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English IV

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### A Lost Voice

Steve lost his voice in Vietnam, and fear enveloped him. He was in the 1st infantry platoon- second battalion, also known as The Big Red One- Black Scarves. The battalion received its name during a heavy firefight when they were able to capture a large amount of black cloth; the vietcong had used black cloth to make their uniforms. The battalion leader told them to tie the cloth around their necks to distinguish them from the other battalions. This scarf represented a sort of victory; it was a badge of honor.

Later in the war the battalion was ordered to search a village. They ordered families out of their home and lined them up on the streets. They searched the huts up and down to find anything that would help them defeat the VC. Steve was the first one to enter his hut; his focus was ahead of him, he thought about what might be in the next room. Suddenly the floor came out from under him; it was peaceful, like floating. He remembers a sharp pain in his leg and the feeling of someone pulling on his arms. He woke up in a hospital that seemed to have been quickly set up, and ready to take down at any time. He stayed there for a few months before being released back into the fight. Each time he was hurt they treated him in the hospital and sent him back to a war that couldn't be won. It was the band aid approach, only healing the surface wound. The pain never left.

The VC had learned how to fight against the Americans while getting in less firefights. They used traps to injure American soldiers, knowing that it would take 2-3 more soldiers to carry that one; this tactic lessened to number of soldiers available. They used our

weaknesses, they knew we wouldn't leave anyone behind. This also instilled fear in the Americans and caused their focus to shift from spotting the VC to being absolutely silent and looking for the traps. It was like the tortoise and the hare, we were fast and powerful, they were weak but tactical. I remember him telling me that the war was unfair, we weren't used to fighting that way.

Steve doesn't talk about the war anymore. He believes he's guilty because he survived. PTSD affects everyone differently but "Black Scarves" represents what it is. He doesn't wear black anymore, it reminds him of everything he lost and the pain that he keeps inside.