

something that pierces through the negative. While walking through a Vietnamese village, Smith saw an old man working metal. Upon closer inspection he sees that the man is utilizing old shells from bullets; melting them down in order to craft beautiful and ornate vases. The man was literally taking part of a lethal weapon, a symbol of death and pain, and turning it into something that was capable of bringing joy and color into the world.

The last tale of overcoming scars, both physical and mental, comes from an artist out of Hanoi. Vu Hy Thieu was a Vietnamese man who chose to join the southern forces, marching along the Ho Chi Minh trail. He speaks of sandals made of old tires, of thirteen-year-old boys who had their intestines blown out onto the mud, and of hordes of mosquitoes and blood-sucking leeches. After all of these appalling experiences, however, at the very end of his testimony, Vu describes returning to his city. He went through hell and back, yet still he closes with a recollection of the sun, rising on the walls of his city. He is struck by the simple beauty, by the sight of something he once took for granted, but never will again. I am astounded by the fact that a soul can survive so much anguish, yet still retain the capacity to observe and appreciate beauty.

Reading all of the accounts contained by the Appy book, I was humbled, sickened, and moved. I feel privileged not to have experienced anything similar to the things detailed in the stories of the brave men and women in the text, yet I also am able to see how their mindset can be applied to many things in life, no matter how small. By looking for the positive, even if all seems lost or hopeless, a flame can be found. It is this flame that gives humans the ability to move through situations that seem to have no happy ending in sight.

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"strength of soul"
or "rays of optimism"

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& seemed
noted

Much better than 1st
year