hell wasn’t English only’ in Vietnam*” (366). It may not be the actual turning point of the war, but just reading through the recount gives the feeling that the American soldiers had just given up and had enough and that they weren't going to take crap from anyone; anymore, regardless. When reading through Charley’s story, there were a few comments that he would make throughout that gave a sense of what the American soldiers, not only the Hispanics or the Blacks, but all American soldiers were going through and dealing with. These events caused a shift in the combat abilities and created a direction of avoidance and elusion. At one point in his story, Charley states that “When we got back to the village, the South Vietnamese Popular Forces were playing volleyball and having a grand old time drinking Cokes. They were supposed to be on our side and helping to fight” (368). This comment gives a feeling of sacrifice for truly no good reason, and you start to see in his writings where American soldiers are just plain tired of fighting for nothing. A supporting statement to that would be when Charley later states “I’ll just walk in the middle and try to keep alive. At that point we practiced search-and avoid. They’d tell us the enemy was coming from one direction and we’d say, “Roger that” and go in the other direction” (369). Like stated earlier, this may not be a true turning point, but it gives one the idea that no one wanted to fight anymore, they wanted to just get out alive and avoid contact with the enemy at all costs.

The Ending of the War

Part Five of the Appy book was filled with policy and deceit. Nixon was about as paranoid as they come and this was represented by the Watergate scandal unfolding post the Christmas bombings. There were a few “moments” in history that could have represented the “end” of the war, like the Fall of 1972 when the US and Hanoi finally agreed to terms which would withdrawal American forces from Vietnam (396); but Thieu in all of his un-cooperation refused because it would not allow the withdrawal of the North Vietnamese forces from the South. I suppose that would represent more of a “turning point,” but even then, there were so few American ground forces left in South Vietnam and Cambodia that air attacks were basically all that was left and it suggested that the war was basically ending or at least hanging on by a thread. What represented the true “ending” of the war, would in fact be on December 22, 1972 when Hanoi agreed to resume the Paris peace talks on January 3, 1973 during the intense Christmas bombing attacks in

Hanoi and (Herring 327). By this point, it was a rushed round of talks especially with Nixon's fear of impeachment (400), but with Hanoi agreeing with the majority of the terms and Nixon forcing Thieu's hand, although backed by a major threat of no further American support, it still gave the sense of completion even if it was not the way America wanted the war to end. With the frustration and the protesting of Americans causing a scare to the re-election of Nixon as President, the Christmas bombings were necessary in order for Hanoi to agree to any of the terms that were being proposed by America. No matter what happened, in the end it seemed that Hanoi had planned to storm and take over Saigon as soon as American troops left regardless of what happened before withdrawal; even if the bombings continued. The North Vietnamese troops were hungry for a victory no matter what the cost and at that point, America just wanted to get out of there. It is sad to look at the number of lives that were lost due to a political war and hopefully a lesson learned for the future.

Austin Helfrich

Assignment 2

History of the Vietnam War

Assignment 2

Part 1

Humans have ever evolved since the dawn of mankind. With this constant evolution eventually came conflict amongst our species as far back as 10,000 years. This conflict within ourselves seem to escalate as we evolved and continued to do so. These simple conflicts became battles which then became wars increasing in violence and mayhem. One of these battles of man was the Vietnam War. This war showed just how far man has come to wage war. Many wars either escalate or die down in which the change has a "Turning Point". Historians argue what really was the turning point of the Vietnam War with different sides believing different things. The section in part 4 of the Appy book titled "From Cambodia to Kent State" really showed major changes happening in the war. Richard Nixon took the presidential office in January of 1969. At the time over a half a million U.S soldiers were in Vietnam with 14,000 plus recorded American casualties the previous year. Tom Grace, a sophomore at Kent State University adamantly opposed Nixon's invasion of Cambodia. Grace outright protested war expansion along with many other students. This shows clearly the very sharp turn in the American public's view on the war. The government did not from the very beginning of the war want to allow South Vietnam to fall under communist hands and was unwilling to ever let that happen with or without public support. Grace himself in a protest was shot in his left foot by national guardsmen. Tom had many friends and fellow students get shot or even killed during these protests. Grace had many friends die in the war and went so far as to say "I was totally opposed to the American political and economic system". He along with many other Americans had given up on the war and some on the government. Tom said after he was shot by a national guardsmen "If I'd had a gun, I definitely would have fired back". If one thinks about this an American citizen would have returned fire on his/her own national guard due to such opposition to the nation's foreign policy. Nixon had been escalating the war to some extend while much of the American public wanted de-escalation & possibly a complete pull out of Vietnam. This turning point in the war had seen a new president, involvement with not just Vietnam but now Cambodia and shootings to disrupt protests not in Vietnam but in our own borders between Americans. These shootings had been a major turning point of Tom Grace in saying "I can't say the Kent State shootings altered my political perspective, but it did reinforce an existing one and the anger I felt about it was my political fuel". Grace then became involved with the McGovern campaign and became a Democratic committeemen for Jesse Jackson's campaign for his congressional district. These shootings altered not only his opinion and

perspective of the war but many other Americans as well.

Part 2

As the Vietnam War changed, intensified and started twisting into something more than just a war an end was near. The American government clearly was unwilling to lose and began taking drastic measures some of which were not even legal, most notably the Richard Nixon's "Watergate" scandal. With foreign policy a mess, the public losing support in its government, and a rippling economy the presidential administration began taking action against its "enemies". The Nixon Administration created measures attacking those you opposed the war or wanted to reveal his plans for war expansion. Nixon used federal agencies like the CIA and FBI to spy on and rid his opponents. As Daniel Ellsberg said, "Vietnam showed that American leaders were psychologically unwilling to negotiate a solution that would be called a defeat by some people, even if the American people could have lived with it very well". The war had seen multiple presidents all very different personally and politically but all had very similar foreign policy actions particularly in Vietnam. The government would go this far and seemed to be going farther and farther since the beginning of the war. With the Watergate scandal much of Nixon's doings were exposed which brought the whole administration to its knees and verged on a complete and utter meltdown and collapse. As Daniel said, "I think Watergate shortened the war by at least a couple of years and possibly much longer". Less and less U.S troops were active in Vietnam each year from 1970-1975, down from a peak of 543,000 in 1969. Scandals erupting within the government, less troops each year, decreased bombing, and the public support almost diminished, the war could not sustain for too much longer. After Watergate the bombing of Vietnam decreased like Daniel Ellsberg claimed, "Without Watergate I think Nixon might have been able to keep up the bombing of Vietnam indefinitely". Also casualties just kept climbing on both sides putting more and more stress on an end to the war. The Vietnam War from the United States perspective was like a spider web. Having many connections holding it up from the start but then getting cut by public support, government crisis, decreased troops, decreased bombing, and high casualty rates, each thread continually had to hold more weight as other support threads were breaking. On top of that the weather erosion of the web represents North Vietnam's persistent attacks putting more pressure on said web. Eventually the web or war would give and it gave hard leading to the fall of South Vietnam's capital, Saigon and an end to the war.

Christina Bergman

HST195

Assignment #2

5/24/15

After reading Part Four of *Patriots* by Christian G. Appy, the story that stuck out the most to me as a turning point was Tom Grace's. The story he tells is about what happened on May 4th, 1970 at Kent State University. On that day, Tom was among the protesters who were fired upon by a group of national guardsmen. He was hit by a bullet in his left foot. From his account of the experience, it's obvious that living through the events of May 4th instilled a lot of anger in him. That anger then drove him to participate in the anti-war movement and politics like never before. This outcome really all started when he made a promise to a friend that he wouldn't go to any demonstrations that day. But, in the end, he decided to break that promise and go anyway. He had deemed opposing the war as more important than keeping his word. Because of that decision, he participated in the demonstration and got shot. As a result, his experience gave him "political fuel", as he calls it, and his life turned in a different direction. At the end of his story, he mentions that, "Prior to the shooting I had never passed out a flyer. I had never run a meeting. I'd never written a handbill. I'd gone to a lot of demonstrations, but I didn't make speeches. So these were all things I [now] had to learn how to do."

This story represents a profound turning point for Tom Grace in a personal sense. But, it also had a profound effect on others, as well. In particular, a friend of Grace's, nicknamed "Aquinas" because of his "saintly qualities", was obviously also deeply affected by the shooting. Grace comments that, "He was never really the same after that." (385). From what Grace tells in his story, Aquinas was very disturbed by what happened that day at Kent State. After the shooting, one day he apparently decided to smash a birds' nest to bits for no reason, which, from the way he was described by Grace, seems drastically out of character. And so that day, for him too, was a turning point in his life. I think what happened that day showed him a part of the world that he'd never seen before, and from then on he struggled with his newfound perspective.

I thought the best example of an ending of the war in Part Five was Judith Coburn's story. The beginning of her story illustrates very well the unwillingness of the military to continue fighting in Vietnam. From her story you get the sense that the majority of them didn't want to do it anymore and because of that this story represents an ending of the war in regards to the participation of the United States military. From what's said in her story, it seems like they were fed up with Vietnam. They knew it was a lost cause and so a lot of them stopped fighting for it. They didn't think it was worth it to risk their lives anymore. As Coburn put it, simply "...nobody wanted to be the last guy to die in Vietnam" (408).

Coburn notes that “troops really were openly refusing to carry out orders” and that sometimes, “they’d drop a group of guys into the jungle and they’d just sit there for a couple of days calling in fake coordinates, smoke a little weed, and wait to get picked up” (408). She goes on to add that, “Of course there were other missions where people were greatly heroic, but it was pretty obvious that the military was gradually losing control of its own men” (408).

Coburn also tells about a large group of people in the Americal Division at Chu Lai who in 1971 actually had an antiwar demonstration planned to take place on the Fourth of July. She recalls that they, “put up posters...calling for ‘an immediate and total American troop withdrawal’” (408). One thousand five hundred people showed up.

She also talks about Henry Rollins, who was court-martialed after knocking down a superior who, after noticing he was out of uniform, came up to him and demanded to know where his hat was.

All of these things illustrate that many people in the military were openly against the war and, in some instances, completely disregarded authority. Coburn comments, “When I hear people say we could have won the war, I always think: where were you going to get the soldiers?”, and I agree (408). If soldiers are unwilling to fight and follow orders, that’s definitely the end for a war.

Assignment 2 Part 1 by Daniel Hovet

I consider Clark Dougan's account "*He Was Only 19-Did You Know Him?*" under the Memorial Day 1968 section of Part 4 on page 304 to be the best example of a turning point to me. The story focuses upon the death of a 19 year old soldier and its impact on the neighborhood in which he grew up. I only recently turned 20, so the proximity of age stood out to me.

Months and months before Greg Fischer's death (the nineteen year old), Clark Dougan recounts how he and his friends would talk about what their plans were after graduation. Fischer intended to join the marines. Everyone at the high school dealt with the war and potential to be sent there through black humor. Dougan recalls how he was struggling his way through college, and how he found out Fischer had died at Dong Ha up near the DMZ in a local newspaper editorial on Memorial Day 1968.

The date makes me inclined to think he was killed during the Tet Offensive, or immediately congruent to it. In the months leading up to Memorial Day that year, Tet aside, times were turbulent. A new Secretary of Defense, Clark Clifford, was ushered in, people were displeased to hear that General Westmoreland requested over 206,000 reinforcements in Vietnam, McCarthy, Kennedy, and others were threatening Johnson's re-election chances, and so on.

It was impactful to the area. As the editorial argued and people began to think, "how many more people like Greg are we willing to waste?" Dougan points out that the newspaper was owned by a conservative publication, and considers that telling as to how people's attitudes were changing towards the war, going so far as to refer to it as "the moment when 'Middle America' really turned against the war" in his mind.

The story is devoid of battles, political backrooms, congressional committees, marches, etc., and yet that is what in a way makes it rather relatable in its emotional resonance. I can think of a dozen people off the top of my head whom I knew in high school and joined the military afterwards (I'm just saying I've been in the same place as Clark, however in a different time, context and global climate. I'm not making broad comparisons between Vietnam and current efforts in the Middle East, let it be clear). I could imagine the feeling in the community if someone, recently a kid, known in the area, was killed in action far over seas.

So to Clark Dougan, this was the moment he observes as the turning point for American opinion on the war. It sounds like it to me, as well.

Assignment 2 Part 2 by Daniel Hovet

Truong Tran's account in Part 4 of *Patriots* strikes me as a good example of an "ending". He was a South Vietnamese soldier who fought for years in the countryside,

protecting the hamlets, patrolling, and so on. He saw firsthand how difficult defending and counter-guerrilla tactics were.

He recalls the slow deterioration of the country, with more and more people being forced to migrate to the cities for safety and to make any sort of living. Even his grandfather's coconut plantation was killed by allied defoliants. Corruption crippled the efforts of the military and relief workers. Every step forward was countered by other ones back.

As he points out, since the United States had decided that invasion of the north was off the table, that meant true victory was off the table as well. The best that could happen was a stalemate. Fighting for limited objectives and hoping for complete victory upon reaching those objectives is insanely poor strategy.

As defense of Vietnam collapsed, he was able to get his whole family into the embassy compound in Saigon during the evacuation. He was the last of his family to leave, and was almost left behind. Ambassador Martin managed to get some more helicopters to come in, and Truong was successfully evacuated in the early morning hours of April 30th, 1975. He lives in the United States now. He considers the way he left Vietnam to be "shameful" and reflects how he hoped to return to Vietnam one day. In decades, he has not.

Having fought hard for years only to be forced in the end to beat a retreat not only away from your home, but away from your country and to another side of the world could be considered an ending with great finality to it; he could fight no more for his country, and no one else would fight for it, either.

The story in Part Four that gives me the best example of a "turning point" in the war is the very short story of Philip Jones Griffith on page 295. I chose this story because the "turning point" comes in a social disillusionment. The story is about clever the Viet Cong were. They turned the Vietnamese people against the United States. He told of how a couple of Viet Cong went into the heavily populated, pro-American, District Eight of Saigon and began shooting cops and random firing. They did this because they knew that American soldiers would lose their cool with so much going on and begin randomly shooting as well. This was a huge blow against pro-America views with the Vietnamese people in an area where they thought themselves safe. If we couldn't protect them, we couldn't protect anybody.

The account of Le Minh Khue on page 508 in Part Five of the Appy Book is the best example of an "ending" of the war to me because she was a correspondent in the war, which means she wrote down accounts of heroic acts. She witnessed the liberation of Danang in 1975. I think her account struck me as the end of the war because she told of how when she came in on a truck she saw that the southern soldiers "...had stripped of their uniforms." (p. 511) She also said that they smiled and waved at them as they came into the city. It's easy to see why I chose this as the end of the war but there's more than meets the eye. These soldiers were happy to see them coming in. This tells me that they wanted it to be over for who knows how long? So really the war had been over a long time ago because these southern soldiers didn't want to put up a fight. The end of the war came a long time before any peace agreement was signed.

Turning Point

By: Desiree Carter

Tom Grace had spent the previous year attending rallies and protests regarding the idea of the United States entering into the Vietnam civil war. Although, he had been against the war he was not an extremely political person, however, the months leading up to the incident at Kent State had provided him with many reasons to be angry. Mr. Grace describes himself as being a circuit rider as far as his participation in anti-war activities (Appy, 386). On May 4th he went against his promise to take his exam and head home, instead he chose to attend the rally at Kent State. This rally was a turning point for many. In the case of Tom's friend Aquinas it struck something inside of him. He changed forever and had a lot to deal with internally. He was a religious man that had to find a way to reconcile his beliefs with the events that took place on that day. Tom states that he does not believe that the Kent State shooting altered his political perspective (Appy, 388) but it did change him. Seeing those around you be killed will change anyone but also Tom became a figure head of sorts for protestors. This was his turning point because he now was no longer a person in the crowd at rallies and demonstrations. He went on to become involved in many political situations. Who knows if that would have been his future if he had simply taken his history test and went home to meet his girlfriend. Yes, he was already a politically mindsetted person but had no experience being the center of attention. Although the events of that day were an unimaginable cruelty brought on by people that were supposed to protect them it also changed the world. It made the government see protestors as the same as those they were fighting in Vietnam as well as showed the American people they could be treated poorly for disagreeing, thus giving them a glimpse of how oppressive our government could be.

Ending Point

George Evans grew up like many of us. He believed that if there was a war going on then there was a reason for it. Also, that if the United States was involved then we must be in the right. He went to war, as many other young men at the time, because he was required too. In his case he had not yet been drafted but due to the high chance that he would be he enlisted in a way that he felt would provide him with a better circumstance. He ended up volunteering to go to Vietnam. Even though he had been warned and subsequently lost his friend to the war, there was still a portion of him that believed that there was no such thing as a bad war (Appy, 450). After being sent to Vietnam he had to clean the bodies of young boys when a woman assumed to be their mother came in. This incident marked the end of him being naïve regarding war. His eyes were more opened and he realized that maybe this was not the right thing to do and maybe the United States is not always right. He was still a good soldier and completed his job but he actively propagated against the war and quit trying to be a perfect soldier. A short time later circumstances led to him getting his R and R time. While in Australia he became acquainted with people who were also against the war. He notes that they were his first experience with hippies (Appy, 454). This was the end of George thinking war was an okay thing but was the beginning of someone who was a bit less naïve.

Dylan Kohn

HST 195

Instructor:Escobar

Assignment #2

War is an extreme measure of action in seeking resolution in a dispute. It is often the final resort to negotiation, and used as a bargaining chip in persuasion and has been for years. Like the truth, war has a duality, the far end of the spectrum to those that believe in peace and all to get along. But as we see, the truth, just like the need for war is somewhere in the middle. Similarly, the two parts of *Patriots*, the Turning Point and Endings, have themes that are on opposite sides of the spectrum, and the truth is somewhere in the middle. For Turning Point, the theme is Death, the most extreme of all things we know, and how it changed those involved. For Endings, it is the opposite, using personification to understand and accept the people of Vietnam for who they are, which is people just like us, wanting to live, survive, and thrive in the face of death.

The stories in Turning Point all centered around death, with stories referencing the assassination of MLK, the My Lai Massacre, and various stories of fallen soldiers. But the story that shows the best example of a turning point is from Clark Dougan, when he shares his experience of reading about the death of someone he knew. Dougan shares his upbringing first, a recognizable way of life for most of us, with references to high school experiences most of us can relate to.

Dougan shows the reader the effect of a foreign war on domestic soil. Hearing about death was common for his high school, whether it was over the loudspeakers at his school or by reading the newspaper. Where as one loss in a school now would cripple a community, Dougan makes note of the consistent loss as matter of fact. He references that his school mascot was the Patriots, and immediately talks of the total loss in great irony. Having it be the name of Appy's collection of stories just adds to the jarring effect his story has.

Often the atrocities of the world don't affect us until they are in our own backyard, and this story was a great example of how we lost the war by losing the support on the homefront from Middle America. In the same state that the Kent State shootings occurred, the story showed that the Heartland as the Midwest is referred to, was affected and hurt by a war they did not support. The fallen soldier was not of significance outside his community, however, that signifies that anyone could be hurt by this war, and how important it was for the government to start making a change, to end the war.

While Dougan spoke of the tragedy and how it hit home, in Endings the stories focused on the opposite of all the death, but the personification of the people of Vietnam. Most of the stories weren't about the horrors of the enemies or war, but reflective on those they were fighting against and how their world changed with the Vietnam War. Rather than hearing about the loss, stories about survival dominates this section. The prisoners of war discuss their experiences, and the best example of an ending to the war was from Jay Scarborough.

Scarborough was one of the last remaining POWs left after the war, however, it is not because of the chronological order that makes this story stand out. In the story, he speaks highly of his experiences in Vietnam, even saying that he would have stayed if given the chance. His admiration towards the South Vietnamese that he worked with is clear, and even during his incarceration he speaks more of the guilt about his advantageous situation versus other less fortunate in the prison.

The story isn't one of horrific torture and brutal punishments often associated with prisoner of war stories. Instead he speaks of being forced to learn songs of the North, and being groomed for intelligence information. Rather than speaking of his captors as being evil, he often put himself as the suspicious one, almost attempting to justify the actions of the North.

This story signifies the ending of the war because it is a microcosm of the entirety of the Vietnam War. An American, intending to do the greater good, gets involved in a war and watches the South suffer worse than the Americans, and the North ultimately the ones with the power. War doesn't always just end with a peace treaty, a signature, or a handshake. So this story does a great job of showing that American involvement has ended, and the storm that the songs speak of is finally beginning to break.

Both sections of the book have significant stories and powerful messages that both contrast and agree with one another. Whether its war and death or peace and humanization, there is no right answer or definitive truth. For turning points and endings, it is all in the perspective of those involved, and their stories that have been recorded and presented in *Patriots*.

It was a bit difficult to pick just one story that felt like a good example of a turning point. There were so many in Part 4 that were expertly collected together for that express purpose. However, the one most subtly poignant was the story from John Gilligan and he does this twice. He early in his telling describes how the overt difference in technology and methods between aircraft and a guy on a bicycle yielded different results. How with air superiority, two planes were shot down and unable to blow up a bridge, but a lone Viet Cong on a bicycle with plastique managed to annihilate his target. This is a powerful analogy because it seemed many Americans at that time started to relate to this notion. In understanding how this war would not be anything like our military had in the past, signaled a change in attitude (but oddly not in approach for the leadership).

However, the second example is a little more subtle but more important. When he talks about the problems between the Democratic candidates, you can almost picture a man tumbling down a slope, trying to get a hand hold to stop himself but inevitably slipping all the way down. While this may seem like a pessimistic view on America's ending up with Nixon in office, it's not intended as such. Instead, this is important because the departure of Johnson seemed to signal a potential to cease the war. And while withdrawal did continue, the long protracted action that was maintained by Nixon could have been so easily avoided if one candidate could have divorced himself from Johnson, one could truly commit to the position and if the last had not been assassinated.

For the second part, Steve Sherlock's story was chosen. There was some hesitation to use this example as previously objectors have been used as a focus when analyzing their tales. However, Sherlock won over because his narrative has a feeling of completeness to it. He was a man of conviction who tells his story without overwhelming drama or presentation. He presents his disillusionment with the war chronologically from his first encounters with the anti-war movement, through his tour as an officer and then his later activism. It feels like a natural movement, something that happened causally and inevitably. And it isn't just his throwing away his medal that is a good example of an ending, but also how his military career evolved due to him staying true to his convictions. What in the end truly warms the reader up to this story was how he examined his feelings at throwing away his medal. He was not ashamed to have been a soldier or to have served. And he felt some pride in what he had been appreciated with. But ultimately it seemed the symbolic gesture was his way of putting that commitment to an end.

Jessica Seiler

HIST 195

Assignment 2

24 May 2015

Vietnam Finale

Part I:

According to Merriam Webster dictionary, a turning point is a point at which a significant change occurs. Throughout novels and short stories, including history and those of personal stories, a turning point can mean many different things. One thing though, is that these turning points can mean multiple different things including ones that changed a persons idea about something or of a point that altered something even bigger, like a war. Throughout the book, *The Patriots*, by Christian Appy, we, the readers, find our selves completely submerged by the personal encounters of these heroes that served in the Vietnam War. A “turning point” can be one of realization that one had or it could be the Tet offensive that ultimately let to the end of the Vietnam War. I believe that the true turning point in the war, was when our own soldiers wanted to come home and end the war.

In the Book, *The Patriots*, by Christian Appy, Steve Sherlock stated, “That night before the medal turn-in was when it got very emotional. That’s when we talked about trying to end the war and bring people home. Everybody I talked to felt this wasn’t just another protest, because we were people who had already served with no danger of being drafted or being sent back to the war, who knew the war firsthand from experience, who had demonstrated our patriotism. And many had been wounded—there were guys with crutches and in wheelchairs.” To me, this is when the turning point hit the Vietnam War.

When men weren’t “giving up” but were ready to come home and stop the fighting. What is the point of war when the people fighting for it don’t want to anymore?

Part II:

In the book, *Patriots*, by Christian Appy, he wrote a section called, “We Really Believed,” the story of Beverly Gologorsky. Appy wrote, “She doesn’t want “closure” on the Vietnam War. It might be important for people who fought in the war or who lost loved ones, “but there shouldn’t be closure for the country, because if there’s closure, there’s just a chance it could happen again. I think ‘remember Vietnam’ is a good thing.” Not accepting closure for herself, she wrote a novel...“My hatred of that war and the intensity of the movement were so profound it took me twenty years to mull it over and

refract it into a novel.”

I believe that, of course, the Vietnam War came to an end, but one can say that the fighting just ended but nothing else was resolved. Which in my perspective, I believe that’s how it should be. Like they say, “If we don’t learn from the past, history will repeat itself.” In other words, there was a finale in the war, but so many who were in the war never had an “ending.” Granted, Gologorsky’s “ending” may be sad to some because she never felt any resolution, but I believe that it’s a conscious reminder to us of what happens, which at the end of the day in Gologorsky’s words, “Vietnam is a good thing.”

Joseph Foley

The Vietnam War

Professor Escobar

Assignment #2

A Modern War

Part 1:

The Vietnam War was a complex conflict, which included multiple global powers and spanned several decades. It could take a lifetime of investigation just to grasp the fundamental arguments from all sides of the conflict. Finding one clear turning point in this multifaceted puzzle would be impossible, but there are plenty of individual moments that defined and documented a change in the tide. Walter Cronkite's critical assessment of the war after the Tet Offensive highlights a transitory time, and the extreme influence the press had on the war.

In Christian G. Appy's "Patriots," Barry Zorthian, the former director of the Joint United States Public Affairs Office in Vietnam, discussed many turning points in the war, including President Johnson's alleged reaction to Cronkite's message. Zorthian said, "Walter himself, it seems to me, was taken aback at the degree and scope of the Tet Offensive and he delivered the famous statement that the war is at a standstill and we're not going to win. It may be apocryphal, but LBJ supposedly saw that on television and said, 'If I've lost Walter Cronkite, I've lost middle America'." Although President Johnson's famous response to Cronkite's address might not have been officially documented, it perfectly summarizes the new and immense influence the media had on the American people and the war.

Despite the Tet Offensive being sold to U.S. citizens as a decisive victory for the North Vietnamese, the facts did not support the claim. Barry Zorthian mentioned, "They weren't getting reports from the field about all the attacks that were being repulsed." For many military witnesses, the Tet Offensive had finally brought the North Vietnamese troops out in the open. Within days of the initial attacks, the North Vietnamese Army had taken-on heavy casualties and were quickly retreating. Zorthian's unique position in Vietnam allowed for an in-depth account of the media's weighty influence on the Vietnam War.

Being the first war to reach television sets across the country nightly, the Vietnam

conflict was unlike any conflict the U.S. population had witnessed. As the war escalated, so did the press's anti-war fervor. Obviously the Vietnam War was not accurately reported to U.S. citizens. It may have been a lost cause, but American troops dominated a majority of battles and pounded enemy forces as the Tet Offensive concluded, despite American media portraying the opposite. The media's anti-war pitch became an ally of Ho Chi Minh, and an enemy of President Johnson.

Without Vietnam on his record, President Johnson would be viewed as a highly successful president. He made vast improvements to the domestic front, and was particularly revered for propelling initial Civil Rights improvements. Despite many historically important accomplishments, President Johnson reluctantly inherited a dangerous conflict in Vietnam. Whether it was pride, poor advisors, or a combination of both, President Johnson only escalated the conflict. As the war intensified, so did the President's disdain for the press. Despite his trepidations for war, he was careful to never back down or show weakness, especially when it came to Communism. Like many other military and political leaders involved, he thought the U.S. could quickly cripple the enemy with air attacks and close the door on a communist Vietnam.

President Johnson's strong-willed, and sometimes bull-headed approach did nothing to win over anti-war supporters. Any support he had in regard to the war, quickly vanished by the late '60s. Walter Cronkite's famous analysis of the Vietnam War marked a turning point for President Johnson. Losing Middle America stymied any outside hope that Johnson may have had to win the support of Americans backing the war. One of many examples of U.S. mistakes and decline in Vietnam that Zorthian provides in his account. Cronkite's message became a documented confirmation of America's lack of support for the war.

Part 2:

Much like attempting to pinpoint one single turning point in the Vietnam War, identifying one particular point that ended the war would be nearly impossible. There are a multitude of reasons that the war did not conclude favorably for Americans and South Vietnamese forces. Media, politics, military decision-making and even motivation played a large role in the conflict's conclusion. Steve Sherlock's interview in "*Patriots*," gives a good glimpse into the evolution of thinking that many American soldiers in Vietnam experienced. Steve Sherlock was once a lieutenant in the 101st Airborne in Vietnam, a man who also struggled with discipline issues while in country and eventually protested the war. This shift in perspective helped end the conflict, and lent support to the North.

When Sherlock joined the army in 1966, he described himself as a "super war supporter. I believed we were fighting communists in Vietnam so we wouldn't have to fight them on the shores of the United States." Before he spent anytime in Vietnam, Sherlock spent time on the domestic front quieting Civil Rights protests. By the time he reached Vietnam in '68, Sherlock says, "I was in a state of confused neutrality." Sherlock's apprehension only grew while in country.

The North Vietnamese people's dedication to resistance has never been put in

question. Despite having lesser resources in many cases, their resilience and commitment to liberation was unwavering. American troops quickly recognized these qualities. Even with the U.S. having superior fire and air power, the North Vietnamese troops would always return, no matter how badly they were beaten. While some American soldiers began to question America's involvement in Vietnam, the North's devotedness seemed to only grow.

With anti-war media coverage ballooning and war protests in the U.S. gaining mainstream popularity, many American troops were being sent to war already questioning the motives of their involvement. Despite winning a bronze star and being decorated for his heroism, Sherlock's once dogged defense of U.S war motives had shifted, he said, "Around December some guy at Camp Eagle put a petition up that just said, 'Fuck War,' and I signed it." Sherlock's commanders were upset, but he was merely sent to another region in Vietnam. The anti-war sentiment had grown amongst American soldiers. Not all soldiers protested the war, but the contagious anti-war sentiments had a huge impact on the war's results.

After returning home from war, Sherlock became involved with the anti-war movement. Although his role at Purdue was much more conservative than the typical war protester, his time in Vietnam only made him more opposed to the conflict. In '71 he participated in the National Vietnam Veterans Against the War medal-turn-in in Washington D.C. He, along with hundreds of other Vietnam veterans filled the Mall in D.C. and camped together before returning their medals on the Capitol steps. Many veterans felt that the war was wrong and that their medals only represented dishonor. Sherlock said, "For me, there was a certain pride in having been recognized with the medal for doing a good job. So I wouldn't say it felt good to throw it away. It was a mixed feeling."

The protest was met with a mix of extreme reactions. Many non-military protesters felt that it was one of the most powerful statements made opposing the war, since it was actual veterans telling the world that it wasn't worth it. Other veterans and citizens felt like it was an act of tyranny.

Sherlock's wide sweeping evolution of thinking in regard to the war was not rare, but both polarizing views of the war, anti-communist and anti-war divided the public, active soldiers and soon-to-be soldiers. WWII Vet's were met with widespread praise, and treated like heroes. Vietnam Vet's were met with misunderstanding at best. Vietnam was a different type of war, fought in jungles against an antagonist that most U.S soldiers and citizens didn't fully understand.

Without U.S. soldiers completely buying into the reasoning behind the conflict, American forces suffered severe psychological disadvantages in the closing years of the war. The North Vietnamese's rich history dispelling foreign invaders and all-out dedication to the war effort gave them a huge advantage. The American press became an ally of the North Vietnamese and helped stifle any support or public approval that may have motivated U.S. troops. The complexities of the conflict still divide veterans, citizens and historians. The anti-war shift in perspective for many American soldiers, recruits and citizens contributed to the ending and outcome of the war in a large way.

The war brought about contention abroad as well as at home. In America, families were torn whether to support the war or not. John Douglas Marshall became a prime example of the impact of war on family relationships. His grandfather, Samuel Lyman Atwood Marshall, was a well-known general and author. John's family was proud of their long history serving in the war. Under the pressure of his family, John began basic training in the army. Yet, John did not have the same passion for the war as his grandfather. Despite Samuel's passion for the army and his war efforts, John was unable to change his point of view on the war. Before John started his first year of service, he was congratulated by his grandfather for graduating ROTC. His grandfather "grabbed [him] and gave [him] a big bear hug" as he received his commissioning certificate (329). During his first year in the army, John "applied to leave the army as a conscientious objector" of the war (Appy 328). In stark contrast the affection displayed at John's commission ceremony, Samuel broke ties with John as soon as he heard of his discharge. "You will not be welcome here again and you are herewith constrained not to use our name as family in any connection" (329). John suffered a great loss. He never spoke to his grandfather again. For John, his grandfather's dismissal marked a significant crossroads in his life. He chose a route which would cut off all communication with his beloved grandfather.

John was not the only one to experience family tensions during the war. John made a blanket statement after receiving his grandfather's letter of dismissal, "I think his letter shows what the war did to many American families" (329). War tore families apart as well as brought them together. For John, his story would have been significantly altered if he had stayed dedicated to the army. Samuel would have felt honored to have his grandson following in his footsteps. Yet, John's perspective on war was drastically different. In fact, he claimed "all war was wrong" (328). John was not the only one to debate the idea of war. Americans questioned the presence of American troops in Vietnam. John's separation from his grandfather was painful but a realistic account of family tensions during the war. Along with many others, John's life was forever changed by the presence of war.

The war still rose in tension as a conclusion was being made. The introduction to a resolution began in 1968 in Paris. Nguyen Khac Huynh was a part of the North Vietnamese delegates at the Paris peace talks. Although they had deliberated peace before, "real discussion began in the summer of 1972" (468). Even though "every member of [his] delegation believed peace was near at hand" there would still be more talk and debate to follow. The war would not be declared finished until April 1975. Still, the end of the war started during these meetings. To Huynh, the beginning of the end began with these negotiations.

Despite their supposed conclusions in Paris, America "renewed their bombing in December" (468). Huynh viewed this as a drastic mistake by America. War might have been finally suspended before this move. However, in January 1973 they finally reached a resolution. Saigon resisted signing the agreement on the same page as the Provisional Revolutionary Government. Yet, after more debate they "had a place for four signatures with no party identifications" for them to sign (468-469). Many people viewed this as the start of concluding the war in Vietnam. In Huynh's mind, the process of negotiating a

resolution marked the point of conclusion. Although “both sides missed opportunities to make peace earlier,” their signing marked their ability to reach a settlement. The Pair Peace Accords was not the final step of the war. Rather, it marked the ability of the leaders to make an agreement and start the process of negotiations to finish the war.

Huynh and Marshall’s stories marked significant milestones during the Vietnam War. Marshall’s account illustrated the familial tensions during the war as he rebelled against his grandfather’s dedication to the war effort. His life was forever changed by his decision to be discharged. Although his separation was difficult, he held to his personal beliefs. Strong opinions about the war brought about its long debate and extended conclusion. Huynh testified to the difficulty of settlement. The closure of the war began with the discussion in Paris. The beginning of the end of the war was determined by their meetings. The war was a time of contention and after years of fighting there was finally peace.

Marcus Farset

HST 195

Writing Assignment 2

A turning point that I came across in Part 4 of the Appy book is the My Lai incident. This was a huge opportunity for the antiwar activists to cause a lot of havoc for the American government. When the news of this horrific massacre of at least 500 women, children, and elderly came out to the American public, the antiwar movement and the demands to withdrawal from Vietnam heightened even more from where they were. When the whole story of this act came out, it was reported that the American troops never received a single round of hostile fire. The troops took most of the day to complete this dirty deed. It is also reported that the troops were very leisurely about it; taking a break to eat their C rations and smoke. Fifty officers knew about this event, but said nothing about it; summarizing it as a successful firefight where 128 Viet Cong were killed. This was the cover up lie and shows the corruption among the commanders because they used the killing of the villagers to make their "body counts" look better. This lie also caused more distrust of the government by the American people. This is described as the worst atrocity in military history, Larry Colburn, from the Appy Book and his crew were ready to kill their own servicemen to stop the murders. The Tet Offensive, which caused the South to lose trust in the U.S. Army followed by this event caused even more supporters of the U.S to break off. This massacre was the turning point in American attitudes, and was almost as significant as the Tet Offensive. That is a huge comparison, but it shows that this could be turning point because it devastated the U.S. public opinion of the war. Public opinion of the war was a very important because without the support of the people, the president could not effectively prosecute the war. This is why the VC exploited the U.S. whenever possible, to turn the public against the war. The decreasing public support and deteriorating military situation eventually lead to a withdrawal, and defeat. All of these examples are what led me to believe that My Lai was a turning point of the war.

Truong Tran on page 504 in the Appy Book illustrates my idea that the end of the war occurred when we first sent foot soldiers into Vietnam. He says that this put the South Vietnamese at a political disadvantage. The north was able to mobilize southerners as well as northerners to fight what they called the American invasion. He says they could not tell their brothers and sisters that they were fighting for themselves when the American soldiers were in the country fighting for them. This shows that right off the bat the South Vietnamese were at a disadvantage and became more weak when American soldiers arrived. Another reason the war ended right when it began is because the Americans had no idea how the South Vietnamese lived and how they did things. Throughout the war they did not want to learn about their lifestyle, and that knowledge could have helped the Americans prevail in the war. The Americans could have cared less about the way they treated the lands of Vietnam and the citizens. They began using defoliants which killed everything including crops, which were the South's only income. Truong says that when he went on missions, there were strict rules on how they dealt

with the local people. If the soldiers stole a chicken or some vegetables it could create negative political repercussions. When the U.S. went into villages they looted, burned houses, raped women, and in some instances killed everyone in sight. Now wonder the Americans were hated by the end of the war. He says corruption was a big thing among the American officials. When one million piasters were received for village development, an American would take a hundred thousand for himself. The last paragraph of his story is really eye opening to me. He says we fought a war that we could either lose or tie, but not win. The Communists could either win or tie, but not lose. The worst they could do was keep half the country. All of this illustrated the fact that we lost the war as soon as it started and never had a chance to win. The fact that the Americans could care less about the Vietnamese and their country played a huge role in our defeat. The beginning was also the end of the war for the Americans.

Part 1

Barry Zorthians I think was a big turning point specifically from the media standpoint. When you're in the media you tend to show up in war zones after things have happened. When the war came to the residences of the media that would be a pretty big turning point as far as how things are shown to the world. When the special assistant to the ambassador has to shoot an infiltrator things the tides of war are turning. When he urges Westmoreland to talk to the press because the issue needed to be clarified but as he said, in the context of what happened the media frenzy that happened after the Tet offensive

Leading into what I was saying on January 31st the turning point of the media outlook on the war completely changed when the war was brought to their door steps, literally. When he says "what do you write about? You write about what you see?" and what they say was what was happening to our troops. He goes on to talk about the pictures that were coming out at the time. The infamous picture of the execution of one of the Viet cong. The personnel carrier with marines stacked on it. The media focus completely changed. Everything about how it was portrayed was changing and LBJ had it right, he lost Cronkite he lost Middle America. Though the parallels he draws between Saigon and Washington are really interesting at the point the whole world was on fire with Martin Luther King just being assassinated the Tet Offensive happening. I would imagine to be a journalist at that time was really difficult. Trying to accurately say what was going on state side as well as the hell that was happening in Vietnam would have been incredibly difficult. He does point out how the government withheld information. Which everyone now knows, that a lot of people weren't incredibly aware of what was happening and I think after Tet that all changed. The AP photos, the journalists that were there real information started coming out about the horrors our troops were going through.

Part 2

I think Charles Cooper (II) had the most significant example of a ending, especially with Project 100,000. When they ran out of people they could draft so they started drafting the bottom ten or fifteen percent that was pretty indicative that America was losing the battle. He explains how this war was a lot more media based, which is something I hadn't thought about because during my whole life you have been able to pretty much see up to the minute information on everything ever. Especially in the past ten years. When he says: "they should be professional and tell the truth" that is something that really rang true because, from what I understand not a lot about the story was being told to Americans, and what was being told were either half truths or misinformation. A lot of people had, and still don't, have any idea what the conflict was actually about. When he mentions removing all alcohol from the troops I can definitely see why this would have been a problem. From what I have read it seemed self-medication was the big thing over

there. People, in the beginning were killing kids and being that a lot of them weren't much older themselves I am sure this was taking its toll on them the morale was suffering. Which lead to his rifle company being embarrassed by the little kid attacking them, which I really feel was the ending point for him. I don't think he was fully aware what was happening to his troops how far off the reservation they were, to use his Indian country line, when they went and attacked that village. It says that they thought they were VC but it alludes to the village not being that far away if it was that close you would think he, being the commanding officer would have had better intel on it. Which leads me to think he probably did and the whole altercation was why he kept reporters with his unit afterwards. it seemed he knew nothing was going well which he touches on with the "blow away mode" comment. For as much as he lead up to all that happening with his troops he does kind of drop the ending by jumping too him leaving. I would be interested to read if there were any other instances of altercations like this happening. Though, if it really was his turning point, he sure got out pretty quickly afterwards. It seems a lot of other people weren't so lucky.

The Vietnam War, being such a controversial war, had a huge turning point. The Tet offensive in short has been identified as the major turning point of this war. The Tet offensive was a series of surprise attacks put on by the North Vietnamese to catch American and southern Vietnam forces off guard during the middle of the night. Even though this was the largest military operation conducted by either side up until that point in the war, there was an even bigger turning point. The home front made a huge difference in the war as well. The way the American people supported the war made a struggle to have a do whatever it takes to win the war. Specifically one story stood out amongst the others. A story told by Clark Dougan. Dougan coauthored seven books on the Vietnam Experience, (304 patriots). Out of this story he talks about a friend that he knew from school and the directions they would end up taking after they graduated. Dougan said that he would be going on to college while his friend, Greg Fisher, would be joining the marines. He then speaks about Memorial day in 1968, he was just getting back from his first year of college and read an editorial from the Cleveland Press. The editorial that he read was titled "He was only 19-Did You Know Him"(305 patriots). As he read he came to find out that the person the editorial was about was his friend from school Greg Fischer. The line, "The editorial was really asking, how many people like Greg are we willing to waste?" felt like the real turning point of the war. Dougan also further explains what his friend Greg Fischer was like. He said, "He wasn't an eagle scout, or a class president, or an all American athlete. He was a kid who had worked in the local pharmacy." (306 patriots) The public was realizing that these average kids were being sent off to Vietnam to go die for their country and for what? The public at this time started to turn against the war and the military propaganda that went along with it. The military would say that these young men should go and fight for their country. Dougan really expressed the way that people had turned by explaining in a quote, "...were starting to say "Fu** this, it's not worth Greg Fischer's life or his buddy's life." Or maybe they weren't saying it, but they were starting to feel it." (306 patriots) If the government couldn't get the public to support the war, the war would eventually have to stop or the people would want their sons to come home. Because the loss of support for the war, it made the turning point that much bigger.

While the end of the war came to the Fall of Saigon one story from the Patriots book made it a big picture. The first quote from Frank McGuire on page 441 was an attitude that had an impact. The quote goes, "the whole attitude was, stand back little brother, I'll take care of it." (441 patriots) He talked about how his attitude would change from one year he went back in 1966 and had this idea that the Americans were not just going around killing people but that they were there to build the country up and make it better. After going back to Vietnam in 1967 He said that, "shortly after Tet I heard the word Vietnamization for the first time. Of course, it was always supposed to be their war, but it was lip service because all the Americans wanted to get in and win it by themselves. The Vietnamese just stayed in the background." (442 patriots) He then talks about returning to Saigon in 1970 saying, "when I got back to Saigon in 1970, the city was dead." (443 patriots) The Plan he was talking about before was to build Vietnam, but seeing this city dead it was counterproductive for the overall mission. His view on why they were there would start to change. The quote that had the biggest impact on me was when he said, "The world was coming to an end." (443 patriots) This led me to believe now the troops were not supporting what they were doing and in fact didn't know what they were doing there

anymore. When both the home front and the soldiers fighting the war couldn't tell why they were there, the war seemed over at that point. Attitude for the objective was starting to soften. At the end of his story showed that attitude by when he says, "we really wanted to win their hearts and minds, Except we could never find one or the other." (445 patriots) At this point the war was over for the people over in Vietnam as well. The Americans felt like they were helping but to the soldiers it didn't feel like it at all, and for them the feeling of war was over.

Paul Turner

Assignment #2

May 24, 2015

Part 1

The Tet Offensive was an obvious turning point in the war. In a tactical sense, North Vietnam was unsuccessful, but they did succeed in causing troubling psychological effects on Americans. The U.S. was already uneasy with progress of the war and the Tet Offensive was the breaking point. Barry Zorthian's story expressed how the media impacted the U.S. and Washington. "The sudden shock of these attacks, and the fact that they hit so many places at the same time, was a tremendous blow to U.S. public thinking and particularly to government officials and Congress" (Appy, p. 291). The U.S. society realized the war was not worth the lives being taken. This change in mindset was the largest turning point of the war. Zorthian, who was in charge of all media relations, said the attack on the U.S. embassy got most of the media attention. He also said that many journalists that lived near the embassy wrote about what they were seeing in the moment which was Viet Cong soldiers attacking. The journalists "weren't getting reports from the field about all the attacks that were repulsed" (Appy p. 291). When the stories of the VC attacks reached the U.S. the journalists inadvertently created a horrible sense of defeat to the American public. Even though the Tet Offensive was technically a victory for the Americans and South Vietnamese, it was the opposite that was believed in the United States. "It wasn't until August that Charlie Mohr finally wrote a front-page story in *The New York Times* saying that in military terms Tet was a tremendous setback for the North Vietnamese and VC" (Appy, P. 291).

The Tet Offensive struck at a sensitive point when President Johnson and General Westmoreland were planning to reduce American troops in South Vietnam. "Then—boom!—Tet comes along after all those reassurances that things were improving and the impact of those muliattacks was devastating" (Appy p. 292). American support of the war was at an all-time low. Many soldiers did not know what they were fighting for and opposed the meaningless war. The U.S. thought they would destroy North Vietnam with brute power, but they realized that the war was not going to be won with power. The North Vietnamese had immense will power and as Ho Chi Minh stated several times, the Vietnamese would never give up. General Vo Nguyen Giap once said that the protestors in America would help North Vietnam achieve a victory in a war they couldn't win the war on the battlefield. Giap was right; the war was lost in the United States not in Vietnam. At such a low point in the war, the Johnson administration needed to make a change. When Washington asked Zorthian and his colleagues for recommendations he suggested they "go to the Vietnamese government on our side and say, Look, you either get your act together and start performing better or our responsibilities to our citizens and our country require us to pull out" (Appy, p. 293). The Tet Offensive created crippling effects to American support of the war. The media fueled the fire that eventually burned down any hope of a U.S. victory. The Tet Offensive forced the U.S. into Vietnamization

and eventually a Communist victory.

Part 2

President Richard Nixon's resignation in 1974 promoted a communist surge that would crumple South Vietnam. In late 1974 and early 1975 the ARVN was in terrible shape. The President of South Vietnam, Nguyen Van Thieu, trimmed defenses in northern part of South Vietnam and "allowed them to keep their families with them very close to the fighting" (Appy, p. 498). This strategy was counterproductive and the ARVN collapsed under the pressure of the North Vietnamese.

The departure of South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu was one representation of the end of the war. Americans and South Vietnamese knew a massive attack on Saigon was coming. Knowing they could not possibly win, evacuation was on their mind. On April 23, 1975 Ambassador Graham Martin, said to be "the last guy who was gonna concede that country to the Communists", ordered Thieu to leave the country. Frank Snepp's story expresses his personal experience with the conclusion of the war. Snepp was a CIA agent who Ambassador Martin ordered to discreetly transport Thieu to the Tan Son Nhut air base. After Thieu boarded the blacked-out CIA plane, Snepp says that Martin "began dragging away the stairway as if he were trying to rip away the umbilical of the American commitment to Vietnam" (Appy, p. 501). There must have been some sort of relief that the war was coming to an end even though it was in defeat. President Thieu's leave signified the loss of all hope for South Vietnam. A few days later on April 29th, as predicted, the Communists began their push to the center of Saigon. The next day the Communists captured Saigon and the war had finally come to an end.

Reference

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Samantha Westrope

HST 195 Joe Escobar

Assignment 2

May 23, 2015

Part One

There are a number of turning points in any war, such as tactical turning points, political turning points, and emotional turning points. At ten years old, Nguyen Qui Duc encountered a confusing emotional turning point resulting in his transcendence into adulthood. Nguyen's coming of age story is relatable to just about any individual who has had the privilege of becoming an adult. (295-297)

Nguyen's father was a South Vietnamese government official and his family stayed at a government guest house in Hue during the Tet Offensive, and admits himself that he lived a "very sheltered life" (295). The realization that Hue was actually being attacked instead of the more peaceful assumption that the noises they heard were just fireworks celebrating Tet was a humbling one for Nguyen. Nguyen and his family were unaware of an actual attack until the North Vietnamese Army soldiers were at their doorstep, his father made the assumption that the guards he saw were simply those that were guarding the compound (295). The experience set forth a wave of confusion in the young boy. A NVA soldier lectured Nguyen's family and other prisoners from the government compound. This lecture was a great source of confusion. Nguyen was startled by the admiration he felt for the soldier. The way he spoke influenced Nguyen's thoughts and was a catalyst for the change that Nguyen had not expected (296). After the soldier's lecture, the boy was left confused about his emotions and the NVA soldiers separated the men from the women and children, and separated Nguyen's father from him and his mother. The feeling of dread that had to have washed over mother and son watching as they took Nguyen's father away in the night must of been devastating.

Ten days after the young Nguyen had his father torn from him; he, his mother, and the rest of the women and children were moved by American soldiers to a refugee camp. The sight of the city he loved ravished by war further fueled the flames of confusion in Nguyen. The NVA soldier who previously lectured the refugees emitted a passion and love for Vietnam in Nguyen's eyes. The young boy could not comprehend how someone could do so much damage to a place of such cultural importance, specifically in regards to the bridge over the Perfume River, and came to believe that a person who could do such a thing had no reverence for his or her nation, culture, or history.

These cataclysmic events changed a young Nguyen. It opened his eyes to the reality of war and stripped him of his innocence. Originally he believed that the South Vietnamese cause was the right cause, probably due to his parent's influence, Nguyen began questioning the way things were and why. For Nguyen, his change was personal. He

changed from a child to a young adult in a very short amount of time. Every child that has become an adult goes through this change and it is a difficult time of any individual's life, it can't be any easier during times of war, but Nguyen made it, and is an inspiration.

Part Two

War is not pretty, there is no getting around it. It ravishes the beauty of the land, the people, and their emotions. An actual ending sometimes happens long after "the end", if at all. Sometimes there is no such thing as closure. For Judith Coburn, a reporter who covered the wars in Vietnam and Cambodia, the ending was being able to return to Cambodia and witnessing the beauty of the country while not shrouded in the sullen midsts of war.

After overhearing stories exchanged between her father, then Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford, and Senator Stuart Symington from Missouri about their experiences and fears about possible mutinies and insubordination after Thanksgiving dinner in 1967, Coburn began to understand these fears and witness them coming to fruition herself when she got to Vietnam in 1970 (406-407). After the Tet Offensive, the American troops' morale was at an all time low and they knew that the war was coming to an ending, and not in their favor (407). The antiwar movement was growing, both at home in the United States and in Vietnam where the North Vietnamese were gaining confidence.

In 1971, a group of soldiers organized a peace rally that demanded "immediate and total withdrawal of American troops" was scheduled to happen on the 4th of July in Vietnam (407). Commanding officers forced men to sign an agreement saying that they would not participate in such a rally, but had no way of actually stopping them. It was a stressful situation to say the least. And although a demonstration never actually occurred, Coburn was at the beach and said the scene reminded her of a "be-in" and she proceeded to interview the troops. She found that almost no one there did not support immediate withdrawal and it became apparent to her that many troops had already left the war even if they were still there. (407-408)

Coburn arrived in Vietnam at about the same time the process of "Vietnamization" began to take place, and it became apparent that the South Vietnamese had the same feelings as the American troops. The VA was considered to be a "paper tiger" and the ARVN was abandoning equipment in mass amounts and the majority of troops the South could offer consisted of those forced to serve. The end was near. (409)

After a couple of years in Vietnam, Coburn came to the realization that the MACV in Saigon was misrepresenting the situation in the media and stated her beliefs. Shortly after stating her claim Coburn found that she could no longer get her visa renewed to enter Vietnam in 1972. Her reports had most likely upset someone, and eventually she returned to Vietnam, but as part of a women's antiwar group rather than a reporter in 1979. She had wanted to show the world what had happened in Cambodia. When traveling through Cambodia she heard countless stories of families lost and ripped apart by the war and saw many of the mass graves for those lost. Coburn was guided through Cambodia by a native

woman who eventually admitted she only took the job to acquire some beautiful sarongs for herself and friends. (410-412)

This admission to Coburn revealed that there was still beauty to be seen. That the scars of war would heal even though they may not be forgotten. It is important to see the beauty in everything.

Part 1

The story that provided the best example of a turning point in the war was *My Lai*. Michael Bernhardt's, the *portable free-fire zone* story provided visceral imagery of US soldiers behaving as a bunch of lawless street thugs with guns and no morals. (Appy, p350) The Tet Offensive occurred at the end of January, 1969, and was a moment of clarity in which public trust in US military leadership was lost. Were leaders lying or incompetent? Neither answer was good. It also suggested the war was not almost over as they had been told. General Westmorland's use of additional troops, his search and destroy tactic, dropping more bombs and positive-spin speeches apparently did nothing to dent the North Vietnamese. What was next? General Westmorland's credibility with the public was gone. But there was more to come and it was ugly.

The My Lai massacre revealed to America shameful, deceitful activity involving American troops acting in their name. Americans were learning their military leaders had actually lied to them and in a big way. The military had buried reports of indiscriminant slaughter of women and children by US soldiers in My Lai. Much of the evidence of the My Lai massacre was in the form of color photographs taken by an Army photographer named Ron Haeberle, who, a year after My Lai, shared his photos with his hometown newspaper who published the pictures with the story in November 1969. The story was published the following month in LIFE magazine for all of America to see and read. (Source: <http://time.com/3739572/american-atrocity-remembering-my-lai/>) Leadership, training and morale had apparently broken down, and America was forced to question the justness of the war and whether it is worth the continued sacrifice.

While most Americans were debating ugly facts about government lies, military cover-ups and their young men's apparent loss of morality, there were hold-outs, die-hard pro-war supporters who felt the US atrocities should be excused because the Communists had perpetrated atrocities as well. They did it so we can do it too! (Appy, p345) This view was in conflict with the anti-war position which seemed to be gaining more followers in part because they seemed more credible than the government.

The anti-war movement gathered momentum as the public became more and more distrustful of their government and military. Reports of search and destroy missions, free-fire zones, body counts, tiger cages, ear collecting, poisoning village food supplies, all played into the narrative that the war was a result of misguided policy and was a tragic mistake. (Appy, p344) Even Vice President Humphrey turned against President Johnson's war policy as did other Democratic politicians. (Herring, p270) When the politicians in Johnson's own party felt they needed to turn their backs on the war to get elected, the voter was perceived to have been against the war and against funding for the war. When Nixon took office in January 1969, he was forced by an anti-war influenced public to reduce troop numbers and to at least appear as though he was going to end the war.

Part 2

The will to continue the war in Vietnam ended with *Watergate*. Daniel Ellsberg's "*We're eating our young*", made the point that through four presidents, all were sucked into lying

and deceit to avoid a poor outcome that could hurt them politically. (Appy, p433)
Nixon's desire to end the war honorably apparently overwhelmed his moral compass. It ultimately cost him his presidency and brought the war to an end more quickly. (Appy, p436)

It takes money to fight a war and that kind of money needed approval from people elected to Congress. People elected to Congress represent those who voted for them. Therefore, to fund the war the majority of the voting public must be mostly in favor of the government's war policy.

In 1968, Richard Nixon was running against Vice President Hubert Humphrey for President of the United States. Humphrey, trailing in the polls, could offer no alternative to the direction of the war in Vietnam. Nixon, on the other hand, offered a plan – a secret plan – for bringing the war to an end. Polls showed Nixon leading Humphrey by a comfortable lead until just before elections when President Johnson announced a halt to all bombing of North Vietnam, and linked the halt to optimistic peace negotiations with North Vietnam. Polling points between Nixon and Humphrey narrowed. The Nixon campaign countered with a secret message to President Thieu of South Vietnam assuring him that he would be better taken care of with a Nixon administration than with the Humphrey administration, and was pressured not to participate in peace negotiations between North Vietnam and the Johnson-Humphrey administration. (Appy, p309)
President Thieu's refusal to participate in the peace talks ended hope of a peaceful resolution and swung the American public's hopes back to Nixon and his 'secret plan' to end the war. Nixon won the election and became president.

Nixon, being elected in large part for his secret plan to end the war, had interfered with a peace process that could have potentially led to peace; and he did this so he could become president. Nixon also wanted a dignified end to the war and was determined to force the Communists to negotiate a reasonable deal. He continued his reduction of US troops and increased training of South Vietnamese soldiers. He increased bombings and planned secret bombing missions that were in conflict with campaign promises to end the war.
Nixon feared his plans to escalate the war had been discovered and could be revealed by a former Defense Department official, Daniel Ellsberg, in what came to be called the Pentagon Papers. (Appy, p434, 436) Nixon ordered his "plumbers," a small group of criminals who did his dirty work, to find something that would discredit Ellsberg. Their sneaking around, breaking into places and searching files for sensitive information eventually led to their getting caught breaking into the Watergate apartment complex, which in turn led to Nixon and a grueling two year public debate which eventually forced Nixon out of office on August 9, 1974.

When Nixon took office in 1969, there were 536,000 US troops in Vietnam. Throughout his time in office Nixon gradually reduced troop numbers under intense public pressure that began before he took office, but made up for the reduced 'boots on the ground' by increasing the bombing campaign. Nixon's two year entanglement with Watergate took his time, energy, and political support which, in turn, eroded support for his war policies and the funds needed to continue the war and maintain a reasonable bargaining position with the North Vietnamese Communists. It was over.

Michael Bernhardt: My Lai

The war from the beginning had many controversial aspects such as; “Free Fire Zones” where anything that moved was subject to die, where the Search and Destroy missions success was measured by body counts and where the “Phoenix Program” sought out and detained communist collaborators. These policies by the American Armed Services were based on an all out death and destruction strategy, but the key reason why these were not “turning points” in America was that these programs were targeted mainly at the enemy and communist collaborators, not civilians.

My Lai was a sub-hamlet of Son My village and the horrendous events on March 16, 1968 was the “turning point” in the Vietnam War. Originally, major American media outlets like The New York Times presented it as an achievement. American media announced it as an "impressive victory" in the long, stubborn war in Southeast Asia. The New York Times put the story of the battle on the front page, describing how the Americans destroyed 127 Viet Cong agents. (<http://www.historynet.com>.) The true horrors of the event would not be revealed to the world and American public for another eighteen months, resulting from an investigation that was prompted by a letter written by a veteran named Ron Ridenhour who received first hand accounts by men who participated in the massacre. The details of the senseless slaughter of around five hundred civilians including innocent women and children was the “turning point” of the war to the American public that was already damaged by the Tet Offensive early that year. This event was not only the crossroad for the American people but also was the “turning point” for a young soldier named Michael Bernhardt who served during the violent acts perpetrated by his unit, Charlie Company.

“When I was assigned to Charlie Company, I knew something was wrong, you could see it and smell it.” (Patriots: P.350). This was Michael Bernhardt’s first intuition of the company he was reassigned to from being a part of the Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LURP). This observance of his new assignment would be the inception of his personal “turning point” of the war in Vietnam. Michael Bernhardt had a sense of pride of being part of an elite group like LURP and was honored by the military training he received. He went to Vietnam to serve his country and ended up *“just trying to stay alive, get the hell out of there and get home.” (Patriots: P.352)* My Lai was the site of the infamous mass killing of civilians in South Vietnam in 1968. This atrocity was committed by Bernhardt’s assigned unit Charlie Company, led by Lieutenant William L. Calley, later found guilty for pre-meditated murder and then released by President Nixon on house arrest for two years. (<http://www.History.com>.)

The “turning point” of the war was bearing witness to the horrific scene of women and children being massacred and not being able to do anything about it. Sergeant Michael Bernhardt was quoted in 1973 that *“he saw no one who could have been considered to be of military age.”* He also stated that *“the US troops in My Lai met no resistance.”* (http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/my_lai_massacre.htm) Bernhardt declared: *“I was trying to get to where I could intervene... every time I got somewhere it was too late.”* This weighed heavily on Bernhardt’s conscience and turned his proud military convictions into a distained divergence for the war.

Daniel Ellsberg: Pentagon Papers

The end of the Vietnam historically speaking was made official by the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in 1973. Two years later the North launched a final offensive and took Saigon, uniting the country under one flag. The re-election of Richard Nixon, Watergate and the Pentagon Papers were events that legitimized the Anti-War protest and forced the President to resign, preventing further secret escalation and effectively ending the war in Southeast Asia. The New York Times printed an article in 1969 uncovering the covert U.S. bombing missions on neutral Cambodia with out congressional approval. President Nixon over stepped the constitution and responded by illegally wire tapping government officials and journalists suspected of leaking information about the secret escalation and expansion of the war. (*Patriots*: P.430)

In 1971, a former Defense Department official slowly released parts of a top-secret document on the study of U.S. political and military involvement in Vietnam from 1945 to 1967 that originated from former Sec. of Defense Robert McNamara, called the Pentagon Papers. That persons name was Daniel Ellsberg a graduate from Harvard and a former U.S. Marine. Ellsberg, who worked on the project, had been a staunch early supporter of the U.S. role in Southeast Asia, but had become seriously opposed to U.S. involvement in Vietnam. He felt compelled to reveal the nature of U.S. participation and leaked major portions of the papers to the press. Daniel Ellsberg's end of the war was when he read about a Special Forces team that murdered one of their own because they suspected him as a double agent. They were put on trial but later it was dropped. The secretary of the Army took credit, but Ellsberg had good suspicion the order to dismiss the trail came down from the Nixon Administration. "*There were lies at every level of command...all to cover up a murder. At that point I just wasn't going to be a part of lying and murdering anymore... killing in an unjustified war is unjustified homicide, mass murder.*" (*Patriots*: P.434) This encouraged Ellsberg to copy the seven thousand page Pentagon Papers that proved that U.S. policy makers where pessimistic about winning the war and how their policies were failing.

Ellsberg's motivation in leaking this information was to change Nixon's war policy and end the war, he also had sources in the administration that Nixon was planning on escalating the war to prevent his "loss," even possibly using nuclear weapons to force Hanoi into submission. Daniel stated in the book *Patriots* (P.435) "*no one in Congress was willing to do it (hold hearings and subpoena witnesses) that's when I decided to give the papers to the newspapers.*" He was hoping that Richard Nixon would overact to the leaks and let his paranoia take over, if he did not than the information would just disappear and there would be no public pressure on the Administration to answer to the papers. With the white house issuing injunctions on newspapers, this became a direct threat to the 1st Amendment in many Americans opinions and fueled the simmering anti-war movement. Ellsberg believed that the effort to stop the leaks led to the Watergate scandal and without such a scandal Richard Nixon might have been able to prolong the bombing indefinitely. The Papers led to a de-legitimization of the war and in combination with Watergate effectively ended Americas long standing role in Southeast Asia.

Regarding to the papers Daniel Ellsberg stated “*They made people understand that presidents lie all the time, not just occasionally, but all the time.*” (*Patriots* P.436)
Ellsberg’s release of the Pentagon Papers was the “ending” to the war in Vietnam, not only personally but helped solidify the conclusion of the war for the American people.

Part 1

The best example of a turning point is exhibited in Philip Jones Griffiths' short account of district eight in Saigon. Civilians had long been assumed safe in cities, but there was a turning point where they became fair game as a tool for the Viet Cong to use against the Americans and allied forces. The group of people specific to the story were not just civilians, but what Griffiths' describes as "the highest concentration of pro-American Vietnamese" (Appy p295) The significance of the Viet Cong willing to sacrifice their countrymen, pro-American as they were, marked a new chapter in the war.

For a leader described as a nationalist first, it was a bold move. Ho Chi Minh, in the PBS series, was said to put the nation first yet here he was as a mastermind using the citizens that he was supposed to unite.

Part 2

Judith Coburn recalls her time in Vietnam and Cambodia as a reporter in her account of the war. She provides a lovely ending to the war in the trip she and her interpreter took after Coburn struggled to renew her visa.

The trip to Cambodia resulted in an event that marked the end for the reporter and translator. While not physically the end of their trip, they had an encounter that had a lasting impression and kept them going for the few weeks left.

"It was bizarre but it pulled us out of some kind of psychological hole. On the way back we still stopped at every village and saw every mass grave, but in between I would think about her trying on all those sarongs and giving them to her friends. I thought about how beautiful Cambodia is and started to fantasize that none of the killing had ever happened." (Appy p412) This represents the end of the war for them in that they have the good memories that kept them going for the physical remainder of their trip.