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Roxanne

Wow

"Our resistance will be long and painful, but whatever the sacrifices, however long the struggle, we shall fight to the end, until Vietnam is fully independent and reunified."

HO CHI MINH, statement, Dec. 19, 1946

"If I left [the war in Vietnam] and let the Communists take over South Vietnam, then I would be seen as a coward and my nation would be seen as an appeaser, and we would both find it impossible to accomplish anything for anybody anywhere on the entire globe"

President Lyndon B. Johnson, 1964

Difficult Decisions

I recently spent some time trying to account for every decision I make during the course of a single day. Geez! Not only was that a waste of time, but it was also impossible! Thinking over the memorable decisions I've made as an adult, though, I realized that no one is immune to making difficult decisions. Minimalist case study: I remember being the last one sitting at the dinner table staring at a pile of Del Monte faded green peas. My moment of decision was: eat the green peas and enjoy some unremembered dessert, or sit at the table (the pile of peas eyeing me as viciously as I glared at it) until my mother tired of monitoring me or bedtime arrived, whichever event came first. At that time in my young life, this was a very difficult, stomach-churning decision.

Aging and experience broaden the decisions we face and the stakes become higher, and concurrently, there is more to gain or lose. Of the 350 interviews Christian Appy conducted for his book Patriots, 135 were included and the majority involved difficult decisions. After I read portions from Patriots, I noted a distinct pattern emerge from three individuals whose only shared experience was the Vietnam War. The decisions they made were difficult, the kind that haunts a person at night, raising answerless questions and leaving behind the tormenting query *what if?*

Contrary to what some people *may* believe, I've never been elected to the office of the President of the United States nor do I even know anyone who has even met a president. I know there are presidents whose names few people outside of historians remember and some presidents whose names few could forget. Lyndon Baines Johnson falls into the second category. Charles