

MY LAI AMERICAN LEGACY LIBRARY LEARNING CENTER

“WE CANNOT CHANGE THE PAST, WE CAN CHANGE THE FUTURE” ---Vietnamese Ideal

On March 16, 1968 at the Village of My Lai, Quang Ngai Province, Vietnam a unit of the 11th Brigade of the Americal Division killed 504 people, women, children, and elderly in what has gone down in history as THE MY LAI MASSACRE---often described as the worst atrocity in the History of the American military.



Hugh Thompson stopped a massacre with words, in tears and rage he rescued innocents, at the end left to the young a wonderful and imposing legacy.

Hugh Thompson will forever be known for an extraordinary act of conscience and courage: putting a stop to the My Lai Massacre, in which 504 unarmed South Vietnamese villagers were terrorized and killed by U.S. soldiers on March 16, 1968.



That morning, Warrant Officer Thompson, 24, was piloting his fragile OH-23 aeroscout helicopter over My Lai with his crew chief, Glenn Andreotta, 20, and his gunner, Larry Colburn, 18. When the three realized that they were witnessing a massacre, Thompson landed his ship between fleeing Vietnamese survivors and pursuing American soldiers. There, Thompson told his crew that if the American soldiers tried to harm the cowering villagers, then they should open fire upon the Americans.

Now, over 40 years later, the cycle of vengeance in the wake of war is being broken, thanks to Vietnamese leadership and sponsors from the Library of Vietnam Project. It is “A NEW DAWN” as Vietnam and America join hands in peace in the 21st Century.

Glenn Andreotta was killed in action April 8, 1968, just 3 weeks after wading through bodies in the ditch at My Lai to save the life of a child. Hugh Thompson passed away January 6, 2006. Larry Colburn has started a Foundation in Hugh Thompson’s memory. It’s mission? Keep alive the inspiration of a life well-lived from a moment when common men engaged in uncommon acts for courage.



Hugh Thompson and Larry Colburn with children of My Lai.

There is a Memorial Museum at the site of My Lai. It is fitting there should be a monument recalling this tragedy---remembering the past.



But in the finest Vietnamese tradition of remembering a past we *cannot change*, we have set about building a future that we *can change*. And so the My Lai Library/Learning Center is a monument to the future of the hopes and dreams of the children and people of My Lai dedicated in memory of all who lost their lives that fateful day in 1968, to the three Americans who exemplified the better angels of our nature---and to a future of peace and friendship between the Vietnamese and American peoples.

