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I believe that soldiers are the ones that fight and win wars. They are the meat of any military. Countries can have the best technology, strategies and position but if the fighting men up front do not execute, everything fails. For a soldier to be fully effective, they must believe in the cause they are fighting and be willing to do whatever it takes to overcome adversity and succeed. I compare it to my profession, sales. Although a salesman and a soldier do not have like careers, they share morale as a factor of success. I worked as a sales manager for a direct marketing team for years and I would say the one thing that effected production more than anything was the morale of our salesman. I've seen times when my most skilled salesman would be constantly out produced by someone that didn't seem to have any social skills, the difference was the attitude and enthusiasm held by the latter of the two. Salesman that come in and "punch in" and "watch the clock" are rarely successful. A soldier is the same way, ones that have belief and excitement are more willing to overcome adversity and put their life on the line to accomplish objectives. Soldiers that are simply "watching the clock" are far less willing to do what it takes for victory. History has proven that weak troop morale can cripple an army quicker than anything and I believe that the loss of morale for the American was the true turning point of the Vietnam War. The telling story is the testimony of Bob Gabriel, the hero of the "lost Battalion." Speaking mostly about his tenure during the Tet offensive, Gabriel also describes himself before the war and though out the rest of his service. Parts of his story stuck out to me that might be able to define the morale of the American soldier towards the end. I would like to say that Bob Gabriel is an American hero and I am not trying in any way to devalue his service to his country, I am only trying to dissect his story to help define the average morale of the American soldier at this time. In the beginning of the story, Gabriel was seriously considering dodging the draft by going to Canada but decided against it out of respect for his father, a World War 2 vet. He felt he needed to hold honor at home and was eventfully drafted. His initial desire to dodge the draft and his mentioning of his father indicates that he served more out of obligation to his father then to the actual war and its cause. Later he talks about being pinned down on a road by enemy machine gun fire during the Tet offensive. While in direct, the men in his platoon told him there was no room the foxhole for him and after he gave them covering fire to escape back across a

river they took off without helping him get across. I compare this story to the account of Dennis Dealon while fighting in the La Drang valley found in part three of the book, when his troop made repeated attempts to retrieve a surrounded unit, even after suffering heavy casualties. Gabriel's fellow soldiers didn't even return the favor by giving him covering fire. The last example I would like to use for comparison is when Gabriel was awarded 3 days of R and R for killing the most "gouks" in a month, he befriended an officer and stayed and got drunk for a week and a half. There are a couple other instances where it shows a clear lack of desire and morale in Gabriel and his comrades in arms compared to the stories of soldiers from the first part of the book, there is a clear contrast and I believe the true turning point of the war is when the United States lost the hearts of the fighting men of their military.

In Le Minh Khue's account titled "The merriment was short lived," Khue tells about the overall feeling of North's Vietnam and the morale of their soldiers. She talks of how her family was stripped of their riches during the communist land reform but she still fully bought into cause of her government. She covered the war on the front lines, but instead of reporting tales of horror she wrote about stories of heroism. The morale was high for the people of North Vietnam as well as its soldiers. They believed what they fought for was right and how everything was going to be great after the Americans left and South Vietnam surrendered. After she witnessed her enemy's surrender she felt great joy and she talked of celebration. I would put the celebration as part of the war for the Northern Vietnamese; it was all a part of that feeling that what there were fighting for was just. I think the ending of the war came after about a month while she was looking around at what was left, nothing. All the hope turned into reality and the high of victory was gone after she realized that after all the high hopes and heroics, there was still poverty and misery. Even after years of hellish war, not much had changed.

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