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Part 1

The Vietnam War lasted a quarter of a century, so naturally there is bound to be more than just a single turning point during the war's span. In the Patriots book and participants in the Vietnam War from standpoints on all sides of the spectrum. In Part Four of this book there is one account in particular that really stood out to me. Not only does this certain account signify what I believe to be a turn in the Vietnam War, but also I was profoundly moved by the courageousness of the soldiers who stood up against their men for what was right.

Right from the first page, I knew that Christian G. Appy's interview with Larry Colburn was going to be the one I chose for a turning point in the Vietnam War. My Lai was an incident in Vietnam that did not completely come to light until a year and a half after it happened. On March 16, 1968 U.S infantrymen from Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, and 11th Infantry Brigade of the 23rd Americal Division murdered around five hundred Vietnamese civilians in My Lai-4, a sub hamlet of Son My. The story of Larry Colburn isn't one of a soldier who ruthlessly killed so many Vietnamese. Instead, Larry Colburn's story is one of a soldier who stood against actions that he knew to be morally corrupted. With the help of the other two crewmen from his observation chopper, Hugh Thompson and Glenn Andreotta, he made a point to land their chopper after he realized that the people on the ground that he was marking with green smoke (saying that it was okay to approach) were still being shot down by American soldiers. Upon landing their helicopter, the three soldiers moved towards a bunker that had just filled up with Vietnamese women and children. American soldiers that had intentions to kill those inside surrounded it, but the three crewmen approached Lieutenant Brooks and confronted him about getting the people out of the bunker. The Lieutenant claimed he could get the people out by throwing a hand grenade in and that was when Thompson told Colburn to shoot the American soldiers if they shot at the Vietnamese while Thompson was helping to get them out of the bunker. The Vietnamese civilians then got flown out by one of the crewmen's friend that piloted a gunship. The three crewmen never had any actual combat with their fellow soldiers, but I think the fact that they were willing to stand up against their own men and risk being killed was a very commendable act.

The reason that I believe this to be a turning in the Vietnam War does not have much to do with the entirety of the war itself. To me, this story symbolizes the turning point for not just a couple American soldiers, but perhaps a turning point for the internal struggle that many of the soldiers found themselves fighting with during the war. By the soldiers taking the initiative to stand up against what they believed to be

wrong, instead of just following the majority, they showed that the American soldiers are not just a group of order-taking zombies. They saved a number of innocent lives. The unpopularity of the war was no longer restricted to the Vietnamese and counterculture Americans, but it now had a stand with the very soldiers the Americans had sent over there to fight it. In all, who knows how far the My Lai incident could have spread if those soldiers had just went along with their comrades.

Part 2

In my personal opinion, Part Five in Christian G. Appy's book, *Patriots*, is filled with many examples of an ending of the Vietnam War. However, in Part Five there was one story that I found to be the best example of an ending of the war. On page 432, I read the story of Daniel Ellsberg. A former Defense Department official for the White House, Daniel Ellsberg's story led to the discoveries of President Nixon's illegal activities and the corruption that he practiced while in office.

Daniel Ellsberg was part of a team that was responsible for compiling the Pentagon Papers, which was a project originally put into motion by Robert McNamara during his last year as the United States Secretary of Defense. The Pentagon Papers were roughly seven thousand pages of secret documents about the history of United States decision making in Vietnam from 1945 until 1968. In August of 1969, Ellsberg began to have his first doubts about the war after attending a conference for the War Registers League. He met a Harvard graduate, name Randy Kehler, who announced that he would be going to prison for refusal to cooperate with the Draft. Ellsberg did not fully decide that he needed to take action against the war until a month later, when he read about a Special Forces team that was on trial for having killed one of their own Vietnamese agents. The men had suspected he was a Viet Cong double agent so they took him out over the South China Sea, then shot and dumped him over the side while he was weighed down with chains. It was after this that Ellsberg concluded that he needed to take action that was both nonviolent and truthful.

He realized that his best choice was to copy the Pentagon Papers that he had in his safe. These documents were evidence of a quarter century of aggression, broken treaties, deceptions, stolen elections, lies, and murder. These papers had nothing to do with President Nixon, although that wasn't what made Nixon have such an interest in Ellsberg. Nixon primarily feared that Ellsberg knew about his plans to escalate the war and that he might be able to expose and prove them. Ellsberg first took the papers to Congress, hoping they would move them to hold hearing and subpoena witnesses that could expose Nixon's strategy. However, no one in Congress was willing to take action. That is what led to Ellsberg's decision to release the papers to the press.

Had Nixon not overreacted to the publishing of the Pentagon Papers, Ellsberg believed that they would have sunk like a ship. Instead, Nixon issued injunctions against the newspapers, which ultimately led to the public paying more attention the

papers especially after Ellsberg was charged with theft, conspiracy, and violations of the Espionage Act. Every time Nixon issued an injunction to a newspaper, Ellsberg made sure to give the Pentagon Papers to another newspaper. The Nixon administration had even gone so far as to illegally wiretap Ellsberg phone and have the Plumbers break into Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office. The Nixon administration's actions led to the dismissal of the case against Ellsberg. Ellsberg believed that Nixon's effort to get him is what set the foundation for Watergate. Which of course, is the scandal that eventually led to President Nixon's resignation.

Even though Ellsberg's story isn't one that takes place at the exact ending of the war I find that it represents an example of the ending of political corruption and silence that seemed such a vital part of the Vietnam War. Although I am not so naive as to believe that political corruption has in any way disappeared entirely, I feel that this story is an example of how the political corruption that supported the Vietnam War for a quarter of a century finally made it's way to an end. An ending of political corruption may have been a vital piece of the United States leaving Vietnam, but I think it hardly compares to how important the exposure of the political corruption affected the American People. Without that exposure, who's to say that America would not be still locked in war with the Vietnamese?

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