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Women are a group of people that many do not associate with having any real effect in war, historically especially. Looking back, we see images of mens bravado and masculinity out on the field of battle, and not many would ever feel that women had any real impact on the Vietnam war. However, reading through these accounts it is clear that almost all of the women felt that they had a positive impact on the men at war in Vietnam. Many who went to war in Vietnam did not even know where the place was on a map, let alone why they should be fighting a war there. It was a place so far away from home, many became heavily disillusioned and homesick, just wanting their tours to end so they could leave. For these men, the women in Vietnam - be they nurses, entertainers, or even Vietnamese - gave them some small reprieve from the horrors of war by giving them some small moments where they were able to just be normal men, spending time with a woman who will listen to them, comfort them, or provide them with pleasure - whatever it may be. I chose this particular theme purely because it was a theme i was not expecting to see in reading the accounts, and it was unique to me amongst everything else that was written. This theme has the most human and emotional aspect to it, something refreshing to see amongst the horrors of the war.

The first story from the reading that started my mind ticking on the positives of women in war was very much the one with the least emotional aspect to it - but it still began the idea of womens importance to men in the war. The short account by Nguyen Thi Kim Chuy speaks of her ordeals as a Youth Volunteer in the jungles of the Truong Son. Most of her story is mostly about her experiences in the jungle as far as her job was concerned, but near the end of the account she does make mention of her encounters with American troops. It is very brief, and she does not actually even mention the words sex, or specifically say thats what happened. But it is obvious it did due to this quote; "...it was just innocent romance. No babies were born." Obviously, sex is what happened.

The reason I use this as part of my theme here is that although maybe not an emotional morale booster, men do love sex. In war, sex is an illusive pleasure that generally not many would have access to, bar the R&R weekends if they are that lucky. To be able to encounter these young Vietnamese girls working in the jungles

who would allow them to have their way with them, and release some tension, is an undoubted way of boosting ones general mood and morale. It was free, and it was easy to get from these girls, and for men who are spending almost all of their time out of the company of women - it would have been absolute heaven for them to be able to just spend a short part of their time with one of these girls and do what they will, then move on in their travels with a notch to their belt of sexual encounters. It may be a short lived encounter, and one that doesn't exactly live on long in their minds due to shallow emotional context of it, but for a short while they were just a man with a woman, one of lifes most beautiful pleasures - and for that short while, war was able to be forced from their minds.

The next story for me is where we go into a more deeper emotional reason for the positive impact of women in the war - the story by Army Nurse Sylvia Lutz Holland. As a nurse, Sylvia often saw men who were at their worst, near death and in need of a comforting hand. Regardless of the fact a man is dying, a morale boost for that mans last moments is something of utmost importance. They do not want to die, lonely and without anyone acknowledging them. They want to feel one final moment of bliss, of comfort - and these nurses were there for them. Sylvia mentions that despite all they have been through, the horrors they have endured, that men on their death beds still just wanted some comfort; "Hold my hand. I know I'm dying, please don't leave me." Men at their core, no matter how tough they act, still need comfort. This proves that.

She also makes mention of the quieter times, when it was a little more relaxed in the hospital, how much the men appreciated the female presence. "Sometimes it was quiet and we just sat around. Then you were like a sister, a mother, grandmother, a girlfriend." These women acted as a porthole to a life at home for these men. It was an emotional escape from the horrors they have endured, allowing them to pretend that they are just hanging out back in America with a lady friend, talking about things such as girlfriends and cars. They could have an emotional connection with someone again, talk about life, the things they like - rather than how much they were hating the war they were in. It allowed them a window of happiness at life again, something they may not have had for a long time out in the field. A deeper positive emotional boost can be absolutely paramount in allowing a man to keep his passion for life amongst all he is going through in the field of war.

Entertainment. In life, entertainment is the one thing that every human being enjoys as a way of escaping from the hardships of life. Whatever the form of it, it allows you to switch your mind off from

whatever you are doing and just genuinely enjoy whatever it is that you are watching. The account of Bobbie Keith, or better known as 'Bobbie the Weathergirl' proves how important some regular entertainment for soldiers can be. Of course, a lot of her appeal was the fact she was a young, sexy, woman. Her weather broadcasts, although starting fairly standard, turned into a risqué fun weather broadcast that men would tune into mainly just for her. She even mentions not exactly knowing what the weather was. However, that's what the men needed. They needed entertainment, something to see on a regular basis that made them happy, and gave them something other than war to talk about.

She also gave them a connection to home as well, by throwing in references to towns back in America for soldiers who asked for a mention. She says herself, "You do all these little things 'cause it brings them home." So not only was she providing entertainment through her sexy performances as a weather-girl, and giving the soldiers something fun to watch and take their mind off things - she was also giving them a connection back to the land they were at war for. Though to us, it may not seem a big deal to hear of America, for people so far away from home, any little mention of your homeland can give you such a boost that we may never be able to imagine. Myself, I feel such a boost whenever I see something about Australia on the TV. And even that would pale in comparison to how it would feel for a man in the Vietnam war.

Though it may not be something we immediately associate with the Vietnam war when it is mentioned, women played an integral part in keeping men's morale up while they were there. In three different ways, they provided pleasure, comfort, and entertainment for the men who otherwise may have descended into madness due to having nothing to take their mind off the war. Men at war may be portrayed as being tough beings, but beneath that is just a normal man who craves the everyday things they enjoyed at home. These women gave them that.

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