

# The Last Days Of Saigon

**Special Report: The Communist Takeover Of South Vietnam's Capital Was A Low Moment In The American Century. Twenty-Five Years Later, The Collapse Still Haunts The Men—Politicians, Soldiers And Spies—Who Were Caught Up In The Maelstrom Of The Escape From The U.S. Embassy. The Human Story Of The War's Bitter End**

Evan Thomas

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Frank Snepp was overwhelmed. Like his fellow spooks in Saigon, Snepp, a CIA analyst in the American Embassy, was desperately looking for ways to get his friends and informants out of the country before the South Vietnamese regime collapsed and the communist reprisals began. The North Vietnamese Army was closing in, and the embassy was in turmoil. That afternoon in late April 1975, Snepp got a call from a former girlfriend, a Vietnamese "tea girl" named Mai Ly who claimed to have borne Snepp's son. Could Snepp help the woman and child flee? Busy writing a report for the ambassador, Snepp told Mai Ly to call back in an hour. When she did, the CIA man was away from his desk. He never heard from her again. Less than 24 hours later, dressed in a flak jacket and armed with an M-16, Snepp was helping pull refugees over the embassy wall as the first helicopters lumbered in to begin the final evacuation. One of the frightened South Vietnamese seeking sanctuary was a Saigon policeman whom Snepp knew casually. He told Snepp that he had found Mai Ly and her toddler lying dead in a pool of blood, apparently by her own hand. Snepp recoiled, disbelieving. It would take years for him to accept his own responsibility.

The bitter memories linger on. President Gerald R. Ford remembers sitting alone in the Oval Office, watching the TV film of the helicopters pulling off the embassy roof. "It was one of the saddest days in my life," he recalled in a recent interview with NEWSWEEK. "To see the United States literally kicked out, beaten by the North Vietnamese. It was a tragedy in my own mind." Ford insisted that he was "proud" that some 50,000 South Vietnamese and 6,000 Americans were rescued, at the cost of only four U.S. soldiers. But the uncomfortable fact remains that tens of thousands of South Vietnamese, allies of the United States for many years, were left behind to be shot, imprisoned or sent to "re-education" camps.

The fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975, 25 years ago this Sunday, was a low moment in the American Century, a painful reminder of the limits of power. "It was frantic, a mess," remembered Brent Scowcroft, the president's deputy national-security adviser who manned the White House command post through the final night. To many Americans, the fall of Saigon seems about as remote as Appomattox, but to the men who were there, caught in a swirl of moral ambiguity, high drama and dark absurdity, the memories are haunting. The last day was a fitting end to a war that remains irreconcilable--at once a noble cause and a tragic waste that cost 58,000 American lives during more than a decade of fighting and more than 3 million Vietnamese over the course of 35 years of civil war.

Historians are still debating every aspect of the war, from the decision to intervene under Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson to the secret escalations of President Richard M. Nixon and Henry Kissinger, his foreign-policy chief. The major players in the endgame--President Ford and his cabinet, the diplomats, soldiers and spies in Saigon--are still vigorously blaming each other for the blunders of the final days. Classified documents released this month by the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library show well-intentioned policymakers in Washington trying to sort out conflicting signals while putting the best face on defeat. But the real story was played out in Saigon, in the nightmarish last days at the U.S. Embassy. It can be told through the still-vivid recollections of three men sucked into the vortex: Snepp, the CIA analyst tortured by guilt over the friends he left behind; Pham Xuan An, a correspondent for Time magazine and spy for the North Vietnamese who was torn by divided loyalties, and Marine Lt. Darrell Browning, a helicopter pilot flying into combat for the first time, more fearful of getting killed by America's allies than by its enemies.

## CALL BACK IN AN HOUR

After five years of being stationed in Vietnam, Snepp, a handsome, well-educated North Carolinian with a flair for the dramatic, had lost his illusions. Once he had worshiped the U.S. ambassador, Graham Martin. A proconsul of the old school, Martin was a brilliant, paranoid, chain-smoking insomniac who had announced to his deputy, before he came to Saigon in 1973, "I'm not going to Vietnam to give it away to the communists." Young Snepp, then in his late 20s, had briefly dated Martin's daughter when the ambassador first arrived. "Janet Martin told me I reminded her of her father," Snepp recalled. "I took that as a supreme compliment." But by the spring of 1975, Martin was--in the view of Snepp and most of the junior officers in the embassy--refusing to face reality. America's long and painful involvement in Vietnam was coming to an end. The military commitment that began with a few advisers in the late 1950s to help save the Republic of South Vietnam from the communist North and swelled to 500,000 men by 1968 was winding down. As part of a 1973 ceasefire with Hanoi, the United States had withdrawn its last ground troops. Now South Vietnamese soldiers were fleeing before the North Vietnamese invaders, shedding their boots and uniforms as they ran. Congress was in no mood to spend any more American money or men on a lost cause. Still, Ambassador Martin believed that the South Vietnamese would stand and fight before the onslaught reached Saigon. It was important, the ambassador believed, for the United States not to be seen "bugging out."

Snepp and his colleagues did not openly criticize Martin's judgment. But as the North Vietnamese Army troops drew closer in April 1975, the ambassador became testy over small acts of defiance by his subordinates. Martin was annoyed, for instance, when Snepp and some junior CIA officers began secretly burning documents. The ashes, the ambassador complained, were fouling the embassy swimming pool and leaving dust on the roof of his limousine. You're sending the wrong signal, he lectured Snepp and the others. Don't be defeatist. Snepp deferred, though today he laments, "I should have grabbed him by the lapels and shouted, 'Can't you see?' "

Snepp's doubts about the endgame grew to outright fear on April 17, when he met in a CIA safe house with one of the agency's best informants. Wearing a disguise, sipping a Budweiser and smoking Salems (his favorite brand), the communist turncoat told Snepp that Hanoi planned to take Saigon by May 19--the birthday of North Vietnam's great revolutionary leader, Ho Chi Minh. There could be no compromise. The final assault would begin by May Day--May 1.

Ambassador Martin was dismissive when Snepp related his source's warning. "I've got better intelligence," he told the CIA analyst. Martin had been discreetly talking to the French, who were hopeful of negotiating a coalition government that would include communists, as well as defenders of the old order. But back in Washington, the Ford administration was at last beginning to hear the disaster warnings. The Saigon embassy was instructed to reduce the American presence in Saigon to 1,250--the number that could be lifted out by helicopter in a day. In flights that left Saigon's Tan Son Nhut Airport around the clock, transport planes were ferrying out thousands of refugees--the first of about 200,000 "at risk" South Vietnamese, government officials, wives, servants, bar girls with their mixed-race children--anyone who could get the proper papers, legally or not.

The evacuation did not go smoothly. The Pentagon wanted to pull out Americans as fast as possible. But worried about America's credibility with its allies abroad, Secretary of State Kissinger, backed by President Ford, wanted a gradual and orderly withdrawal that saved Vietnamese as well as American lives. The Pentagon began shuttling transports in and out of Saigon, but the diplomats in the embassy did not immediately fill them with either Americans or top Vietnamese officials, for fear of causing a panic. Kissinger suspected that he was being set up by his foes in the Pentagon to take the blame if Saigon fell and many Americans were trapped and killed. In his memoirs, he wrote, "C-141 transports were leaving Saigon each day with well-documented empty seats to prove that, if there were any casualties, it would be someone else's fault--Ambassador Martin's or mine." President Ford, too, heard about the half-empty transports leaving Saigon. "It burned me up," he recalled to NEWSWEEK. In Washington, top administration officials accused Ambassador Martin of dragging his feet on an

evacuation plan; in Saigon, Martin complained about poor leadership and red tape in Washington. Many South Vietnamese were stranded, caught in a bureaucratic snarl.

One very important South Vietnamese was getting out right away. On April 21, President Nguyen Van Thieu resigned, bitterly blasting the United States for pulling out its troops: "You ran away and left us to do the job that you would not do," he railed in his farewell address. Frank Snepp was assigned to drive the ex-president, who appeared dapper in a sharkskin suit, to the airport to board a plane for Taiwan. Snepp recalled "the clink of metal on metal" as Thieu's bags were loaded into the trunk. The CIA man thought the sound came from gold bars clinking against each other. As he drove Thieu through the Saigon streets, Snepp was fearful for his own safety. Afraid his car would be ambushed by Thieu's foes, Snepp was "armed to the teeth," he recalled, with a gun under the seat. Racing through the airport gates with his car lights turned off, Snepp nearly ran down his boss, CIA Station Chief Tom Polgar, on the darkened runway. Snepp recalled the "reek of Scotch" on Thieu's breath as the ex-president reached forward from the back seat to shake his hand, and that Ambassador Martin "angrily yanked the ladder away from the plane," after Thieu had boarded. "It was as if he was trying to unplug the U.S. commitment to Thieu," Snepp said. (Polgar told NEWSWEEK that he does not believe that Thieu, who now lives modestly in London, smuggled out gold or that he had been drinking.)

By the last week of April Snepp was strung out and edgy, no longer sleeping more than a couple of hours a night. With his fellow spooks, he was helping to run a "black" airlift, using forged documents to spirit out South Vietnamese friends aboard the agency's secret airline, known by its cover name, Air America. At the same time, he was writing intelligence reports trying to convince the ambassador that the end was near. But, a quarter century later, the excuse that Snepp was too busy no longer suffices to quiet his guilty conscience over the death of Mai Ly.

The statuesque, almost six-foot-tall Mai Ly had been a hostess in a dive where prostitutes sold "Saigon tea" and their bodies to the round-eyes, Snepp would later write. Snepp's romance with Mai Ly had been on again, off again, until she disappeared in 1973. Almost two years later she showed up at Snepp's door--holding a baby she claimed was theirs. At first Snepp was not sure what to believe, though today he accepts paternity of the child, a boy. He hangs on to a photograph of Mai Ly looking regal in a skin-tight dress, while he awkwardly holds the baby like a fragile and foreign object. Shortly after that photo was taken, Mai Ly and the child vanished again, only to resurface the day before the final evacuation of Saigon. "Call back in an hour, I'll be glad to help," Snepp told her over the phone that afternoon when she called, begging for an exit visa for herself and the child. But when he got back to his desk more than an hour later, there was only a message for him from the woman. It read: "I would have expected better of you."

The next morning--April 29--at 4, Snepp was jarred awake by the concussion of distant explosions. He jumped up and put on his flak jacket. The North Vietnamese were shelling Tan Son Nhut Airport, a few miles away. The final assault had begun.

## FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

In Washington, where it was 4 o'clock in the afternoon, Brent Scowcroft interrupted a White House meeting to hand President Ford a note. Two Marines were dead and the runway at Tan Son Nhut, the last available airport, was unusable, clogged with terrified refugees. It was time to begin Operation Frequent Wind, the code name for a final helicopter airlift out of Saigon. In the besieged capital, the Radio Saigon announcer played "White Christmas," the signal for all Americans to head for their evacuation points.

The courtyard of the U.S. Embassy was a shambles. Looters, a few cooks and chauffeurs, were guzzling pinot Chardonnay from the commissary. Marines were hacking down a giant tamarind tree to make way for helicopter landings. Thousands of frightened Vietnamese were clamoring outside the embassy walls. The Marines pushed some back as they tried to vault the barbed wire, but Snepp and other embassy officials were pulling any South Vietnamese they recognized as a friend over the wall to relative safety.

One was the Saigon policeman who had discovered Mai Ly's dead body, and the body of her young boy, earlier that morning.

Reeling from the news of their deaths, Snepp retreated to the CIA's sixth-floor command center in the embassy, where confusion reigned. Looking for something to do, Snepp helped man the agency's secure radio-communications network, the "Diamond Net." Some senior agency officers were anxiously trying to figure out a way to save a group of 30 Vietnamese dependents, including a girlfriend or two, trapped outside the embassy walls. Snepp dispatched an Air America helicopter to fly to the apartment building of the CIA deputy station chief, several blocks away at 22 Gia Long Street. The chopper was to land, precariously, on the building's small rooftop and pick up the 30 stragglers, who were told to assemble there.

The photograph of that rescue has become an icon of the fall of Saigon. A stream of bodies climbs a rickety stairway to a helicopter that seems too small to carry them all. One of the tiny figures in the picture, possibly the last, is Dr. Tran Kim Tuyen. The former chief of secret police in Saigon and a longtime CIA informant, Tuyen was a dead man if he stayed in Saigon. His rescue is one of the most dramatic tales of the last day, and the personal story of his savior, the American magazine correspondent who doubled as a North Vietnamese spy, captures the larger moral murkiness of the war.

When Dr. Tuyen called the embassy that day, looking for his CIA handler to get out of the country, he was told that the CIA officer had already left. Fearful for his life, Tuyen turned to a friend who was widely regarded as the best-connected man in Saigon--Pham Xuan An. For the past decade An had been a staff correspondent for Time, while feeding scoops and tips to dozens of other journalists, including some from NEWSWEEK. Gaunt, affable, quick with a joke, An held forth most afternoons at the Givral Coffee Shop, right after the daily 5 p.m. U.S. military briefing known as The Five O'Clock Follies. One of the few Vietnamese nationals cleared to attend U.S. military briefings, An seemed to know all the gossip and intrigue. He was so well informed that he was generally assumed to be CIA.

Actually, he held the rank of colonel in the North Vietnamese Army. About once a month he would go to a safe house or slip out of Saigon to give detailed reports on American and South Vietnamese strategy to his communist handlers. An was scrupulous about not betraying his newsman's cover. He says he never fed disinformation to Time or any U.S. journalist. He liked Americans. His happiest years, he said, had been studying at a junior college in Orange County, Calif. An had joined the revolution in 1945 as an 18-year-old, but he was a nationalist, not a Marxist. His only goal was to free his country from foreigners--first the Japanese and French, then the Americans.

Fearful that his own family would be killed in an all-out North Vietnamese attack on Saigon, An had sent his wife and children out of the country. He was hoping for a coalition government to make a peaceful transition to communist rule. Indeed, he had conspired with Dr. Tuyen, who was an inveterate plotter, to look for a successor to President Thieu who might be acceptable to Hanoi. But as An sat in the Time bureau in the old Continental Palace Hotel on Saigon's last days of freedom, he felt he was losing his touch. He had received a decoded message that the North Vietnamese Army was going to seize Saigon. Fighting had broken out on the outskirts of Saigon, where the advance units of the main North Vietnamese force were routing the final remnants of the Army of South Vietnam. For An, there was no time to do anything but try to save his friends.

Interviewed by NEWSWEEK last month at his home in Saigon--now Ho Chi Minh City--An recalled how frightened Dr. Tuyen looked when he found him hiding in the hotel room of an American journalist. An drove Tuyen to the U.S. Embassy in his ancient Renault, but it was useless: the mob was too large to get through. Calling frantically around the city, An finally found another American journalist who said he could get a message to the embassy. That worked: the word came back for Tuyen to report to a CIA safe house, an apartment building at 22 Gia Long Street, where an Air America helicopter--the same one dispatched by Frank Snepp--awaited.

The steel door of the building had been locked shut when An and Tuyen roared up in the Renault. An screamed at a tough-looking and impassive guard to open the gate, sternly invoking the authority of CIA Station Chief Polgar. The guard wouldn't budge. "Call Polgar yourself!" An demanded. Nearing his breaking point, An recalled, he felt for the pistol in his pocket. Just then the guard's wife arrived carrying food. The gate opened a crack to let her in, and An grabbed the grating with his left hand and pushed Tuyen through with his right. The former chief of the Saigon secret police, saved by Hanoi's best-informed spy, scrambled up to the roof and the waiting chopper.

### TAKING FIRE

The helicopter bearing Dr. Tuyen and the other frightened South Vietnamese joined a giant swarm winging out over the South China Sea, to a U.S. Navy armada steaming 20 miles off the coast. The carrier-based warplanes in the 40-ship flotilla were there to remind North Vietnam that the American sword was sheathed, but not broken. Hanoi was not unmindful: by midmorning, the shelling at Tan Son Nhut Airport had stopped. A last window of escape had opened, it seemed. But for how long?

Scores of helicopters, flown by fleeing officers and men of the Army of South Vietnam, were streaming out to the American fleet, jockeying for a place to land on crowded decks. Aboard the USS Hancock, Marine Lt. Darrell Browning watched as Navy crewmen shoved the South Vietnamese choppers over the side to make room for more. The pilot of a CH-46 helicopter, Browning expected to be on the sidelines that day. His chopper was too small to carry many passengers and lacked the range to safely make the 90-minute round trip to Saigon. But then, at about 4 that afternoon, he learned that he would be flying into the fray after all.

The evacuation was already running behind schedule, delayed three hours by snafus. The big Chinooks, the CH-53 helicopters that carry 50 men, were too heavy to land on the roof of the embassy, which was reportedly teeming with refugees. Browning and a score of other CH-46 pilots were ordered to head for the besieged capital and join the rescue mission.

It was dusk as he reached the Vietnamese coastline. The monsoon season had begun, and thunderstorms drove him down from his assigned altitude--6,500 feet--to under 2,000 feet. In an interview with NEWSWEEK, Browning recalled that he was just doing what he had been trained to do. Still, he was anxious. He doused his running lights to make his chopper less of a target. He was concerned about North Vietnamese Soviet-made antiaircraft missiles, but more worried about the South Vietnamese. In their rage at being abandoned, America's former allies were firing on the Marines. With the air full of choppers, none of them flying their assigned altitude, Browning was also fearful of a midair collision.

Settling his chopper on the embassy roof, worrying whether he had enough fuel to make the return trip, Browning was shocked at what he saw: at least 1,000 people crowded in the courtyard below. He wondered to himself, where is this going to end? Do they expect us to get them all out? As Browning sweated through his flight suit in a steamy rainstorm, embassy Marines shoved refugees into his craft, frisking them first and handing Browning their weapons through the cockpit window. The capacity of his helicopter was 24. Browning took 36 passengers (the Vietnamese are smaller, he figured) and prayed he would get off the roof.

The shooting began on his second run in from the fleet. As his chopper approached the embassy roof, tracers arced up from the steeple of a nearby Roman Catholic Church. Browning's crew chief suddenly reeled back against the door. The visor of his helmet was splattered with gore. Browning was sure he had been hit. The blood and guts belonged to a pigeon, which had flown into the helicopter's .50-caliber machine gun.

### ABANDONING THE EMBASSY

In the CIA command post on the sixth floor of the embassy, someone had broken out the cognac. An

intelligence report that the North Vietnamese would shell the presidential palace, just a few blocks from the U.S. Embassy, at 6 p.m., had proved false. But the Diamond Net radio was crackling pitifully with the calls of embassy gardeners and cooks and chauffeurs, scattered in their homes about Saigon, begging "Save me! Tell me where to go!" Frank Snepp took the microphone and tried to reassure the CIA dependents, "Don't worry, we won't leave you." He knew he was lying. Inside the embassy, agency men were destroying documents, including hundreds of laminated identification cards that were to be used as seat tickets for top officials of the South Vietnamese government in any evacuation. It was too late now. To his horror, Snepp also realized that they had forgotten about 70 translators, native Vietnamese who lived all around the besieged city. The CIA's translators would be a prime catch for the invaders: privy to countless interrogations and debriefings, they could help the communists identify many CIA informants.

Outside, the corridors were jammed with frightened, pushing refugees making their way slowly to the roof. At about 7:30 p.m., Snepp joined the doleful procession. The rooftop was a "vision out of a nightmare," he recalled. Numbly, Snepp took in the scream of the helicopter engines, the fires burning in the distance, the tracers streaking the night sky, the helicopter crews who looked like giant insects in their oversize flight helmets, the mob still surging below. As the helicopter shuddered into the night, Snepp screamed to his seatmate, "We're taking groundfire!" The man next to him was a CIA officer who had been an airborne commander at D-Day. "Why, it's almost like Normandy," the man shouted. He seemed to be almost enjoying himself.

Still at the embassy, Ambassador Martin was angry and sick. He had pneumonia: his face was ashen, his voice a rasp. He had wanted to stay at his post, no matter what, but Secretary of State Kissinger had ordered him to evacuate. Kissinger later wrote that he was afraid that Martin would become a kind of colonialist martyr like "Chinese" Gordon, the British imperial general who stubbornly perished in the siege of Khartoum before the turn of the century. We need our heroes back in Washington; there aren't too many of them here, Kissinger cabled Martin. Now Martin was trying to shame Washington into saving as many Vietnamese as possible. Ordered to get the last Americans on their helicopters, Martin bitterly wired Brent Scowcroft at the White House, perhaps you can tell me how to make some of these Americans abandon their half-Vietnamese children, or how the president would look if he ordered this.

Martin kept revising upward his estimate of how many American and Vietnamese remained to be evacuated from the embassy. At the State Department, staffers mordantly joked that Martin had just evacuated "600 of his last 400" people at the embassy. In fact, about 1,000, mostly Vietnamese, still swarmed in and around the concrete-reinforced embassy compound at midnight. The embassy swimming pool was now not only fouled by ashes but by urine. The bottom of the pool was strewn with handguns stripped from refugees by the Marine guards. In the parking lot, the embassy's fleet of limousines had been appropriated by looters, who were driving about, smashing into one another in a mad game of bumper cars.

#### THE LAST FLIGHT OUT

Browning was exhausted, but also exhilarated. By midnight, he had made five round trips to the embassy. He was ready to go for a sixth when the order came: stand down. A helicopter had flown into the sea, and the fleet commander was worried that the pilots were reaching their breaking point. In the ready room, Browning learned that the dead pilot was a friend and former copilot, Bob Nystul. Sent to his bunk, Browning just stared at the ceiling.

He was roused shortly before 3 a.m. He and the other chopper pilots were going back into Saigon. Wired with coffee and adrenaline, Browning was just "feet dry" over the coastline in the predawn hour when he heard the code word "Tiger! Tiger! Tiger!" over the radio. It was the signal that Ambassador Martin had been rescued from the embassy roof. On orders, Browning wheeled his helicopter back to sea and headed for his ship, believing that the last Americans had been rescued.

They had not. Somehow, 11 Marines, the rear guard, had been left behind. Not until 7:50 that morning did a Marine chopper, surrounded by gunships to suppress fire from the angry South Vietnamese below,

land on the embassy roof to save them. The Marine guards lobbed tear-gas grenades down on the last 400 Vietnamese stranded below. The whirring helicopter blades sucked clouds of gas back into the chopper. Blinded and choking, the last Americans left Saigon.

Back on board the Hancock, Lieutenant Browning stood on the flight deck, exhausted yet still wide awake, staring at the Vietnamese refugees he had helped rescue. "There were about a thousand of them," he recalled. "They had lost everything, they had no idea where they were going and they were tired. But they were orderly and thankful. They came up and thanked us." Browning and his squadron mates were on deck for a somber memorial service for the two pilots lost during the night, the final casualties of the Vietnam War. There was already talk of the medals the squadron pilots would win for their service that night. Browning heard that they might all be put up for Distinguished Flying Crosses, a top medal for valor. "We were embarrassed," he recalled. "We didn't feel like we deserved it." Lieutenant Browning did win a lesser commendation, an air medal. Today Colonel Browning is the director of the Marine Corps Command and Staff College in Quantico, Va.

### RE-EDUCATION AND REGRETS

About an hour after the last helicopter pulled off the embassy roof, a Chinese-made North Vietnamese tank crashed through the gates of the presidential palace. Leaving the abandoned Time magazine bureau, An wandered the streets in a bittersweet mood, happy that the war was at last over, worried about his South Vietnamese friends. As he walked by the Continental Hotel, he barely recognized a prostitute he knew. She had shed her usual bright, floral-print miniskirt for black peasant-style pajamas. She had cut her nails and cleaned off the polish. She no longer wore lipstick. She was frightened, she said, not of getting killed by the North Vietnamese, but of being forced to marry one of their war invalids.

An himself was warily received by the victors from Hanoi. They suspected that he had become polluted by his long association with Westerners, and ordered him to be re-educated in Hanoi. This consisted mainly of listening to Marxist lectures, which An found tedious, but not particularly onerous. An was promoted to general when he retired from Hanoi's Strategic Intelligence Office in 1990. His family returned to Saigon, and his son was educated at Moscow University. Today the son is a law student at Duke--Richard Nixon's alma mater.

After a few days of R&R in Hawaii, Frank Snepp was sent by the CIA to Bangkok to debrief Vietnamese refugees, including "boat people" who were sailing out of Vietnam in anything that floated. He heard terrible stories of retribution and suffering. After leaving the agency in 1976, Snepp wrote a book about the fall of Saigon called "Decent Interval." He accused his superiors of bungling the evacuation and was declared a pariah by the CIA old boys ("Frank Snepp is a complete liar," Tom Polgar now says, though he gave Snepp top ratings during his time in service). In a famous legal case widely regarded as a setback to the First Amendment, Snepp was sued by the CIA in 1978 for breaking his oath of secrecy to the agency and was forced to give back the profits he made from the book. Snepp, now a producer for the syndicated show "Extra," went back to Saigon in 1991. As he walked past the seedy tenement where he had stayed with Mai Ly, he realized that their son, had he lived, would have been 18 years old.

*RON MOREAU IN SAIGON AND ANDREW MANDEL IN WASHINGTON*

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