

as possible. The strength of this bond and the chain of command is the most important under times of extreme stress. The fact is that if you wanted to survive, you followed orders. Jim Soular, Luu Huy Chao and Larry Heineman learned to follow orders to take part in a war that lead to the devastation of countless lives.

Jim Soular was a flight engineer on a Chinook helicopter with the 1st Cavalry Division in Vietnam. Like most Americans, Jim was proud of his country and willing to defend it with his life. Our country was in war and it was his duty to protect it. Jim was a young patriot. He was no stranger to hard work and perseverance and his story began similarly to many of his generation. He joined the airborne cavalry and loved feeling the power of the machines. Like most young men, "...I loved war. I can't deny that. I loved it. I hate it now, but at the time, as a kid, I loved it"(Appy, 157). Jim was taught, as I was, that Americans fight for what we believe in, we fight for what is right. We are taught to fight for those principles at all costs.

Jim's exhilaration for flying was tarnished with experiences of seeing those principles trounced on by his superiors. During operations in which American soldiers relocated the Vietnamese from their homes for the impending free-fire zones, Jim began to realize that the Vietnamese had very strong principles and beliefs themselves. Time and time again the refugees would return to their homes, heedless of warnings, just to be close to the bones of their ancestors. Jim saw first-hand that the Vietnamese were second-class citizens in their own country when a refugee was thrown out of his helicopter from 60 feet up and there was never any investigation or follow-up. Things began to not add up in Jim's mind. The things Jim went there to fight for were not so evident anymore. Like a good soldier though, Jim pressed on and followed orders, with the hope that things would make sense later.

Unfortunately things only got worse for Jim and his best friend was murdered by a fellow soldier. During the trial, Jim was the only one to testify and to his disbelief the man was sentenced to only five years of hard labor. The man on trial before was sentenced to fifteen for moving a helicopter. In Jim's mind it was clear that for all of the military's rhetoric about principles, the potential loss of a helicopter was worth more than his friend's life. To his disbelief, the murdered man's parents were never told the true story of what happened or even that he was murdered. He felt that everything he thought he had known was false, "...the government had absolutely no compunction about lying to her (the man's mother), just as it had lied to us constantly during the war" (161).

The experience of the many North Vietnamese Army soldiers was