

TONY

First Draft Story Outline By
John Wilkey

Based on *On The Frontlines of the Television War* by Yasatsune "Tony" Hirashiki

Meet Tony Hirashiki, legendary news cameraman for ABC News during the Vietnam War.

May 14th, 1967
Battle of Mother's Day Hill

The command company of the 1st Battalion of the 327th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, is on a search and destroy mission in a particularly mountainous district above the Song Ve valley, just miles from the East Vietnam Sea. When they encounter a Viet Cong bunker, they are ambushed. Ultimately, eight soldiers are killed and more than 30 wounded. Twenty-six year old cameraman, Yasutsune "Tony" Hirashiki, and ABC News correspondent Ken Gale are filming the carnage and confusion when Gale screams out "Tony! Stop filming! Let's stop and help!". Tony drops the camera and begins to help. He collects canteens and brings them to soldiers. A soldier asks Gale to re-insert the needle of the serum drip bag he had hooked up. After several failed attempts, the soldier yells "Goddamit, just stick the f***ing needle in the vein!". Before the end of the opening scene, not only do we meet Tony, but we learn that the photojournalists documenting the Vietnam War faced the same dangers in combat as any soldier or medic, while armed only with a camera.

Spring. 1966.
ABC News. Saigon Bureau

Tony arrives at the sixth floor of the Caravelle Hotel, carrying a letter from Jack Bush, ABC News' executive in New York in charge of all film operations around the world. He shows the letter to Jack O'Grady, bureau chief for ABC News in Saigon, O'Grady offers him his first freelance assignment, with the 1st Cavalry in An Khe, Tony does not understand the concept of freelance due to his limited English, and the misunderstanding that his old boss's letter promised work. He fears that he may have to return to Japan a failure but figures out he can live in Vietnam if saves enough and rents a tiny room for \$50 a month. This is Tony's origin.

October 13, 1966
Meeting Roger Petersen

Tony meets Roger Petersen while stationed at the United States Marine Corps combat base in Con Thien. Tony had been working alone or as back-up but now found himself assigned to Peterson, his first correspondent. Roger was one of the best reporters at ABC and a major influence in Tony's life. He was twice Tony's size, at 6'4 and 250 pounds, and grew up on a farm in Minnesota. Their team was completed by sound man Frank Eddy, Tony's de facto "English teacher." By mimicking Eddy, Tony becomes quite fluent in American and Australian obscenities.

It's Roger that comes up with the nickname 'Tony.' Tony tries to explain that there are no nicknames but Roger insists that there is no way he is going to wrestle with the name "Yasutsune Hirashiki" in the middle of a firefight. From that point on, "Tony" would be his "battle name".

Roger's knapsack was well-appointed to say the least. Its contents included everything from a folded rubber mattress to a bottle of Jack Daniels, which he kept in one flask, next to another filled with water. One day, while following a Marine unit on a routine mission, Tony and Frank were following the rhythmical banging sound of Roger's canteens down a long footpath when gunfire erupted in front of them. Without hesitation, Roger charged toward the sound with a microphone, recording as he ran. Tony had barely started filming, when Roger re-emerged with his right hand covered in blood, leaning on a Marine. Tony screamed and rushed toward his partner, dropping his Auricon, a super-heavy 16mm sound-on-film camera. Roger, despite being

wounded, still managed to capture audio all the way up until the sound of the bullet hitting his right hand and arm. After he regains composure, Tony realizes he has footage of the fire fight, but no images of Roger to go with the audio. So, he puts his camera back on his shoulder and asks Roger if he's up for doing a "stand-upper", a term that refers to when a field reporter stands up to report the news. Despite the morphine and loss of blood, Roger ad-libs until he nearly passes out.

Tinh Hoi Pagoda Tony's Big Break

Tinh Hoi Pagoda is surrounded by armored troops. Rebel soldiers, young monks, and nuns are holed up inside. Tony takes the initiative. He uses charades and whatever words he knows to ask a 10 year old kid to lead him into the pagoda. Once behind, he gets behind sandbags and can see all the other news men gathered with the troops outside. A young monk tells Tony he wishes to hold a press conference. Tony makes his way back to his fellow journalists. Roger cannot believe Tony has footage from *inside* the pagoda. Tony leads reporters from Associated Press and United Press International, still photographers, Roger and an ABC sound crew into the pagoda. He makes sure they have white handkerchiefs, towels, and shirts. Because of Tony, Buddhists get to give their side of the story. Tony gets something called a Herogram, or Attaboy, which are telexes from ABC headquarters in New York City, letting their journalists know they did a good job. One of many to come, this one is awarded to Tony because ABC had exclusive news coverage of the press conference. This leads to Tony being hired full time and told to take a vacation. Tony misunderstands and thinks he is being sent packing. Instead, he realizes that his dreams of becoming a professional photojournalist just came true.

U.S. Military Press Office Saigon

Journalists would gather here to watch news programs that were broadcast the previous week. It always seemed as if 'bang bang' pieces, combat footage full of explosions, received the most praise. However, Tony had worked on a story with correspondent Bill Brannigan about a young soldier named PFC Ronnie Compton, freshly arrived in Vietnam. They followed him into combat and, as a result, Tony filmed footage of new recruits jumping from their helicopter into a hot LZ and landing on one another. Tony does not anticipate the piece getting much response. His suspicions seem proven correct when it is met with utter silence. A mere moment later, the room erupts in applause and shouts of praise. We see Tony receive a standing ovation for his insightful work and unique point of view. Somehow, he manages to find light in the dark.

Terry and Ted

We now meet two important men in Tony's life, both with first names that start with the letter T. One is legendary American broadcast journalist Ted Koppel, and the other is Terry Khoo, Tony's best friend. Ted arrived in Vietnam in 1967. On the first day he joined the Saigon bureau, he witnesses a profane exchange between Tony and the bureau secretary, Miss Hein, on the sixth floor of the Caravalle Hotel. Tony had just arrived from an assignment in the field, when he proceeded to bow deeply and say "Miss Hien, any motherfucking mail arriving for me?".

Terry Kho began covering Vietnam in 1962, four years prior to Tony's arrival. He was not much taller than Tony, but two years older. The well-liked veteran was known to be calm, self-possessed. He was of Chinese and Singaporean descent, and looked like a Chinese philosopher, with a long beard and neat mustache.

Terry was the first friend Tony made in Saigon. His house was known as 'Terry's Villa' or 'Terry's Saloon.' Everyone was welcome, no invitations necessary, Food and drink were always available. He was a mentor to many young cameramen looking for their 'big break', including Tony. The two were competitive, challenging each other to get the best footage. This competition was central to their relationship, but eventually the cause of great concern because it put them in great peril.

Before meeting Koppel, Terry tells Tony to watch out for the new guy: "He might be one of the best correspondents we have. He is very smart and quite an independent guy." Naturally, this sparked the competitive spirit in Tony. His first assignment with Ted was in April of 1967, out of a US Marine base at Da Nang. The two men, along with soundman Dick Harris, were in such a rush to head out into the field, they forgot to bring food or rations. To make matters worse, journalists are not supposed to ask soldiers for food. Needless to say, Tony refuses to give in to hunger out of pride and competition with Ted.

Tony's Trip to New York

Tony is told he has to undergo "orientation" at ABC News headquarters in New York City. So, he flies to America, meets the bosses, and gets to see the daily operation. Everyone's heard of Tony. We meet Jack Bush, the man who wrote the letter that led to Tony's career. Tony even gets to see the Mets win the world series.

May 18th, 1970 Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Tony finds the atmosphere in Cambodia to be quite strange. Time moves slower. Troops are more relaxed, generally less disciplined, and comically disorganized.. Tony and correspondent Howard Tuckner were covering the Cambodian army advancing down Highway Three, as they cleared rebels from the local towns and villages. Tuckner was famous for his unique brand of stand-up, known as "Tuckner's Crouch". A great cameraman by the name of In Jip Choi told Tony that Howard was so tall that the only way to frame him properly, with the action behind him, was to have him crouch. The assignment turned bizarre due to the fact that Prince Sihanouk, the Prime Minister, had never sent the army out to fight. The operation did not even start until noon because the Cambodian officer in charge had organized a cockfight, and no one was going anywhere until their rooster was deemed victorious.

Tony may have found Cambodia to be different from Vietnam but it was no less dangerous. One incident in particular would demonstrate precisely why his best friend Terry Khoo was a hero, not just to Tony, but to anyone who worked with him. Steve Bell reported live on the death of Robert Kennedy and covered the death of Martin Luther King. He was as charming as he was experienced, with a smile so broad it was referred to by locals as the 'Buddha Smile.' Along with Terry, and soundman Takayuki Senzaki, Bell headed to a local village from Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia. They were traveling in a big dark blue Mercedes Benz limousine. Their driver, Tan, was a local who knew which routes were safe and which weren't. If he wasn't comfortable about a destination, journalists typically heeded his warnings. On this day, Tan was worried but the ABC crew went anyway.

The big blue limousine stopped at a local village checkpoint. The guard gave them the green light, indicating it was safe to move on, but it soon proved otherwise. Tan was moving fast but Terry's keen eye was still able to spot trouble in the form of insurgents wearing what were

known as “Ho Chi Minh” sandals. That sort of footwear was cut from the tires of downed American planes and a trademark of rebels, along with the AK-47s they carried in place of American M16s. Before Terry or Tan could do anything about it, they hit a roadblock made of dirt, stones, sand, and tree branches laid across the road. Forced to head in the opposite direction, the crew were met by soldiers with their guns aimed directly at them. Tan slowed down, opened all the windows, and waved to indicate he was slowing to a stop. Terry is the first out of the car. He heads straight for the only soldier with a pistol on his waist, clearly the leader. Terry’s cool, calm demeanor takes him by surprise. By acting as if nothing was out of the ordinary and treating the officer as an equal, Terry figured he had a chance of getting himself and his colleagues out alive. He was succeeding, even managing to convince the Cambodians that Bell was a journalist there to hear their story, when Bell pulled out a tape recorder, promptly convincing the soldiers that he was calling in an airstrike. Bell diffused the situation by flashing that “Buddha Smile” then recording his voice and playing it back. Terry continued to ignore his own dread and chat with the leader until he was asked whether or not Bell was an American. Terry thought fast and explained that they were an international team and when the guerilla leader asked if Bell could remain behind to answer questions, Terry, flying by the seat of his pants, responded that Bell had to broadcast live in order to convince the world of their plight, and offered himself as a hostage instead. For some reason, the leader declined and let them go.

Upon returning to Phnom Penh, Terry shared the experience with Tony. He told his friend that “shaking hands with the enemy” was the most important part of a negotiation. Once you put a face to an enemy, they become a real person, and there is less of a chance that they would kill you. Tony, as usual, was enamored with the wisdom of his mentor. However, his mentor had something more important to tell him. Terry could tell that his friend and protege was addicted to combat. Most rookie cameramen seek out what they call “bang-bang”, what they call combat footage, because that’s where the money is. Over time, the veterans become addicted to the danger. Will Tony learn this lesson in time?

March 30, 1972 Easter Offensive

The Easter Offensive was a full-scale armored invasion of South Vietnam, launched by the North Vietnamese Army. It began on March 30th, 1972, with a massive attack on the Demilitarized Zone with 30,000 soldiers and more than 100 tanks. The military campaign was the largest offensive in the war, designed to achieve a decisive victory via a simultaneous attack on three fronts. The bulk of the North Vietnamese Army, fourteen divisions, rolled across the DMZ and hit Quang Tri, but they also came from Laos, into the Kontum area in Central Vietnam. More troops came from bases in Cambodia to hit Loc Ninh and An Loc.

The purpose of the attack on the Kontum Province, known as the Battle of Kontum City, was to cut South Vietnam in half. The build-up to the battle began in mid-1971, with the North Vietnamese army’s defeat of South Vietnamese forces in Operation Lam Son 719. The South Vietnamese had attempted to counter a possible future offensive by the North Vietnamese. Now, instead, the North Vietnamese decided the time had come for large-scale conventional offensives, armor assaults backed by heavy artillery.

Meanwhile, President Nixon continued to insist that Vietnamization was working. The term referred to the US policy of withdrawing its troops and transferring the responsibility and direction of the war effort to the government of South Vietnam. Essentially, the administration was under fire from American families who wanted their sons back. They were being led to

believe that by having Vietnam take a bigger and bigger role in the fighting, more more soldiers would be boarding planes for home.

That spring, Tony met an accomplished documentarian by the name of Drew Pearson. Trained as a combat photographer, Pearson produced, filmed, reported, and edited his own documentaries for distribution on public television. During the 1960s, he was a stringer cameraman and radio reporter. He covered stories in Africa and Asia for networks like NBC, ABC and the BBC.

By the time he teamed up with Tony, Pearson was fluent in Vietnamese, viewed as an expert, both in the culture and the war. Some thought it was his depth of coverage and attention to detail that kept Drew's stories off the air, but Tony knew better. While other reporters followed the company line, Pearson had been saying otherwise for some time. In fact, along with Ted Koppel, he produced an hour-long documentary that called the so-called policy a "hoax." To him, the period was merely the "quiet before the storm". Sadly, the Easter Offensive vindicated him and it wasn't long before ABC News led the other networks in coverage of the devastating events.

June 1972 The Return of Roger Petersen

Tony returns to Quang Tri City, with his old friend Roger, to follow South Vietnamese marines. The South Vietnamese army, otherwise known as the ARVN Army, was determined to take the city and the entire Quang Tri province back from the North Vietnamese. They ended up outnumbered by the North Vietnamese and were wiped out. The report, "ARVN Marine Assault" was one of the great news pieces of the war but Roger did not have praise for Tony. He felt that this would only encourage him to take more chances and put himself in more danger. This is the second time that Tony is warned about his eagerness to take risks and charge into battle.

June 1972 Battle of An Loc

An Loc was the key strongpoint of defense in the reversal of the Easter Offensive. It was so dangerous to shoot there that the assignment desk managers knew they could not force staffers to go, but were willing to pay freelancers low wages to risk their lives. Terry Khoo went into An Loc with Howard Tuckner to prove that a freelancer's life was as valuable as a staffer's life.

An Loc had been shelled constantly for almost two months. There were piles of dead bodies because no one could safely retrieve them nor could anyone return them to their families or bury them properly. Terry and Howard shoot an ABC News exclusive but when they attempt to leave, the helicopter is swarmed by wounded soldiers who have been waiting for a medevac. The two men gave up their seats and nearly twenty injured soldiers lifted off in their place. After Cambodia, this is the second act of heroism by Tony's best friend.

July 1972 Death of Terry Khoo

Terry and Tony meet for dinner in Saigon. Among other things, they discuss Terry's recent engagement to the love of his life, an ABC bureau secretary named Winnie Ng. Tony is to be the best man. Before leaving, Terry tells Tony he is taking a job in West Germany, as a staff

cameraman at ABC's bureau in Bonn. Tony realizes that Terry only took the job because he knew Tony would not leave Vietnam otherwise

On July 20, 1972, Terry approached correspondents Jim Bennett and Arnie Collins at the Huong Gang Hotel in Hue City. News teams gathered there before heading to Quang Tri City, where ARVN Army continued to hold off the North Vietnamese. Collins and his crew had just arrived to replace Bennett and his crew, which included Terry. As they pulled into the hotel parking lot, Terry leapt down from his perch, on a large circular dirt and rock base surrounding a tree, and greeted them by saying "I wanted to meet the new correspondent."

Collins' crew was essentially there because Terry was leaving Vietnam for West Germany. Yet, when Terry heard a rumor about a North Vietnamese tank that had been seen to the west of Highway One, between Hue and Quang Tri City, he had to see for himself. Bennett refused. They were due to fly out that afternoon. But Terry insisted. Bennett relented and so Terry headed to the reported location of the action, near the My Chanh River, along with close friend and colleague Sam Far Kaye, soundman T.H. Lee, and North Vietnamese cameraman Tra Van Nghia. By the time they arrived, the skirmish was over. However, the crew was able to see a line of South Vietnamese soldiers moving across what seemed like a smooth and empty field, and decided to head over and shoot some footage. What they did not anticipate was the high grass, trees, and rocks that not only made it rougher travel than expected, but also made it easier to hide a North Vietnamese ambush. When gunfire erupted, the crew hit the ground, but when Lee called out to see if Terry was alright, the response was "I'm OK, but Sam's been hit." Sam was shot in the stomach. Nghia took a direct hit in the head and was killed instantly. The sound of his voice drew more fire in their direction. and Lee heard Terry cry out in pain. Lee, a trained martial artist, realized his friends were pinned down and sprung into action. He barrel rolled until he hit the road and ran for cover behind the crew's jeep. When the coast was clear, he hopped in and raced back to headquarters. Once there, he alerted the others, then he and Bennett jumped back in the jeep and raced back to the scene, only to find that Terry and Sam were still trapped. The two men were held at bay by AK fire from the North Vietnamese. The South Vietnamese even attempted a rescue attempt after being contacted by ABC News. No one could reach their crewmembers. The North Vietnamese had too good of a vantage point. Every time South Vietnamese soldiers and medics tried to reach them, they were driven back under heavy fire.

The next day, Tony chartered a flight to Hue, to join the rescue operation. Despite the apparent failure of trained soldiers, he still considered charging into the field with a white flag and begging the soldiers to spare Terry's life. Fortunately, a friend was looking out for him, and kept him from certain death. Tony knew Terry would never leave Sam's side. It wasn't long before the South Vietnamese called in an artillery strike and demolished the entire area. According to a report from a reconnaissance plane, Terry and Sam could be seen, along with Nghia, but it was impossible to determine if they were alive or dead. After three days, the bodies were recovered and sure enough, Terry and Sam were found side by side. Tony was asked to identify their bodies. He was utterly devastated, so much so that he could barely identify them through the tears.

Survivor's Guilt

Tony always remained neutral in terms of the war, in part because of being a journalist, but mostly due to his good nature. Now, Tony finds himself in a dark place. He mourns the death of his friends and finds himself full of hate for the North Vietnamese soldiers responsible for their death. He hates himself for not protecting his brothers from tragedy. To make matters worse,

word reaches him that some are saying he is partly to blame for their death. The basis for the baseless claim was that Tony's competitive spirit compelled Terry to take unnecessary risks, to hurl himself into danger, and put himself in harm's way. Anyone who knew either men knew this to be untrue, but Tony became consumed with survivor's guilt. Survivor's guilt only drives Tony to double down on combat time.

January 28, 1973 Ceasefire

In December of 1972, President Nixon ordered an air attack on Hanoi in North Vietnam. For 11 days straight, American forces bombed all major military targets in the region. Nixon's plan was to force Hanoi's hand through shock and awe. On December 26th, the North Vietnamese expressed a willingness to negotiate. Finally, in January, all parties involved in the war hashed out a ceasefire. The final agreement was signed in Paris on January 27th. The ceasefire would begin the next day, on January 28, 1973. That morning, Tony had his camera set up on a tripod in front of a major Saigon landmark: a Catholic church located next to the central post office. He had become convinced that the loss of his mentor led to the loss of his own abilities as a cameraman. His correspondent that day was none other than Ted Koppel, now regarded as the foremost expert on the region and the workings of diplomacy. He'd become ABC's premiere journalist, covering stories in Vietnam and Hong Kong in the years since he and Tony first met. Yet, the reunion barely had an effect on Tony's outlook.

It wasn't long before Tony and his colleagues realized that everyone took the ceasefire seriously, *except* for North Vietnam. In fact, later that afternoon, Tony reunited with Arnie Collins. The pair were heading to the city of Tay Ninh expecting to see farmers celebrating the new peace, only to encounter government troops in armored personnel carriers and tanks advancing through a densely populated area, attacking house after house. Before they knew it, they had to duck and cover in the courtyard of one of the houses. Without pause, Tony looked at his watch, noted it had only been six hours since he covered the ceasefire, and handed a microphone to Collins. Instead of a "stand-upper", the newsman delivered a "lay-downer".

Spring, 1973 Fall of Cambodia

Tony hit rock bottom in Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge, supported by the North Vietnamese, were bombarding the capital city of Phnom Penh, massacring civilians and refugees. Members of the press were battle-hardened. Most were recovering from injuries or had narrowly escaped ambush. Plenty had war stories of evading shrapnel, even as others were struck and killed all around them. These were Tony's brothers and sisters-in-arms. They were no replacement for Terry, who had been gone for almost a year, but their war stories kept him from ruminating on his loss. Still, a void remained.

Those days, Tony was staying at the Monoroom Hotel on Monivong Street in Phnom Penh. ABC News was headquartered there, on the third floor. A typical evening might include an explosion, followed by a dive into a steel tub, a routine check to see if everyone was OK, then it was off to film the story. One morning, shells were dropping outside his window. As usual, he grabbed his camera and headed out to shoot the madness. This meant dozens of wounded people, crawling and screaming. It included a wailing woman holding her dead baby. Yet, it took the death of a door man that he'd chat and smoke cigarettes with, to realize what he'd become. That evening, he reflected on watching his doorman, a fellow he'd chat and smoke with, die in his colleague's arms. He'd carried on filming pictures of the mayhem, taking close-ups of faces in agony. He

was 100% combat cameraman, a shadow of the naive young shooter that arrived in Saigon with a recommendation in hand.

March 25, 1975 Da Nang

This date marks the beginning of catharsis and the road to redemption for Tony. It was the Easter Offensive all over again, but this time there were no American war planes in the sky, or Naval battleships in the South China Sea. Thousands of refugees were fleeing on foot, headed down Highway One. Tony and Jim Bennett headed to Da Nang to check it out, along with soundman Troung Kha Tien and second cameraman Joseph Lee and his partner Tran Khiem. It was a dire situation and Tien's elderly grandfather lived in the besieged city. So, he implored Tony to ask Jim if any seats were available on the last evacuation flight, on a plane shared by all of the press agencies. The question led to a shocking confrontation. Tony was stunned to learn that Jim had also been blaming himself for Terry's death and thought Tony hated *him* for not being able to stop Terry and Sam that day. It was quite a revelation. Earlier that evening, Jim had sent him a memo ordering him not to remain in Da Nang and to get on the evacuation charter. Tony then realized that Jim, like Terry and Roger before him, was trying to save his life.

Tony's Redemption Saigon

After Da Nang, Tony and Tien had a brief assignment in the city of Quy Nhon but when they showed up to the airport around noon, their charter plane was nowhere to be seen. Apparently, all of the engineers and soldiers who worked at the control had fled early that morning, so the pilot could not get permission to land, and assumed the city had already fallen to the North Vietnamese. So, instead, Tien and their correspondent, Ken Kashiwahara, had to negotiate with the pilot of a large jet passenger plane chartered by a bank and filled with its employees. They ended up sitting in the cargo section, and finally arrived in the besieged city of Saigon. From then on, there would be no need to leave Saigon, as the North Vietnamese continued to close in.

One of Tony's sojourns in these final days was with Canadian correspondent, Jerry King. His defining characteristic, at least to Tony, was his height. The more interesting fact, however, was that Jerry had spent time in New York. While there, he met Tony's old boss, Jack Bush. Before leaving for Vietnam, Bush gave him one solid piece of advice. He said, "Follow the camera crew, listen to their advice. You'll be fine. And Tony Hirashiki is quite dependable."

On their first day together, Jerry and Tony left Saigon early in the morning and drove up Highway One, to the frontlines at Xuan Loc. An elite Rangers battalion was preparing to cross over. Tony got right to work, getting close-ups of the soldiers' faces, their boots and weapons, then wide shots of them marching on both sides of the road. Jerry was eager to find the perfect spot to shoot a stand-up with the Rangers in the background. He found a small hill, but that was his first mistake. With the added height, there was no Tony would be able to get the shot. His second mistake was potentially fatal. The position made him the perfect target for a sniper. Tony knew this so he simply refused and chose a different location. Jerry could have argued but instead, he recalled the advice given to him by Jack Bush back in New York. He simply followed his cameraman to the new location and ended up shooting a series of great stand-ups with the same background. Only minutes after finishing, they all had to take cover as several shells landed nearby. Jerry lifted his head, face covered in dirt and mud, only to see the hill he had originally chosen blown to bits. All he could do is turn to Tony in disbelief and sheer relief, to

say: "Tony, how did you know the rockets were going to hit that spot? Somehow you knew it before the rocket landed there-that's why you changed the location. How?"

Of course, Tony had no special powers, just experience. Jerry continued, saying "Jack Bush was right! He said to just follow you, and you saved my life!". Just then, several things occurred to Tony. Here, he thought he had lost himself, that his skills as a cameraman had somehow diminished or vanished, ever since his best friend died. Yet, halfway across the world, someone he hadn't seen in years, thought to tell a young man being sent to cover the war for the first time, to trust one man: Tony Hirashiki. Tony also realized that he may have lost his mentor, but had become one himself. Terry would be proud. Now, if only Tony would heed his friend's wishes, and put his war to rest.

April 29th, 1975 Fall of Saigon

The South Vietnamese capital of Saigon finally fell to the North Vietnamese on April 30th, 1975, but the U.S. military had already begun evacuating thousands of Americans and South Vietnamese. For Tony, survivor's guilt returned, but this time, it was not from outliving his best friend. This time, he felt as if he was abandoning people he had come to know, and a country he had grown to love. He felt guilty because he could escape, while others could not. Regardless of what he was thinking or feeling at that moment, Tony still did his job. He filmed American soldiers checking fellow evacuees' IDs and passes before being allowed on the bus. He filmed as more and more people rushed the bus, outnumbering the soldiers, and causing chaos. Even as the bus finally pulled away, Tony aimed his camera at the crowds chasing the bus, both on foot and on motorbikes.

At the airport, Tony trained his lens on the arriving "Jolly Green Giants", the large CH-3 helicopters used for transport or search and rescue missions, as they landed and took off with everyone and anyone trying to flee the country. Even as other TV crews and journalists hopped on smaller helicopters, known as "Sea Knight" helicopters, Tony rolled the camera. At that point, he was the only cameraman still filming at the evacuation point, and thus, ABC had the complete story. Even when it was his turn to board a helicopter, Tony tried to hold out and wait for his correspondent, Ken Kashiwara, but was told by a Marine commander that it was the last flight out. Only when safely on board, with a burning airport below him, and the South China Sea ahead of him, did Tony drop his camera and let go of all the emotion he'd been carrying inside. He cried, not just because he'd seen and lost so much, but because he was simply unable to reflect, or let his guard down. It was simply not something a combat cameraman did.