Welcome to Spotlight. I’m Ryan Geertsma, And I’m Robin Basselin. Spotlight uses a special English method of broadcasting. It is easier for people to understand. No matter where in the world they live.

“June 4th, 1968 if only I had wings I would fly back to our beautiful house on Lo Duc Street. I would eat with dad, mom and my sisters and brother. One simple meal and one night’s sleep under the old cotton blanket. Last night, I dreamed of peace. I came back and saw everybody. Oh the dream of peace and independence has burnt in the heart of thirty million people for so long”.

These are the words of a young Vietnamese woman named Dang Thuy Tram. Tram served as a doctor in Southern Vietnam during the American War in Vietnam. Each day Tram wrote her thoughts and feelings in her diary. This private book was found by soldier after her death. This diary is the base for the award winning Vietnamese film “Dung Dot” or “Don’t burn”. Today spotlight is on this film and the diary of Dang Thuy Tram.

Dang Thuy Tram was born in the city of Hanoi in the country of Vietnam. She was born into a well-educated family. Her father was a surgeon – a doctor that performs medical operations. And her mother taught pharmacology. She was an expert on Vietnamese plant medicines. Tram’s family thought education was very important so Tram received a very good education. After high school, Tram attended Hanoi university medical school. There, she trained to be a surgeon like her father. After finishing medical school, Tram was invited to complete higher level study in eye surgery. However, she chose instead to serve as a doctor in the war. And at the age of 24 she left for Southern Vietnam. There, she helped care for those injured by the war. Both soldiers and common citizens.

For over 3 years, Tram was as a doctor in areas of conflict, she did her best to heal the physical wounds of war. She lived through many struggles and times of sadness. Tram died in January of 1970. But her story lived on in her diary. And Tram’s spirit of hope makes her story powerful. Soon after Tram’s death her diary was found by an American soldier named Fred Whitehurst. Whitehurst’s job was to burn any non-military documents found by the American. Among these documents was the diary of Dang Thuy Tram. One day, he was about to burn the diary but his Vietnamese translator Hoan said to him: “Do not burn this one Fred, it has fire in it already”

Whitehurst did not burn the diary, instead, against his order, he brought it home with him, to America. Whitehurst recognized what the Vietnamese translator had told him. This book was full of fire, full of emotions. Whitehurst read the diary and it brought him many emotions.

Whitehurst was an American solider - an enemy of Tram’s soldier. However, he still liked Tram and her diary very much. In fact, he said:

“Human to human, I fell in love with her”

For many years, Whitehurst kept the diary. However, his goal was always to find Tram’s family and return it to them. With the help of another American soldier and a Christian group in Vietnam, he was able to do this. And in 2005, Whitehurst returned Tram’s diary to her mother. After he returned the diary, Whitehurst became very close with Tram’s family. Whitehurst visited the family in Vietnam. He became like a brother and son to Tram’s sisters and mother. Whitehurst and Tram were enemy during the war.

However through her diary they became like family. In July of 2005, Tram’s diary was published in Vietnam. The book showed over four hundred thousand copies in 2007 the book was published in English and called “Last Night I dreamed of peace”

In 2009 the well-known Vietnamese filmmaker Dang Nhat Minh decided to make Tram’s diary into a film. He named the film “Don’t burn”. After the words of the Vietnamese translator. For Minh, the film was not about the war. Instead, it was about the beauty and humanity of Tram. Minh told the actor that played Tram.

The film doesn’t concentrate on describing the sadness of war, but chose the beautiful spirit of Ms. Tram

And Tram did have a beautiful spirit. For over three years Tram cared for the injured and sick. She worked in poor conditions. She was operated while bombs exploded in the air. She never had enough medicine, supplies or people to help. But these things did not destroyed Tram’s spirit. Tram often said to patients to ease their pains. Her patients and other doctors and nurses were like her brothers and sisters. She served them with all that she had. At times, the war and conditions did make her sad. One day in April of 1968, she operated on a soldier. It should have been a simple operation. However, she did not have enough pain medication. She also found that his stomach was full of infection without the right tool, she could not find the cause of the infection. After this operation, she wrote.

I wanted to say if I cannot even heal people like you, this sadness will not leave my medical work. But sadness did not overfill Tram spirit, in the middle of the war, she still had hope. She often wrote of love and peace for the future. Six months before Tram’s death, she saw a dead body of a soldier and friend lying on the road. And she wrote these words

Death is so near and simple. What makes our lives move forward so strongly? Is it the love between our people? It is because the hope for tomorrow still burn hot in our hearts? Is that it my much love friend?

Tram’s story is about one doctor during the American War in Vietnam, however, it is also about much more her stories is a story of hope for love and peace. It is a hope common to all people and this may be why the film “Don’t burn” had been nationally and internationally recognized.

In September 2009, Don’t burn won the audience award at Fucowaka Film Festival. This award is one of the highest for Asian film and “Don’t burn” has also been chosen to compete for best foreign film at the 82 Oscar – the American Academy of Motion Picture Award. This is the first time a Vietnamese film had ever been chosen for this honor.

Tram’s Mother has been involved with both the publishing of Tram diary and the film Don’t burn. The filmmaker Dang Nhat Minh talked about her idea with the Newspaper Viet Nam Net

Dang Thuy Tram’s Mother say that film showed the spirit of the diary, she said she hope through the film, the world would get to know more about the Vietnamese people and the Vietnamese spirit.

The writer of this program was Robin Basselin. The producer was Ryan Geertsma. The voices you heard were from the United States and the United Kingdom. All quotes were adapted and voice by Spotlight. Computer users can visit our website at [www.radioenglish.net](http://www.radioenglish.net/). This program is called a dream of peace.