

90/100

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(1968 words)

There were many instances of a "turning point" throughout the stories from the Appy book. Some had to do with a specific incident that initiated turning point, while others were more of a collaboration of events that eventually led an individual or group to change or "turn." While just about everyone from Chapter 4 and even a lot from Chapter 5 had a revelation or turning point, these are a few that stood out to me.

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11 The assassination of Bobby Kennedy in 68 was a turning point for some; he was young and optimistic and running on a campaign for peace in Vietnam. After his assassination in California, it seems that the entire outlook of the elections, at least for the Democratic Party had been shaken up. While it was pretty much a forgone conclusion that Nixon was going to have the Republican nomination and very good chance to win the elections, the Democratic Party was disjointed and very fragile even before the assassination. Johnson had announced that he would not run again, leaving it a three man race between Humphrey, McCarthy and Kennedy.

While Humphrey was struggling to separate himself from the Johnson administration, McCarthy and Kennedy were running on a campaign of peace. While some were questioning the commitment to the office by McCarthy, it seemed that there was some momentum building behind the Kennedy campaign. According to John Gilligan (pp. 311), Bobby was able to draw support from both the black community as well as the white blue-collar workers and was the only candidate that could "bring them together and inspire them." After his assassination the optimism left the democratic campaign, at least from those who were hoping for peace, or at the very least progress towards peace in Vietnam, and Kennedy being their best chance for that.

Another turning point was the excerpt from John Douglas Marshall (pp. 328-330). This was not so much for the individual, but for the relationship between his-self and his family. Coming from a pro- military family and from the shadows of his grandfather, S.L.A. Marshall, who was a war hero himself, he was expected to fight in the war. He completed ROTC and then trained as an infantry officer but was reading the works of Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Thoreau. He soon concluded that the war was wrong and decided to apply to leave the army as a conscientious objector. The application was approved and he received an honorable discharge, but that is where the turning point occurred.

His family, especially his grandfather could not understand or get over what he had done. John says at the beginning of the story that he "thought more about making my grandfather proud than my own father" (pp. 328). After he received his discharge, his father did not speak to him for over a year while his grandfather had written him a letter pretty much dis-owning him as a grandson. He went from embracing John instead of saluting while giving the commissioning speech for the ROTC graduates, to telling John that he doesn't belong, that he "will not be welcome" and that he is "constrained not to use our family name in any connection" (pp. 329). The fact that John did not agree with or could not support the war was enough for his grandfather to never speak to him again, except for the letter, showing just how divisive the war was. John observes that "the war was divisive to the country, but it was also incredibly divisive in families" (pp. 329).

The last example of a turning point I would like to bring up was the story from Vincent Okamoto (pp. 357-362). A Japanese American who had two brothers serve in World War II in the 442nd Regimental combat team, and all six of his brothers served in the military, he felt that military service was an "inevitable rite of passage"(pp.357).

In the beginning, being a volunteer for Vietnam, Vincent did not seem to object to the war or his duties, saying that "it's inevitable" and "you just accept it and go on with your life", that he was doing the "right thing" (pp.357-358). He does mention that after being there for "six or seven weeks" and seeing some of the violence that occurred he began to question that he was doing the right thing. He still performed his duties though, receiving two purple hearts for being wounded in action. In most divisions, you were assigned to non-combat unit after two purple hearts, but because of desperation of the times, they changed it to three and sent him back out. The turning point for him occurred after he was injured a third time and receiving another purple heart. He was expecting to get a "rear job" but was told that even with his three purple hearts he did not meet the criteria to give him the change of assignment. So they sent him "back to the weeds" (pp. 360) for three months while waiting for his Distinguished Service Cross to be approved and he said that he "was a very un-happy person" (pp. 360) for that time. He no longer wanted to engage in combat and reached a point where he "couldn't function" (pp. 360), and was becoming dependent on drugs to function. It seems that he had had enough with the war at that point. Somebody who was proud to join the military and serve his country, a volunteer for Vietnam, had seen and been through enough that, while he still performed his duties, his heart was no longer behind the cause.

Part 2

There were many turning points it seems in the stories from *Patriots*; the Tet Offensive, My Lai, the assassinations of Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King, the politics of the Nixon Administration, the secret bombings of Cambodia, even the shootings at Kent State all provided the inspiration for a pivotal turning point for not only on an individual basis, but for the country as well. There was not one single event that stood out as "the turning point", but single events compounded with wavering faith and doubts about the war that previously existed may have provided the final push for some, and in those cases it seems it was more of a "breaking point" rather than a "turning point."

Steve Sherlock (pp. 425- 429) provided the first example of an "ending" to the Vietnam War. A decorated veteran of the war, he was part of a group of veterans who had come to oppose the war and join in the anti-war movement. He participated in an anti-war demonstration in 1971 in Washington D.C. by the VVAW (Vietnam Veterans Against the War). During this demonstration many veterans lined up on the Capitol steps and threw away their medals in protest. Sherlock says the purpose of turning in the medals was a "strong symbolic statement that they couldn't buy our silence with decorations" (pp. 427), and that decorated veterans who were in Vietnam opposed the war and that "it wasn't unpatriotic to be fighting against a wrong and harmful policy" (pp.428).

Sherlock says that to him the medals were just a "symbol" of a war that was "wrong at a political and moral level" and that they were "meaningless" (pp.429). He says for some of the other veterans they were "badges of dishonor" (pp. 429). By throwing away their medals, I believe it provided to varying degrees, closure for some of the veterans who were opposed to the war. Sherlock said he had "mixed feelings" about throwing his medal away, but for others it might have been a huge relief. Whether or not it provided complete closure or a complete "ending" to the war for the veterans involved in the protest, it might have at least helped them close a chapter in a portion of their life and maybe allowed them to move on.

Another example of an "ending" of sorts was that of Daniel Ellsberg (pp. 432-436). In 1967 Ellsberg, working for the Department of Defense, was part of a team that compiled the Pentagon Papers. The Pentagon Papers were several thousand pages and contained the history of the United States decision making in Vietnam from 1945-1968. After reading the entire study he felt that it "stripped away all legitimate rationales for what we were doing" (pp.432). He took the Pentagon Papers to the congress and tried to get them to conduct hearings based on them, but no one was willing to do so. So he went public by giving the New York Times a copy which began to publish them in June of 1971.

Reading the Pentagon papers was an end to his faith in the war, and by releasing them, was an end to his political career. This was a man who, early in his career, rose through the ranks of top-secret military planning and Pentagon planning. He had volunteered to go to Vietnam and work with Edward Lansdale. He eventually felt, however, that the war was unjust and that something had to be done to "change Nixon's ongoing policy" (pp.434). After the release of the papers he was deemed a traitor, Kissinger described him as "the most dangerous man in America" (pp. 432). He was eventually charged with theft, conspiracy, and violations of the Espionage Act, but the case was dismissed after evidence came to light that the Nixon administration had wiretapped Ellsberg illegally and that the Plumbers had broken into his psychiatrist's office to try and find dirt on him. He has never worked or been offered a job with a think tank or in the government since releasing the top-secret documents.

of course The Paris Peace Accords of 1973 was in a way, the beginning of the end of to the Vietnam War. While the war between North and South Vietnam continued on and the true "end" according to most historians was marked by the fall of Saigon in 1975, the settlement reached in 1973 marked the departure of U.S. ground troops in Vietnam and the release of its prisoners. In a sense, it marked the end of American involvement in Vietnam. Although we continued to have aides in Vietnam until 1975, we stopped the bombing of Vietnam, reduced our spending from \$3.2 Billion to \$700 million (pp.494), and in August of 1973, congress even passed the War Powers Act, limiting the time a president could deploy U.S. troops abroad without congressional approval.

While "turning points" were clear and evident among some of the stories, it was far more difficult finding an "ending" to the war. There are many events that could point to an "ending" of sorts; the Watergate scandal, the Paris Peace Accords, the fall of Saigon all could be labeled as an "end" in a way, but it would be difficult to move on from the war not only as an individual but as a nation as well. I do not think it would ever end. It is something that a person would always carry with them. Was there ever an ending for the prisoners of war, or for the millions of South Vietnamese who were placed into the "detoxification" camps after the fall of Saigon? Or for instance Frank Snepp (pp.496-504) who still has to have any of his writings cleared by the CIA. Even this class being taught at a community college over forty years after the "end" of the war says that while the fighting and combat has been over, the war, or at least the memories and scars of the war has not ended.

Nathaniel, I would normally penalize a student HEAVILY for not following directions. I wanted 1 story for part one & 1 story as an ending. You did 6, I wanted depth of analysis, rather than breadth. You would have had to analyze BETTER if you only had ONE single story. Regardless, since we'll write I decided to only "look at" one story each.