

Elizabeth Gambee

(632 words)

< min length

Jim Soular illustrated a good example of a somewhat personal turning point in his "Free-Fire Zone" excerpt. Soular reminisces over the sheer joy that he experienced during his time in Vietnam and explains the almost surreal emotions that he dealt with while piloting his helicopter. "And I loved war. I can't deny that. I loved it...I mean I just loved flying. Every time those turbines started winding up, I just thought, *yeah!* It sounds crazy but after a few months you really became one with your helicopter (157)." Soular described an incredible adrenaline rush associated with chopper combat assaults and their intense addictive nature.

Because the Chinook helicopters that Soular piloted were ~~often~~ so large, he often assisted with the relocation of Vietnamese villagers. The relocation was often the result of the declaration of a new free-fire zone. Villagers inhabiting the area were informed that unless they left their homes within the area's borders by a particular time frame, they were going to be considered Viet Cong members and were vulnerable to any attacks against the Viet Cong. Soular explained the fear of the villagers approaching his helicopter for the purpose of relocation. Many of the villagers had never seen anything like a helicopter and it typically did not resonate well with most of them. The crew members moving the villagers had to take on a somewhat apathetic and callous attitude towards the Vietnamese that they were relocating in order to maintain order and control over the helicopter. Indeed, one man was even thrown out of the helicopter sixty plus feet in the air after he started to panic. "The guy just freaked out. I couldn't control him. I got scared he would cause a riot and crash us. So to make my point, I threw his ass out of there." I said I might have done the same thing (158)."

Soular expressed that even during the war, to some extent, he recognized that the relocation of the Vietnamese villagers truly was a real tragedy. He recalled how during his time as a pilot, he never flew refugees back into their villages, it was always out. The terror that he witnessed on the victims of relocation never left him. These missions assisted in catalyzing a turning point in his view of the Vietnam War. Soular explained the immense lack of understanding and misconception of the Vietnamese culture by the United States. "We didn't understand that their ancestors were buried there, that it was very important to their culture and religion to be with their ancestors...One of my big regrets is that we didn't know anything about the Vietnamese when we went there and we didn't know anything more when we left (158-159)."

What happened?
These stories are NOT
from Part 4 or Part 5
of the APPY text.

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PT

While Soular acknowledged the unforgettable and incredible feelings that he experienced during his time as a pilot in the Vietnam War, he makes it a point to express that these feelings were accompanied by feelings of wrong doing. In the long run, the adrenaline rushes and addictive feelings of combat were overridden by a sense of wrong and right.

Alexander M. Haig, Jr. provides an account that illustrates somewhat of an "ending" of the war. As a notable and high ranking officer in the army, Haig's account presents a rather matter-of-fact point of realization that the United States reached a dead end in its mission in Vietnam. The war seemed to have lost its purpose and the United States was struggling to establish an official reason for its presence in Vietnam. Indeed, Haig's piece held a tone of acceptance and revelation. Additionally, Alexander Haig assisted in attempting to end the Vietnam war through contributing to a series of peace talks aimed at halting its continuance. Jim Soular illustrated a good example of a somewhat personal turning point in his "Free-Fire Zone" excerpt. Soular reminisces over the sheer joy that he experienced during his time in Vietnam and explains the almost surreal emotions that he dealt with while piloting his helicopter. "And I loved war. I can't deny that. I loved it...I mean I just loved flying. Every time those turbines started winding up, I just thought, *yeah!* It sounds crazy but after a few months you really became one with your helicopter (157)." Soular described an incredible adrenaline rush associated with chopper combat assaults and their intense addictive nature.

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