



Impact Statement

Lucian Hickey, Grade 8

Resilience and Safety, 2026

Acrylic on canvas board, 14 x 14 inches

Scio Middle School, Scio, OR

Unsung Hero: Lt. Col. Tran Ngoc Hue

I chose to paint Lt. Colonel Tran Ngoc Hue because I really wanted to illustrate someone who served in battle. His story starts off violently and then ends with the relief and hope that comes from saving people who wouldn't have survived without assistance. It was like watching a heroic movie, and you know they end up all hugging in the end but had to go through horrors to get there. I couldn't imagine doing it myself, but he did. He's a true hero. What specifically and truly got me hooked was that he helped American soldiers as a Vietnamese soldier, in the Vietnam War. And he didn't only help Americans he also saved South Vietnamese people. I feel that if the world had more people like him, we could have world peace.

Lt. Col. Tan Ngoc Hue impacted many American and Vietnamese people, and his heroism is still impacting those people today. When he helped defend the Capital, Hue City, from the North Vietnamese in 1968, he helped American soldiers get out of the fight. If he hadn't helped defend the Citadel it may not be standing today, but almost certainly would have been taken right away. His story is like the 300 where a small group of 40 held off many more soldiers for hours until they retreated to regroup with 150 untrained soldiers. With those men he was able to lead them house-to-house through the streets fighting for a month until they got the Palace and most of the Citadel back under their control.

Although that time was full of hunger, death, and exhaustion, there was an epic tale that stood out more than the others. That was when a "thin unrecognizable man came out of hiding". He had been hiding underwater during the day and only coming out at night for weeks. This turned out to be one of Hue's comrades' friends. This reminded him and his comrades that they're not just there to fight for land but also there to fight for loved ones. I think this is an awesome story that should be known by more people and really stood out to me.

Creating a painting to portray what I wanted was hard because I couldn't find pictures of Hue City from 1968. At least, not in the sense that I was looking for. I researched what mountains outside Hue City looked like, which brought up modern pictures. It was winter when his battles were occurring, so I did some research and found that it doesn't snow in Vietnam. I did see that the mountains were green and filled with trees, today. Also, I read that his elite unit was called the Hac Bao, or "Black Panther" Company, so I wanted to include something signifying that, which is why I have the panther on the tree behind the soldiers.

For my project, I envisioned a jungle, with hills, and vines hanging from the high treetops above swampy green grass growing alongside water. I represented Hue's heroism by painting him reaching out a hand to a man coming out of the water, inspired by the epic story of the man who spent weeks in the water by day and only came out at night. In reality, it would be a darker, gloomier scene, with a war sense and realistic detail. But instead of going for more realistic and gruesome, I decided to show the more hopeful side of the story. I was looking for a blue base color, so I mixed lots (and I mean lots) of different values of blues until I had the perfect blues for the water, sky, trees and mountains, integrating greens to create a scene representing the beauty of the Vietnamese jungle at night. This was the only time that man in hiding felt safe enough to leave his pond, so it fits combining that with Hue, as he represented resilience, but also safety to his people.

Lt. Colonel Tran Ngoc Hu has personally impacted my life by showing me that I should think about everyone, not just myself, or the people I care about. Everything he did feels right, and how it should be. I hope that this shows through all my actions every day. I am sharing his story with my beautiful art piece at the Scio High School Annual Art Show May 8th. The community is invited to come see all the amazing art made by the high schoolers in Scio. We are going to have a section just for the Unsung Hero projects that include the Middle School submissions as well, so mine will be there too. I will be playing a set on the piano for a portion of the reception, but then I will be there next to my painting, ready to talk all about him to the community as well as our school board members who we have invited.

References:

Honoring the Heroes Among Us | [Military.com](https://www.military.com)

Meet the Storytellers: Lt. Colonel Tran Ngoc Hue: A Fearless Leader

<https://www.blackpanthers>

<https://www.soldiers>