

“ME, AMERICAN”

A Dramatic Reading

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Sergeant James Wilson stood proudly tall in his Marine dress uniform, saluted his Commander-in-Chief and said:

“Mr. President, I accept this medal for my buddies, for a little Vietnamese boy named Kim Ho whose favorite expression was “Me, American,” and for his grandfather, Chi Ho, whose one desire was to see freedom in the world.

“You see, Mr. President, it happened this way:”

It was a dank, sticky afternoon towards sunset and we had been holed in and fighting fiercely for two days. A welcome pause had lasted for two hours but we had no way of knowing if the Viet Cong had gone or if they lingered in trees and hills to snipe at us.

We were holed in, in a Camp that had been overrun by the Viet Cong and which we had recaptured. It was near a native village not far from Saigon. We were tired, wet and hungry.

Suddenly the silence was broken by someone singing off in the distance--singing “The Star Spangled Banner” in a high treble voice.

“It’s Hanoi Hattie again,” whispered Bill Smith disgustedly.

“That isn’t a woman’s voice.” I said, “That’s a kid. Sit tight everyone, in this war they booby trap babies.”

The singing was coming closer. We watched. Off to one side in a break in the jungle we saw a small boy of perhaps seven--ragged, dirty and thin. He clutched something in his hand--it was a small American flag. No one moved. Then he shouted, “Me, American!”

Alert and ready we watched him. He paused. “Me help. Me not booby trap--they gone.”

We were puzzled. Here was a Vietnamese kid speaking pretty good English. We could see that he carried nothing except the flag. He was so scantily dressed he couldn’t possibly have concealed a bomb. I reached out and drew him back into the brush.

“Want to get yourself killed?” I asked gruffly.

“No--yes--if for American.” The kid’s answer was abrupt--he repeated it “No--yes--if for American.” This kid knew all about death, he had lived with it all his life.

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