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4th Grade

“My Grandma”

On November 1, 1955, 13 days before my grandma's 19th birthday, the Vietnam War broke out. My grandma's name is Theu. Her name means “as pretty as a painting or embroidery.” She was named that because her mom said she was so pretty as a baby.

She lived in Nam Định, which is in North Vietnam. North Vietnam wanted communism, but many people did not want that they knew it was terrible. Communism is when the government is in charge of your money and other things in your life and tells you what you can do and not do.

My grandma's family especially did not think communism was a good idea. My great-grandfather, my grandma's dad, had to get his family out of Nam Định and my grandma was told she could only bring one bag with her when she left. She did not know what to bring and what to leave, but she knew she could not bring everything she loved. She had a doll from France that her dad gave her when she was really little, and she knew she had to leave it behind. She tightly hugged her doll and carefully put it on her bed. She was crying when she was packing her bag full of things she needed. She remembers her dad telling her to hurry because her family had to get on a ship to South Vietnam. She knew she would probably never come back to her home again.

Even though she was sad leaving her home, she also felt a little relieved to be leaving North Vietnam because communism was bad, and they had to get away. Her family boarded a French ship, and then an American ship escorted them to South Vietnam. It took about three days to get there. On the ship, it was really crowded, and people were crying, and some people did not know where they were going. My grandma remembers it smelled bad, and they didn't have enough food or water.

When my grandma's family arrived in South Vietnam, they found a new home to live in. She later got married and had six kids. She was happy with her six kids and her husband and life seemed good. Since North Vietnam wanted to take over South Vietnam too, they launched a surprise attack called the Tet Offensive in the towns close by where my grandma lived. My grandma's husband had to go to war to fight North Vietnam. My grandma had to raise six kids alone while her husband was at war. Two of her babies died and she had to bury them alone.

As North Vietnam was invading more of South Vietnam, my grandma had to protect her kids and had to help her people in any way she could. So, she rolled up lots and lots of wire she found lying around. She gave it to the soldiers for making bombs! A lot of the people in my grandma's village were getting more and more scared and there was a lot of chaos. When my grandma walked through town, sometimes she would see grenades on the ground and throw them out of the way of other people so no one would get hurt.

Soon my grandma found out that her husband died fighting in the war against North Vietnam. She was very upset. Two years later, she met my grandpa. He was in the American Army. He brought her and her kids back to America to marry her and start a new life together. When my grandma was going to America, she felt very lucky because she finally had freedom! My grandma and grandpa then had my dad.

When my grandma tells me her stories, I feel sad for her because she had to leave her first home, her babies that died, her second home, her first husband and her doll, and because she could have died. Even though I am only 10 years old, I never had to go through anything like what she had to do, and I hope I never will. She is wonderful and I am so very thankful for her! I feel blessed and happy that she is my grandma, and she helped in the Vietnam War!