

MY FATHER THE BADASS

[Condensed Version]

An inspiring real-LIFE true HERO story

MIKI NGUYEN

MY FATHER THE BADASS

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Preface

Inspiration to climb a mountain, run a marathon, attain the pinnacle in business, or simply overcome personal fears, anxiety and depression; what mysterious fountain does this vision spring from? As it is echoed in life, everyone is fighting a battle you know nothing about. It is their personal journey, so what is it that inspires boldness and tenacity in the few and leaves others stranded in the wasteland? In a few words - how bad do you want it and are you willing to work through your fears to get it? It takes courage to sail uncharted waters, to overcome complex challenges, and to ultimately live the life we choose. This is my true story of a “badass” hero, a leading lady, and a quest for greater awareness.

The story that I share in “My Father the Badass” involves fleeing war torn Vietnam with the ragged clothes on our back in the dying days of Saigon in 1975 with my family. Being unceremoniously dropped, along with my mother and siblings, from the belly of a massive Chinook chopper, perilously hovering above a fast moving US

warship sub-marine destroyer. Spiraling wildly in the downdraught, and being snapped to safety in the outstretched arms of an American petty officer, rocking and rolling with the heaving motion of the 134 meter frigate USS Kirk (DE-1087). A story of a daredevil pilot, a heroine and a swashbuckling maverick spirit. Join me on our rocky road through adversity and how, even in atrocious circumstances, find ways of overcoming challenges and obstacles. This is my true-life story.

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Acknowledgments

“Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment... the NOW. This is where true happiness resides.” – Buddha

There are three dominant heroes in my life; one is my mom, the other my dad and finally my higher consciousness – seriously! After many months of soul searching on the golden sands of Nha Trang City, Vietnam, I want to dedicate this book to my incredible mother. Like every amazing mother in the universe, she continually sacrifices life’s pleasures for herself in favor of her family. Always sharing and giving to others. Family and friends are her number one priority in life. My dad, standing at 5’6”, with a thick stock of black straight hair, and weighing in at a wringing wet 10 stones (140lbs) , was a major figure in my life and upbringing. He absolutely exemplified the ultimate real-life “badass” in the film (Last Days in Vietnam, directed and produced by Rory Kennedy). Although not being the requisite 6’6” and powerfully built

Acknowledgements

human that fictional comic book heroes are, his unassailable strength of character and spirit has no peer. No-one is comparable, however, to my mother, with her indomitable spirit and enthusiasm for life. A young woman of 27, slim of build, with long straight black lustrous hair, she was the glue that held everything together in our family during those tumultuous early days of 1975. To me she was a “Mrs. Badass” everyday! My mother symbolizes, in every possible manner, all the values that I stand for in my brand - Courage, Curiosity and Community.

It’s easy to sit back 40 years later, and be astonished by the vision of what my dad (Lieutenant Colonel, Ba Van Nguyen 1940 – 2013) did on April 29th, 1975 out in the Pacific Ocean. Perilously ditching his Chinook CH-47 into the turbulent ocean, within spitting distance of the American warship, the USS Kirk (DE-1087). It’s clear that at that moment in time, a hero is made – a father, a husband, a pilot and a humble man, accomplishing an extraordinary feat. Heroes surround us constantly, doing ordinary things routinely day after day no matter how hard, boring or difficult the task might be – cooking, washing, caring for their children, or just being there emotionally through the dark moments of our life. These are the unsung heroes. One of those is my mom!

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At the age of 27, with three small children, no English, no money, but with a heart full of love, she started her life's journey anew in America. To suggest that the breathtaking moment when she let go of her precious eight month old baby girl (my sister, now Dr. Mina Nguyen) was a defining moment in her life is an understatement. This is a mother's worse nightmare, but she faced it with character, determination, and bravery, under extreme conditions. She willed everything she had in her heart and soul to release her most precious cargo in life. How many individuals can stare into the face of danger and death, and willingly drop their baby into it? It takes one hell of a character to overcome those challenging events, a doggedness of spirit, a tenacity, pure grit and a persistence, courage and conviction to never give up. On that fateful day, my mother did not live in fear, she did what she knew best, protect her kids!

In very much the same way, my dad is my hero for going through so much in his life and not simply that one fateful day we affectionately call "The Ditch". He saved our family's life and set us up to succeed in a new country. I also acknowledge, and praise my higher-consciousness, which is another of my guiding lights in life. I'll talk more about this, the principles of metaphysics and other

Acknowledgements

Universal Laws throughout the book that main-stream culture rarely communicates, nor wishes you to know much about. However, you picked up this book because you were curious to learn more about a hero in history; rest assured I will share lots on my father. In light of his heroic and historic act, I did not want my mother to get lost in his shadow, hence giving her love, light and attention up-front. She was ultimately the fuel to his Chinook CH-47; without her, it would have been impossible for him and us to have experienced this fascinating journey in our family's life.

To all the mothers out there who on a daily basis endure untold challenges and dilemmas, and that nurture, love and selflessly devote themselves to their family and friends. The mothers that succeed with the smallest of stuff, the sweetest of things, the tapestry and red-thread that binds a family together, and are rarely recognized. I salute you and give you a warm hug. For the Vietnamese mothers, and all refugee mothers around the world today, who have taken extreme risks in searching for a better life for their family; whether it be fleeing persecution, escaping by foot, or risking harrowing journeys and pirates on unseaworthy boats to America or other parts of the world. I pay homage to you. It takes tremendous strength and

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courage to cross this difficult divide. These are the stories that I will share throughout this book. I hope to inspire you as much as my mom has inspired me.

Thank you ma for being the backbone of our family and for sacrificing so much of your life for us. Cam on ma!
(Thank you mom)

Love – Miki, Mika, Mina and all your grandkids and great-grandkids to come.

Introduction

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." – African proverb

My crazy journey through life has been a rollercoaster of constant change. The mysterious twists and turns that have made up the sum total of my existence within this Universe is something you would find only in a daytime soap opera on the flat screen. Intrigue, drama, emotion, wickedness, villains and amazingly beautiful people. Leaping terrified out of a helicopter, the size of a small aircraft carrier, at the tender age of six, into the unknown arms of a heroic sailor to save your life, and 40 years on, partying with American royalty, the Kennedy's. Oh! What a ride it has been. On the dark side, I have struggled through family and personal health issues, melodrama, tragedy and in recent years, the total disintegration of my marriage. But on the positive side, and let's face it, as Monty Python so eloquently phrases it "Always look on the bright side of life" my treasured opening line now is... "In 2015, I was involved in an Oscar-nominated film" – this line is a sure fire attention grabber. How many people have the opportunity to say

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that? So it sure does feel satisfying, every time I have the good fortune to introduce myself to someone new. Also a wonderful social conversation piece when you are making your next friend on a personal level, or establishing a new business contact. We all get to make this turbulent journey through life, so let's make it one of looking on the bright side!

The foundation of this book is about my heroic father, Lieutenant Colonel Ba Van Nguyen (1/10/40 - 6/17/13) – one Badass man, one hell of a pilot, and an incredible father. A husband of 50 years to my mother who had to struggle through a hundred times more challenging circumstances than me, and experience changes in life that are out of my realm of thought. From, as a young boy, rounding up the lazy cows in the peaceful countryside of a remote village in Vietnam, to being a Chinook helicopter pilot in the South Vietnamese air force, to heroism in the face of death, and then steering his family through a remarkable journey in the US. An amazing person, and to his death, an absolutely humble man.

Throughout the book I share REAL-LIFE stories, not made-up characters! There are heroes all around us, if only we take the time to engage, listen, and learn more about each other. Everyone knows that fictional characters like

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Superman, Batman, or the suave James Bond are made up to sell movie tickets or DVDs, and although they entertain the audience, nothing is more inspirational than a true badass hero story such as my dad's. Although! I have to admit, I do like the flashy cars and fancy electronic gadgets and of course the pretty ladies that hang out with James.

Before we go any further into the story, let's take a look at that word for a minute – CHANGE. They say the only thing for certain in life is change. What “they” don't all agree on is how best to personally navigate these life changes. In this book I hope to share with you many real life stories of people experiencing extreme changes and challenges in their life. Within each story, and wherever you are in your life, be it riding high, or down in the gutter, we hope to inspire you to take Courage in pursuing your dreams, whatever they may be. In pursuit of that dream, never stop being Curious about the world around you – read a novel, learn a new hobby, get out and socialize, touch fresh ideas, let your taste buds roam free with new culinary delights, and roll with new music. Ultimately, our Community will be stronger through healthy and inspired individuals engaging and giving each other a hand. These are my belief pillars and brand message – Courage, Curiosity, and Community.

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To a new acquaintance living in Vietnam, and one who doesn't know my life story, they may easily label me as a fortunate 'viet-kieu' (an overseas Vietnamese). One that is lucky, with ample opportunity and basically living out a typical middle class Asian American lifestyle. Yes I am all of these. But if we share life's tales and exchange background stories, I will relate to them how I spent the first six years of my life living in a country ripped apart by war. I became a refugee from Vietnam, transplanted into a new country, the United States, not knowing the language or understanding the customs and culture. I had no immediate extended family in my new land, a concept that is deeply ingrained within my home culture. The family unit is the life blood of Vietnamese culture. Respect for elders ingrained, and absolute loyalty to your parents and relatives a given. Living in the US without this support network was akin to losing a limb; and not knowing the language and having zero dollars was akin to losing your mind.

In the US, life for me as a child was not all toys and television. It was more about surviving and helping the family in whatever way I could as a skinny young boy. My first job at the tender age of 7 was at the church which sponsored our family to the Seattle area of Washington

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State. Running around collecting the rubbish and vacuuming amongst the timber pews in the church after service. Then I spent the next 40 years of my life following the pre-ordained rules of living – school, college, the slippery ladder of corporate success, marriage, and eventually a family (I was living the American dream). In 2009, my world as I knew it, decided on a road less travelled. One that eventually involved a messy separation and divorce and another involving an awe inspiring Oscar-nominated film called “Last Days in Vietnam”, written and produced by Rory Kennedy (yes that Kennedy family). As of this writing, all I can say is “Thank you Universe for one incredible ride so far!” Who knows what the future holds. Today I am blessed and appreciative of the torment and struggles I have gone through to get where I am. These are my real life stories.

In a world that most other people look back on in shock and awe, I thrived. It's impossible to relate to unless you have been there, but I am here to tell you, despite the challenges, despite the bickering, and the in-fighting, I not only survived but flourished. I want you to know that it is equally possible for yourself, no matter where you are in your life. It might not be easy, but anyone can overcome their own mental challenges and barriers. No matter how

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difficult the obstacle or struggle might be (and most are illusionary and self-made), one can not only survive, but grow in a meaningful and positive manner.

In 2009 I was given an incredible opportunity. A man named Jan Herman, US Navy Historian (retired), more on this remarkable man later in the book, was putting together a historical piece on Vietnam, mainly focusing on the USS Kirk, a Knox class destroyer in 1975. During his research, he stumbled on some old black and white photos that, when first viewed, his reaction was one of disbelief, and this gentlemen knew a thing or two about choppers! In the photos and some film footage later on, a massive olive green twin rotor Chinook helicopter, flew over a United States navy ship that was moving fast and battling rough seas, hovering long enough, for people on-board the helicopter to leap down onto the surging deck of the ship. He was astonished at the guts of the pilot. Mr Herman knew he was on to something special here.

The pilot of that Chinook, risking outright disaster, then settled that helicopter down in the choppy swell of the Pacific Ocean, and comparable to the late great magician and escapologist, Harry Houdini, escaping certain death for himself, his family, relatives and the flight crew. Mr. Jan Herman, and the US Navy Vice Admiral, Adam Robinson

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Jr. (retired) couldn't believe what they were viewing. He knew enough about those gigantic praying mantis like helicopters, to be in awe of the incredible skill and determination required to do what he was witnessing in the photos - thus began his crusade to identify the pilot of that South Vietnamese Army Chinook, now resting in a watery grave some 14km off the coast of Vietnam.

His arduous journey brought him into my world, nearly 35 years later on July 5, 2009. After many years of searching, he had at long last located that gutsy Chinook pilot. That incredibly brave soul who saved all those people from perishing in the Pacific, was my father, Ba Van Nguyen. I would not be here to tell the fascinating true tale, if he had not risen to the occasion, as we all must, at some point in our lives. Life is to be lived!

Mr. Herman and the film crew from the US Navy immediately flew from Washington DC to visit with my family here in Redmond (30 minutes on the outskirts of Seattle). By 2009, my father was in the thick of Alzheimer's, a shocking debilitating disease which affected our whole family, especially my ever devoted mother who took care of his daily needs for more than six years. The film crew plumbed the depths of our memory of that fateful time, interviewing my mom and myself for their documentary.

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My sister Mina, now a successful doctor in the US, at eight months old when the drop happened, was too young to recall the events. A year later, "The Lucky Few" a film documentary, written by Jan Herman and produced by the Navy Medicine was complete. Certainly, it is one insightful documentary of those turbulent times that I encourage you to watch or a read.

We were invited to come to the 2010 USS Kirk reunion to not only view the film but to reunite with the extraordinary USS Kirk crew from the very first day in April 29, 1975. It was such an emotional reunion to finally meet Captain Paul Jacobs and many of his crew at this reunion. What an exceptional day it was for me and my family.

Here is a little film review from Antosek, L. Edward; Boynton, Bruce R. | Journal of Research Administration in Spring of 2011.

"The film (The Lucky Few) is a brilliant exemplar of how human beings, confronted with chaos and hysteria, respond to the crisis of their fellow humans, irrespective of their national origins, social class, race, or religion."

Again, I encourage you to read the book or watch "The Lucky Few", by Jan Herman.

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In the crowd that day, was Robert Shapiro from National Public Radio (NPR) who covered the event. From that day onwards the US Navy documentary, and stories started to pick up steam. A year or so later, I was contacted by WGBH, American Film Experience series in Boston who wanted to produce a film for PBS. They hired a studio in southern California to drive this project.

Over the next year a documentary about that day was created entitled, "Last Days in Vietnam". Rory Kennedy, the youngest daughter of Robert F. Kennedy, directed and produced the film. I want to quickly mention and thank N. Lockwood and her family for their major support in marketing and promoting film as well. One thing led to the next, and I was honored with the opportunity to appear in the 2015 Oscar nominated film.

I was given the chance to share parts of my father's life, his courage, and bravery with the world through this ground breaking film. My father's heroics during the last few days of the fall of Saigon, allowed me and those who created the film to share a message of courage and hope. I was able to share how my family overcame the many obstacles of a new life in the US, and how we worked untiringly to assimilate into a country, that we had never stepped foot in before. The world had presented me with

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challenges to wrestle with, but with those, also came opportunity.

Throughout my life since that fateful day on April 29, 1975 my father's example of courage and commitment to a better life for his family, has consistently energized me. I realized as I watched people who were mesmerized by the film that for the first time, our story, my father's and ultimately mine, was something that I had a responsibility to share with the world. It is a tale as old as time. Drama, life and death precariously balanced, and a hero steps forward. That was my dad! I had not only endured but I had thrived through all this chaos, change and challenge - what an incredible gift! Throughout all life's lessons, and the many obstacles, I have managed to move forward and create something wonderful. Now I strive to help others flourish and overcome their own personal challenges as well. It is my hope and my mission to provide inspiration to all of the refugees, Vietnamese or otherwise, who take enormous risks and show tremendous courage, leaving everything behind in hopes of a better life. But greater than that, I want to share that incentive to thrive with all of my fellow human beings. Every one of us has the power and the ability, we only need to seek it out. These are the real human stories I want to share within this book.

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This is both my story and our stories, one of courage, conviction and hope. The film, "The Last Days of Vietnam" left everyone who has had the honor of viewing it feeling inspired by the true "life stories" and the universal message of resilience and bravery. I hope to continue that work here, first with this book, and then as I travel the world speaking to others about their ability to be empowered, and grow as a caring human being. We live in a world today where we have lost our way. We have lost our connection to Source Energy, Light, Universal Energy, and Prana (more on all this later). That, when utilized, helps us to connect to our true inner self, our true higher consciousness (our spirit). Once you tap into this universal energy, this is when the magic of life really happens. We live in a world that allows us excuses, leaving us to feel like constant victims. Where are the solutions? A world that provides crutches but not enough healing. A world that expects us to survive but not to grow like a beautiful flower. There are ways to change this, but it begins within us first individually stepping away from the world's mediocre expectations and into the LIGHT and LOVE of understanding, compassion and hope. It takes a lot of courage to make this first step. It takes a lot of courage to move away from fear. Throughout this book, I hope to

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offer you my own learning's through life's ups and downs, as well as others.

Before I conclude this chapter, I want to share the most current "blessing" story that happened to me on January 17, 2017 (The Law of Manifestation and Attraction applied in its truest form). An article written about me and my dad's story came out in a well-respected investment business magazine in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam – Báo Đầu Tư. I was so relieved when I finished the interview a month or so back, and was now receiving positive heart-felt sentiment from family members and friends in Vietnam and abroad. The article was published in the middle of January 2017. In the USA, I am 100% confident of my interviewing and speaking skills. I can relate a brilliant fable, but less confident to share and tell the same caliber of a story in Vietnamese. I left at the age of six so my Vietnamese language skills are not what they should be. My parents did try to school us in this language, but being a young boy in the exciting land of the US, well! I could have tried harder. Somehow, someway I pulled through and the message came across in the interview, from my heart to the Vietnamese readers (via Mr. Gia Huy, reporter). My primary concern that I had in sharing this story with the Vietnamese people, was the sensitive nature

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and conflict that occurred in Vietnam pre April 30, 1975. Today for some, it is still a pain-point. Politics and other issues aside, I want to focus this book on stories of overcoming obstacles and challenges. Again, positioned as a SELF-HELP book format. I want to focus the message and learning's on Love, Compassion, Courage, Curiosity and Community.

So, I invite you to join me on this odyssey, as I share with you what real true life hope and bravery are all about, and not some made up fictional fantasy fairy tales. In the end I want this book to be more motivational and fun to read rather than just another Vietnam era book genre. Of course it will be filled with amazing stories and edge-of-your-seat events to satisfy and entertain the guys. For the ladies, (and the more sensitive guys), we have stories of tenderness, compassion, loyalty, love and romance thrown in as well. If anything, I hope it will be a fun and easy read for you, and if I did my job right, perhaps one to inspire you to elevate as well!

Much Love!

Miki

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Chapter I – Humble beginnings and endings

"Failure keeps you humble, success keeps you glowing, but only faith and determination keeps you going" – Some clever genius

In order to know where one is headed in life, it is handy to note from where you left. Not unlike hopping in the car, and navigating to your destination. A compass of sorts, whether it be for social, business or morality, that will ensure you reach your goal without encountering the rocky road. I have heard this quoted many times over the years, but never realized how vital it was until I became embroiled in my families past. In early 2013 I was approached by a documentary crew headed up by Rory Kennedy, (yes those Kennedys) they wanted to produce a dramatic documentary about the tumultuous last days of Saigon. Having lived through these chaotic times as a young boy, and listened to the harrowing stories of that bleak period, I never credited it with the respect I should have, in terms of world history.

Ch I – Humble beginnings and endings

It was, of course, an integral chunk of my personal history, but I never really gave credence to it in terms of having been pivotal on a grand scheme. In the aftermath of this divisive conflict, nearly three million Vietnamese, and sixty thousand Americans perished in this brutal twenty year clash. Does history teach us lessons? Do we listen? Or was there something more sinister behind this war that did not need to take place?

When the Rory Kennedy's crew approached me, I was humbled by the suggestion that my family could play an important role in their documentary. I had always been immensely proud of the achievements of my mother and father and absolutely respectful of their enormous challenges during the conflict, their ability to move our family ever forward, and start life ...

[SNIP] Condensed version of My Father The Badass. More info on www.mikinguyen.com [SNIP]

It is important to explore your own beginnings, and seek out those life lessons that maybe you haven't realized yet that you have learned. Human beings tend to gloss over the truths in our lives and ignore the basic building blocks that make us who we are. Don't be afraid to explore your past, as with my experience, you never know who you are

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going to truly be until you understand who you have already been. If you would have told me 20 years ago, that by my mid 40's I would be involved in an Oscar-nominated film, I would have told you "to go take a hike!" But that's how life works sometimes. We go through crazy journeys happy and joyous, other times in tears and bitterness, but through it all, the Universe knows what's best for us. Sometimes, showering us with abundance, while at other times, learning moments to make us stronger and better. We are after all, simply souls and spirits having a human experience.

Chapter 2 — When things go wrong (“The Fall”)

"Choices, Chances, Changes. You must make a choice to take a chance or your life will never change." –Another wise person

I cannot continue with my story without creating a framework with respect to the “Fall of Saigon”, if only briefly, as there are countless books, articles, and video on the history, politics and tactics of this conflict. It is after all, the doorway I was hurled through at age six, that brought me along this rollercoaster journey we are talking about now. At this innocent age, I was oblivious to most of the hard core facts regarding that pivotal event in my own, and the world’s history. It is, and will always be, that one defining moment in the lives of myself and my family. Therefore, it is important that we include it now.

The Fall of Saigon has been the source of immense controversy over the years, and for many, still a pain-point. The war in Vietnam itself was, for many years, not referred

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to as a “war” but instead classified as a “conflict”. A review of history shows us that this was politically motivated on the part of the United States, who ended up becoming involved in a hugely unpopular war. As I dug further into this conflict, I found many intriguing facts revealed. A few friends that I respect in Seattle suggested I do a Google search on the “Truth on the Gulf of Tonkin”. After painstakingly checking all the facts and sources, I was stunned, and then immediately disheartened to find out the truth of this inflammatory incident. Too many people had to die because of this massive deception. In short, in 2007, a National Security Agency (NSA) report noted unequivocally that the alleged Aug. 4, 1964, attack by the communist North Vietnam on U.S. destroyers never actually happened. Wow!

[SNIP] Condensed version of My Father The Badass. More info on www.mikinguyen.com [SNIP]

As I conclude out of this chapter, it still bothers me that so many people had to perish and forsake everything in their life. Many are still suffering today, on both sides with PTSD and other ailments for the American Vietnam vets, and those Vietnamese families still having to deal with the hereditary effects of Agent Orange. Then there are the

Ch 2 – When things go wrong

myriad of land minds, still buried in the ground, that to this day, take more than 2000 lives a year.

Our family and a few thousand others during that day were extremely LUCKY! Our family of five was saved, but not by the actions of the United States at the Embassy, or Washington DC. It was a moment in time that courageous people from all walks of life stood up to be counted and helped each other out. This is an extraordinary story of the bravery of my father and the Captain and crew of the USS Kirk DE1087 on April 29th, 1975.

Chapter 3 — The day it all changed

"In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity."
— Sun Tzu

When you are six years old your world is infinitely small. Creativity and imagination for the world as you know it is limitless. Toys abound, whether they be an old bicycle tire and a stick to spin it around, or pop cans lined up to be scattered by your sandal. You trust the adults in your life to conduct the “business” of living and rightly so, it’s their job - your job is to be a kid, play, and learn. My life, at that young age was not that much different than the lives of any other kid. You would think it should be, living in a war ravaged country, but my parents did everything they could to shield the three of us, Mika, Mina and myself. Anyway, they managed to shelter us from the horror, fear and anxiety that was the country of Vietnam during that time. I played with my toys, climbed trees (sometimes fell out of trees) and generally lived a happy life clowning around with all my cousins and friends.

Ch 3 – The day it all changed

Not realizing it at the time though, I really was living differently. My “toys” sometimes included shell casings or even live ammunition. My mom relates the explosive story about the box of balls I had found. I was so proud of myself. Unfortunately, the box of cricket balls turned out to be a box of

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Mr. Chipman, with his laconic sense of humor, said she was “like catching a basketball.” Picture below is Mina Nguyen standing next to the man that caught her on April 29th, 1975 – Mr. Kent Chipman.

Finally, the second to last one left on the Chinook was my mother. Time was running short and there was no way to give a quick hug or kiss, my mother simply turned around and gave my dad a quick glance as if to say “I love you, and I will see you soon” She then jumped down to be with my baby sister, my brother and me. The first of four in our immediate family had taken a leap of faith, and now safely below the heaving deck of the mighty USS Kirk, finding peace for the first time. Now it was just my dad and his horse, the Chinook. What was going to happen next?

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Chapter 4 — The DITCH

"Heroes may not be braver than anyone else.
They are just braver five minutes longer" —
Ronald Regan

Once we all hit the deck of the ship, my father swept the Chinook into a graceful arc and settled a couple of hundred meters away from the vessel, poised above the choppy waters. At that point, no one knew exactly what he was going to do next. Realistically, there were only a few options bouncing around in his head, but ditching the Chinook was the one he chose. No way in hell was he going to fly back to land and leave his family on the ship without him. Life is about choices. As an experienced pilot, he well knew the enormous risks involved in dumping his Chinook in the turbulent ocean. Unconditional love for his family, however, easily won out, and was far more compelling than any fear that would hold him back.

He hovered low over the water for what seemed like an eternity, but was only several minutes. What I realize now, is that he pulled off something so remarkable, that not a soul on board the “Kirk” had ever witnessed before. He

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maneuvered that angry wasp of a Chinook, just off the starboard stern side of the ship so that it was a relatively safe enough distance away. Holding the chopper in a hover, he quickly removed

**[SNIP] Condensed version of My Father The Badass.
More info on www.mikinguyen.com [SNIP]**

My father taught me so many things that day, and unfortunately, I didn't realize half of those life lessons until I was much older. He not only taught me, but demonstrated the true essence of courage and bravery in the face of death, and the importance of family. He showed me that a leap of faith was sometimes what was required, and he gave me the absolute best living example of never ever giving up. But more importantly, my father demonstrated how to adapt to life's journey. Our path is rarely straightforward, and often only your gut instinct will allow you to survive and pursue that dream.

Chapter 5 — On the deck of freedom (USS Kirk)

"Fear is a reaction. Courage is a decision" – Sir Winston Churchill

It is near impossible to describe how rapidly my life and the lives of my family and others altered after my father dropped us bewildered onto the deck of that United States Navy ship. As a child, my eyes were wide with curiosity, and my young mind assaulted with fascination beyond what I thought possible. It was scary and exciting all at the same time. As a small boy it was the stuff of dreams and adventures. That ship had so many secret locations to play hide and seek, and the guns! Well, it was kid heaven for my brother and me. Escaping war ravaged Saigon, and now safe on board a Navy ship in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, was about as far as my mind could stretch. My parents and siblings were together and embarking on an unknown adventure as one family unit.

I don't recall my mother

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**[SNIP] Condensed version of My Father The Badass.
More info on www.mikinguyen.com [SNIP]**

During my research, I identified that the reason so many Vietnamese arrived in the US after the fall of Saigon, was that the US “promised” the opportunity to come to the United States if they had supported the efforts of the military in-country. My father, having flown for the air force was a prime example of that very help. Despite popular belief during the 1970’s that the Vietnamese people just came to America, they in fact did not, but were welcomed for their service and support of American soldiers, fighting side by side for freedom and democracy. In my mind, for people like Governor Evans, to have upheld that promise makes him an extraordinary man. One to whom I will always be grateful for the opportunities afforded my family and other refugees.

Chapter 6 – New beginnings as a Refugee

"Change is hard at first, messy in the middle, and gorgeous at the end." – Robin Sharma

It's vital at this stage to gain a clear image of just how fortunate my family had been; that we explore how the refugee program worked in the 1970's. The definition of the refugee "program" was developed during the Vietnam Conflict due to the promises made by the United States government in those critical times. On May 23, 1975, the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act was passed. This act allowed for approximately 130,000 refugees from Southeast Asia to enter the United States under special status, and providing relocation aid and assistance (thank you Kenny Pham for your help on this). There has always been refugees throughout history from war ravaged countries, but the era the US was in Vietnam created a new generation. One where the US was reciprocating to people that assisted them in the conflict. Certainly the moniker stuck, and Vietnamese were forever

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Devaki was one of those lucky “Operation Baby lift” children, miraculously surviving a plane crash at the age of 9 months. Operation Baby lift was the mission name to evacuate orphaned babies from South Vietnam from April 3-26. On April 4, 1975, 12 minutes after take-off, a Lockheed C-5A Galaxy had a lower rear fuselage explosion (speculation of enemy fire) and had to make an emergency decent and crash landing. Devaki was on that plane. The plane broke into 4 parts and 138 passengers (mainly orphan babies) were killed in the crash. The universe obviously had bigger plans for her and roughly 10,000 other infants and children during this exodus. She eventually arrived in the states, being adopted and loved by a family in the US. Thoa on the other hand, grew up in a well to do family in Saigon. At the age of 11 her family found themselves having to hustle out of Vietnam in a hurry when the communists arrived in Saigon. While all three of us come from different backgrounds, we all share a similar narrative of endeavoring to assimilate into this new country. At the same time, celebrating and appreciating our root heritage. Today, I am privileged to call both of them my friends. Both radiate positivity, strength, and

Ch 6 – New beginnings as a refugee

courage and that is an absolute blessing to be around. Devaki's personal and professional life now revolves around the wonderful Colorado outdoors, where she is marketing manager for an outdoor recreational company. Thoa runs several successful restaurants in the Seattle area including Chinoise Asian Grill. Thoa just so happened to beat Bobby Flay in an early 2015 episode of Food Network's "Beat Bobby Flay."

Chapter 7 – Trying to fit in

"A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity, an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty." – Winston Churchill

When we arrived in Seattle and were graciously accepted into the family home of Gorman and Luella Colling, we didn't quite know what to expect. I absolutely fell in love with the area though. I'd never seen anyplace quite as scenic as the Pacific Northwest, so green and lush. Everything was spick and span, such a massive contrast to where we had come from. High rise office towers glistened in the sunshine, paved roads, minus the bomb craters, and modern infrastructure surrounded us. This was a completely new universe for me, as I gazed out of the car window in awe, and wondered if it could possibly get any better. My parents constantly reassured us that...

[SNIP] Condensed version of My Father The Badass. More info on www.mikinguyen.com [SNIP]

It was not until I was much older that I began to see the burden of the job my father had done for Vietnam and the

My Father The Badass

American forces. To a large degree, it is amazing that my dad survived as long as he did, but it does add some perspective to just how he was able to fly that last rescue mission. My father didn't simply become a hero overnight. A hero is something he had already become through the countless critical missions he had flown throughout the conflict, without fear or complaint. At six years old, I saw the man as any child would see their dad. He was the person that took care of me. It wasn't until I was much older however, that I began to realize that he was also the man who took care of many others as well. Every time he climbed aboard his Chinook my father saved lives. The burden of that understanding on my shoulders as a man is enormous!

Chapter 8 — A mother's love

"Being a mother is learning about strengths you didn't know you had, and dealing with fears you didn't know existed" – Linda Wooten

As I negotiated my childhood, I had to become sensitized to a culture that I had never known existed before. My early years in Vietnam were rather humble, and by age six and a half, I had already been exposed to the brutality of war and conflict. My parents worked hard, and had an extensive family that served as a support network. Many in the United States, for one reason or another, have never had the opportunity to have aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents around to reach out to for guidance and assistance. Today, I invest quite a deal of time reflecting back on ...

**[SNIP] Condensed version of My Father The Badass.
More info on www.mikinguyen.com [SNIP]**

They were a team, my parents, and the lessons of their lives supported the future of ours. Today I am closer to my mother than ever before, and I still respect the traditions

Ch 8 – A mother's love

and culture that she taught us to hold so steadfastly onto. One of the aspects that I now appreciate the most however was that although she was unwavering in her convictions in terms of Vietnamese traditions, she was also fluid enough to allow room for the new American culture as well. We were able to balance both sides of the coin, the old and the new.

Chapter 9 — A father's hope

"A true hero isn't measured by the size of his strength, but by the strength of his heart." — Buddha

While my mother was the “go to” person for daily life activities, my father was our rock, provider, and compass. In Vietnamese culture many expectations are put on the female counterparts of the family, with the responsibility of the male landing firmly in the arena of being a protector, teacher and leader. My father never shirked his duties in those areas.

As a young man in Vietnam (Ba Van Nguyen, b. 1/12/1940), had few options in terms of where he wanted his career in life to lead. He hailed from a poor farming family in Long An Province, Vietnam, and so expectations for his life early on were more geared towards survival than success. Being a family that lived off the land, survival was paramount and he did whatever he could to help out. During the 1940's, rice and other essential resources were being sold, traded and sent off to China and other parts of the world, leaving millions of Vietnamese to starve. In

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addition to struggling to survive with limited resources and opportunities, there was a war going on at the same time with the French and Japanese. The Japanese occupied Vietnam from 1940 to 1945. My aunts tell me that in early 1945, while at the age of five, my dad had to give his little brother (then 3-year old Nguyen Ngoc Huynh) a running piggy-back ride in an effort to flee from Japanese bombing and gun fire. Dreams of a better future were simply that, dreams.

Add being the first born son into the mix and you can see that even at that young age, he was going to share the burden of responsibility for his parents and siblings in the future...

[SNIP] Condensed version of My Father The Badass. More info on www.mikinguyen.com [SNIP]

He realized that he hadn't done it alone and that others had answered the call of help for a simple man and his family. He was always grateful for every step the universe allowed him to take forward. Although my father was not an overly spiritual man, he understood that there was something out there greater than ourselves, and he conveyed that to us every day. He showed me and my siblings that we didn't have to be large and in charge in

Ch 9 – A father's hope

order to be a good person. He taught us that men are the sum of what they sacrifice and are made up of all the experiences, good and bad, along the way. He taught us that sacrificing self for the good of others is what should drive us, and he showed me that standing on my own, rather than on the backs of others is what makes a man great.

My father has journeyed on now and I miss him every day, but I am left with his legacy and so much more. While I was speaking at many screening events of “Last Days in Vietnam”, I never once lost sight of why I was there. I was there because one man dared to undertake one of the greatest missions of his life. The mission of being the best husband, father and hero he could be.

Chapter 10 – The compassion of total strangers

"If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion"— Dalai Lama

It would be a disservice, and totally remiss of me, if I didn't share our experience of the amazing compassion, and genuine kindness of strangers. It was the very key to our survival throughout our bumpy early journey in the US and still holds true today in my daily personal and professional life. I oftentimes find myself relating my story, our story, and people react to it in awe. Comments such as how courageous my father was, how brave my mother was, or even how daring little six-year-old Miki was. While I appreciate the sentiment, it is simply one side of the coin. There were many brave souls on deck that fateful day, and innumerable kind and generous people throughout the years that have made this journey so much more stable than it could have been. Today I view many stories on the news regarding people surging through challenging

Ch 10 – The compassion of total strangers

situations, and rarely is there mention of those who quietly go about the business of helping and guiding them.

That day my father made his bold decision and jumped into his Chinook to rescue his family he had no viable plan. In his heart, he knew that whatever other events occurred that day, he desperately needed to get his family to safety. It was pure and simple blind faith that led him out into the wild waters of the Pacific Ocean. Yes, he knew that there were American ships in the vicinity, and yes, he knew that they were there to support the staff and employees of the US Government and its associates (Vietnamese allies), but he had no indication or intelligence on how any of them would react to his fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants plan. He rounded us up, and powered away into the blue, hoping like hell the way out of this predictable mess...

[SNIP] Condensed version of My Father The Badass. More info on www.mikinguyen.com [SNIP]

... today I am mindful that it was supported by many people along the way. People who were compassionate for the sake of being kind, and who saw a family who were on a journey to a better way of life.

Before I close out of this chapter, I want to note one more thing with regards to Captain Paul Jacobs and the

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crew of the USS Kirk in 1975. In the past three years, I found out that a few of the other US Navy ships and their respective captain/crew in the surrounding waters were given full Navy Unit Commendation (NUC) and recognition for the evacuation efforts (Frequent Wind) during the final days of Saigon; but not the captain and crew of the USS Kirk 1087 for their over the top efforts. The amazing recount of gallantry and display of compassion and professionalism surrounding the USS Kirk really deserves the US Navy's review again more than 40 years later [not to take away from the efforts of the other US Navy ships during this time]. I have been working very closely with Captain Jacobs in the past several years on this cause (formal US Navy NUC and recognition). Several meetings and letters to higher up in the US Navy have been initiated by the captain and me, but no formal reply back yet from Washington DC. He is the latest letter from captain Jacobs to the current Chief Naval Officer:

January 16, 2017

To: Admiral John M. Richardson, USN
Chief of Naval Operations
2000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350-2000

Dear Admiral Richardson,

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I am writing to you personally to request your assistance in correcting a long-standing oversight as outlined in the Principle Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Erich F. Marbod letter on June 6, 1975.

More than four decades have passed since the fall of Saigon. During that chaotic episode USS KIRK (DE-1087) rescued more than 33,000 Vietnamese refugees and recovered thirty-two ships of the former Vietnam Navy. Assigned as just one of more than fifty U. S. Navy and U. S. Military Sealift Command ships during Operations Frequent Wind and New Life, USS KIRK quickly found herself thrust into the very center of the impromptu exodus of tens of thousands of refugees, escaping by helicopters, ships, boats, and barges.

I had the profound privilege of commanding USS KIRK and her fine officers and men during Operations Frequent Wind and New Life, and as her Commanding Officer, I was an intimate eye witness to my crew's sustained superior performance.

USS KIRK and her crew performed in a truly outstanding manner during those nine momentous days in April and May of 1975. It is my firm conviction that the extraordinary performance of USS KIRK and specific actions of her crew should finally be recognized with the award of the Navy Unit Commendation (NUC). A detailed "Summary of Action" (See Attachment B) and the

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“Proposed Citation” (See Attachment C) are enclosed for your review and consideration.

I fully understand that this... [snip]. Nevertheless, I feel strongly that it is my solemn duty as their Captain to do all that I can to finally recognize the incredible actions of those then-very young men who are now grandfathers and great-grandfathers. They are proud United States Navy veterans, who rose to an occasion that in many cases has been the most profound accomplishment of their adult lives. These good men were directly responsible for saving the lives of tens of thousands of terrified Vietnamese refugees.

The performance of USS KIRK and her crew has been informally recognized by the United States Navy by production of the BUMED documentary “The Lucky Few” back in 2010. In addition, the story of USS KIRK’s involvement in Operations Frequent Wind and New Life was the subject of a four-part series on National Public Radio (NPR) back in 2012. And then in 2015, WGBH “American Experience” documentary “Last Days in Vietnam” also featured USS KIRK prominently in their 2015 Academy Award nominated film. Miki Nguyen, who appears in both films talking about his hero father pilot who amazingly ditched a Chinook helicopter next to the USS Kirk, is working closely with me on this initiative - getting a long overdue recognition for the crew of the Kirk.

It is my fervent hope that the United States Navy will now formally recognize USS KIRK’s

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performance by an appropriate and well-earned award of the Navy Unit Commendation (NUC). As her Commanding Officer, I stand ready to assist in any way I can to ensure USS KIRK and her magnificent crew are finally formally recognized for their extraordinary achievements in extremely chaotic circumstances over forty years ago.

Very Respectfully,

Paul H. Jacobs, Captain, USN (Retired)
Commanding Officer USS KIRK FF1087
August 74 – July 76
usskirkff1087@gmail.com

----- Copy To: -----

Mr. Erich F. von Marbod
The Honorable J. Middendorf II
VADAM Adam M. Robinson, jr MC USN Ret
General Victor Hugo, USA Ret
Ambassador Richard L. Armitage

It is my hope that the US Navy do the right thing and formally recognize Captain Paul Jacobs and his crew. As a 6.5 year old boy, I witnessed firsthand the love and compassion of the USS Kirk towards not only my dad and family but to thousands of other Vietnamese pilots and their families during this timeframe. If this book can help bring more awareness and eventual recognition (NUC) for the 1975 USS Kirk, I would be a happy man. I can't think of

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a better way to say “Thank you” to the captain and crew of the USS Kirk than to help them through with this cause – it long overdue. As of this writing, the Captain is over 90 years old, but still ticking as strong as ever. Thank you Captain Jacobs and your amazing crew – much love to you!

Chapter 11 — Growing up in America, being Curious becomes key

"Curiosity is the compass that leads us to our passions. Follow it and you won't be disappointed. The future belongs to the curious"
— A clever soul

One of the key facts of life for us kids growing up in this new country, was the primary focus on “schooling and education”. In America, public education is available to everyone, and totally government funded, so there was no excuse for being ignorant (assuming you grew up through the public education system). The lowest ranking school in America is still head and shoulders above many of the world’s poorest countries. Growing up in Vietnam, my dad received a more extensive education than my mother. The sentiment, back in the day, was why invest money educating a girl, she will only end up marrying a guy and it would simply be a waste of money sending her to school.

Ch 11 – Growing up in America

Although this was a matter of practicality, and a family's resources, it was always something that did not sit well with my mom. This thinking and belief was part of her era growing up. Fortunately for us, neither one of my parents accepted this traditional way of thinking...

[SNIP] Condensed version of My Father The Badass. More info on www.mikinguyen.com [SNIP]

... to ask the right questions so I could tease out from people what “really happened” in the past. I often speak with groups and one of the questions I am frequently asked is, does where you come from really mean that much to your future? The answer is not only yes, but an unequivocal yes. Where we come from is the key to how we travel the road ahead. My history is anchored in the bravery of my parents and their resilience in the face of turmoil. I carry those aspects with me today as I navigate my life and the lives of my own children.

The bottom line is that we children have taken advantage of the educational opportunities that the actions of my father afforded us. I would encourage everyone who reads this book to follow suit. You don't need a major life tragedy to understand that your success is anchored in

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good character, a solid education and a real sense of your own history. Always be curious and ask questions.

Chapter 12 –The road less traveled

"Success is not an accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing." – Pele

Today, my studies continue into the mysteries of human behavior, focusing principally on what motivates people, their belief systems, their family, and cultural upbringing. When Rory Kennedy approached me to tell my father's miraculous tale, something resonated strongly in me,(think of a wrecking ball smashing a derelict building). As a river meanders through a rocky stream, it's easy to take the path of least resistance. In the long run, however, it might not be the wisest choice, at least within the construct of a human life experience. You can discover plenty about a man's character when after a major trauma (lost of job, natural disaster, victim of war, divorce or whichever tragedy has befallen you) has to buckle down and start all over again.

Ch 12 – The road less traveled

Having been on this planet now for nearly 50 years, I have become painfully aware of how and why most people simply follow the path of least resistance throughout their lives. The vast majority of people are more reactionary than creative in their plans for the future, and seldom question, and even more infrequently step out of what they deem “normal”. So many people never face their fears. Rarely do they have the determination, to significantly expand or change what they do, in order to ...

**[SNIP] Condensed version of My Father The Badass.
More info on www.mikinguyen.com [SNIP]**

...Some gambles are small, like do I put in that application for that new job even though I might get rejected, and some are monumental, like do I quit this job I detest and follow my passion. Whichever it is, each calculated risk leads us to the road less traveled and allows us to create our own destiny, and perhaps, save the lives of others. If anything, we are the creator of our own experiences. No one else should decide our fate. We all have a choice.

Chapter 13 — It's about the journey

"The Universe is always speaking to us - Sending us little messages, causing coincidences and serendipities, reminding us to stop, to look around, to believe in something else, something more." – Nancy Thayer

During my early years in America, I moved through the predictable awkward teenage cycle of puberty, pimples and lack of self-confidence. At the tender age of 13, most kids will start to develop new ideas and grow a new or a refined sense of identity. In these early years, you come into an awareness of what it means to be human, and that realization can be just a tad overwhelming. There is a massive gap between what you seek in life, and what your parents/culture/society expect of you. Up till then, I had journeyed through many a scrape, and while I had come through with some bumps and bruises all were a part of my life's learning experience. I was too young to really

Ch 13 – It's about the journey

understand the gravity of my beginnings and too old to just ignore the

[SNIP] Condensed version of My Father The Badass. More info on www.mikinguyen.com [SNIP]

You always have a choice and there are always many more choices than there appear to be, especially in the midst of challenge. Crying, complaining and cursing are all choices, albeit not the most ideal ones to come up with. The more you decide to honor life's lessons, and understand The Universal Laws, the better decisions you will make, and the more motivated you will be to pursue what life has to offer, regardless of how challenging your situation becomes. The Universe will do all it can to help you be the best version of you. It is, after all, about the journey, the abundance, the learning's - no matter what you might face.

Chapter 14 – The gifts of communication

"I've learned that people will forget what you said and will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them FEEL." – Maya Angelou

As we drift towards the end of this true life tale, I would like to reflect on why I felt compelled to put pen to paper following my involvement with the film. It wasn't only to share fascinating and interesting "behind the scenes" stories from my dad. My motivation was simply to relate the real life lessons behind these amazing stories, so that we may appreciate the roller coaster of the highs and lows we call life. To pass on these fascinating stories and "learning's" to future generations in the fervent hope that we might not make the same errors again. More so, the sweetness that comes from crushing and overcoming obstacles in our path from A to B should never be forgotten as well. I am of the rock solid view that it is better to remember and celebrate our successes, rather than focusing

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too much on our failures and mistakes. In sharing such intriguing stories of aspirations and dreams, it is clear that we need to be even more conscious of how we communicate our message, intent and ideas. A minor slip of the tongue, a carelessly composed sentence, or an ill-timed hand gesture, might catapult your intended message and conversation pear shaped rapidly; losing the context of the intent, or creating an unfavorable outcome for that presentation, business deal, or that date you so badly wanted to land.

**[SNIP] Condensed version of My Father The Badass.
More info on www.mikinguyen.com [SNIP]**

...I opened this chapter with a quote from Maya Angelou that people don't really remember what you said, or what you did, but they always remember how you made them FEEL: the emotional connection! Effective communication only works if both parties walk away feeling positive and optimistic, or at least understood and accepted.

The act of, and the lessons of communication were a gift from my parents and more specifically my father. He demonstrated to me that communication (written and spoken), if executed correctly, and taken seriously, can save

Ch 14 – The gifts of communications

lives, as it saved our lives. In the last 25 years of his life in the United States, my dad wrote many short stories and articles for different Vietnamese magazines and newspapers across the country. His chronicles and writings were well received by his peers. He had almost completed his own book before Alzheimer's slowed him down and eventually took the best of him (there is plan in the works to finalize and publish his writings as well). For me, the skill of communication is just one of many important life lessons I learned from my father.

Chapter 15 — Create your own reality

"You did not come to face reality, you came to CREATE reality." – Abraham Hicks

Many of us firmly believe that we have to face life “head-on”, or “deal with life’s consequences”. It is very easy to believe that we are “victims of our circumstances”. Where do these cryptic life quotes originate from? Although life does throw us curve-balls now and then, in the end, we are ultimately responsible for 100% of our actions. How we handle life’s bumpy road and hard times is purely up to us. We are all CREATORS after all; creators of our own thoughts. Every one of us is born into a unique and specific set of circumstances that provides our core spiritual, physical and emotional programming. That built in radar effectively means that our reactions to others and the environment in general, is to some degree, preprogrammed. Some may call it destiny. The majority of mental health professionals firmly believe that this forms the basis for the rest of your life. Creating the foundation of

My Father The Badass

our personality, strength of character, thought processes and determines who we are. However, as noted earlier, we are all creators of our own reality. We are all capable of over-riding our fate, destiny, preprogramming and fully capable of doing extraordinary things, as my father did on that day in April 1975. It all starts with re-shifting and re-shaping how we think about our reality.

When you distill it all, it is said that there are only two emotions, love and fear. I've seen people that are mired by addictions, anxiety, phobias and negative habits, change their lives for the better, forever. They determined how to shift from fear and gravitate towards love...

**[SNIP] Condensed version of My Father The Badass.
More info on www.mikinguyen.com [SNIP]**

Living a fulfilling life is something that everyone deserves to have, yet so many never experience it. My altruistic goal is to inspire others where possible, to pursue their dreams, to help shift them from point A to B. But dream you must!

I believe that my father's story is one of courage and daring, but I also believe that it is one that demonstrates that anyone can achieve their ultimate potential. WE ARE CREATORS. My father had a belief in himself, and the

Ch 15 – Create your own reality

determination to follow through, no matter what obstacle was in his path. It is a pathway that not only my father, but in equal measures my mother created, and now have passed on to their children to continue with. I will pass that precious gift onto my own children as well as many others who seek to better themselves. We are all capable of mastering our own destiny, and living the life you choose. Courage, resilience, strength of character, and bravery in the face of fear! These are the ingredients you need to strive for. Not an easy path, but who said life was easy? Dream big, and move forward one step at a time!

Chapter 16 — Relax, everything happens for a reason (Synchronicity)

"The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away." – Picasso

When my father passed away in 2013 due to Alzheimer's and Dementia, there was sadness, but also a relief to see that he was able to pass away peacefully with my mom by his side. The disease took the best of my dad, and my mom had to look after him for 8 years, tirelessly caring for all his needs by herself. Have I mentioned that my mom is an amazing woman? Yes, there was the heartache of losing my dad, and no, nothing prepares you for that in life, not to mention the pain of losing my brother Mika, in 2003. With the passing of my brother and father, there was an infinite crevasse in my life, one that would be impossible to fill. In the end however, I have learned to stay calm, relax and keep moving forward despite the loss, pain, frustration, and set-backs in life. These "negative" moments are there

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to teach you a “better way”. In other words you cannot truly appreciate light, until you have lived in the dark. So just relax, everything happens for a reason, and you are meant to experience these crises. Even in the direst situation, there are gifts and lessons to be learned. Books and Google searches don't teach, experience teaches. You would learn nothing from a lifetime of happiness, unfortunately there needs to be some contrast in life...

**[SNIP] Condensed version of My Father The Badass.
More info on www.mikinguyen.com [SNIP]**

... I see that in order to survive and grow one must use all the tools afforded us by the universe and those who have come before us. I gaze deeper into the universe than I ever thought possible, and I thank all of those who have come before me that have forged the road I am now traveling. There are many things that I wish I could tell my father. I wish I could tell him how much he has impacted my life. I wish I could help him understand, that what he did that day in April 1975 meant infinitely more than just a new beginning for us as a family. It meant the difference between a young boy growing up on the streets of Vietnam and becoming whatever it was possible to be (perhaps a street-side coconut salesman), and the man who ultimately grew up in the United States that has now become more

Ch 16 – Relax everything happens for a reason

than he could have ever dreamed. It all boiled down to one man, one decision and one split second when he was larger than life and did what no one thought possible – absolute courage in the extreme. My father, in a burst of daring, set the tone for the rest of my life, and now, I have the honor of doing the same for others. From the bottom of my heart, Cám ơn ba! It has been a privilege!

The end.