

Due date: Saturday, 9 October 2010, 09:10 PM

Last edited: Saturday, 9 October 2010, 07:32 PM (1083 words)

PART 1

In the book *Patriots*, there were several stories that caught my attention. However, there was one in particular that caught my attention. Green Beret captain Roger Donlon speaks about his mission in Vietnam to advise, assist, and train the Vietnamese. In his story, he expands on his experience and speaks about his efforts to rescue a fellow soldier. It was not necessarily the story that he told, as much as a remark he had made while telling his story that grabbed my attention. After describing the circumstances of his effort to save his comrade Pop Alamo, Roger Donlon says, "What keeps you going at times like that is the love you feel for your fellow teammates. At the time you called it respect, but as the years go on you realize it was really deep, deep love." This statement really forced me to imagine myself in that situation and resonated with me emotionally, helping me to relate to the writer. Because I was able to associate with Donlon's feelings, I found his story to be somewhat more reliable and trustworthy. And after all, just like you mentioned Professor Escobar, "THEY WERE THERE." I think the fact that Roger Donlon was there in Vietnam gives him much more creditability than someone who was not. And any case, eye witness accounts are normally more reliable than second-hand ones

The real challenge in this book is determining whether the writer is being objective or subjective regardless if they were there or not. Somewhere in my life I have heard that "there are always three sides to a story: yours, theirs, and the truth." Identifying the truth has remained a difficult task. I feel that Roger Donlon's story is truthful from his perspective, just as I believe that there is at least some truth in all of the other stories. This particular excerpt seems reasonable to me because it comports with what little I have heard about the Vietnam War. Furthermore, just because you hear the same thing from seven different sources does not necessarily mean it is true. The main problems I have discerning the veracity of these stories in their entirety are the speaker's own personal biases, the amount of time that has passed, and the effects that the war had on their mental stability or post-traumatic stress if you will. All of these reasons, among others, are elements that should be considered when reading these stories. I feel that at least one element mentioned comes into effect in every account.

Coincidentally, I also believe there is truth in every story because everyone lives life in their own reality through their own personal experiences. A person's reality can be skewed by many of the same reasons I mentioned and more. For example, imagine there is a simple bike crash that only three people witness; one person riding the bike, one person walking across the bike path, and another person sitting on a lawn chair watching it all happen. All three of these people will have different perspectives for many different reasons. This imaginary bike crash described does not even begin to compare to the hostile environment of a war, but shows the many sides of a story. In the case of a combat situation, I'm sure everything is extremely intense, adrenaline is rushing, and emotions are at their peak. Considering all of these factors, I enjoy reading the accounts told by the individuals who WERE THERE and think that all of the stories are valid and should be taken seriously because they represent were someone's perspective.

PART 2

Many of the stories in part two of the *Patriots* book were disappointing in some way. Perhaps I find disappointment easily because I don't feel that America's involvement in the war was entirely justified or necessary. This is partially due to the fact that I'm young and was not even alive during the war. In addition, I'm not yet fully informed about the war from all angles and would have liked it to have had a different outcome. In part two of *Patriots*, Ngo Vinh Long, an eager and well educated South Vietnamese student, talks about growing up and his involvement in the war. In Long's childhood, he seems to have had a positive outlook on the United States. He says "I was extremely impressed by these images of the United States. I always thought of it as an ideal place." Later in the story, he talks about how he acquired a job making maps of South Vietnam for the Vietnamese government. While he was doing that, he began to learn more and more about the policies that the United States implemented on the war. Once Long had become more knowledgeable it seems that he lost a lot of faith and respect for the United States. He mentions, "I resigned in disgust and became involved in the Saigon Student Union." This was disappointing to read because I think that it is important to keep good faith among nations. Granted, this is only one individual who voiced this sentiment, but I'm sure there were many others. Ideally, I want our country to have strong ethics and high morals. Since I'm a bit more realistic, I know that is almost never the case. It just disheartens me to hear his story of his own disappointment by America not living up to his expectations. Another obvious disappointment I read in this story that is prevalent in almost every story is the savage nature of war. It is appalling to think that

civilized people can be as so brutal to behead another person and then putting their head on display. I understand that "war is hell" there is little mercy, but a lot of the stories are pretty grotesque. Even when people are killed in a war, it should at least be done with some dignity.

In Ngo Van Long's story, there are also a lot of positive things that I also saw despite the disappointment. Long stood up for his beliefs, which is rare in many situations. He later moved on and graduated from Harvard University, studying with professors who played roles in formulating U.S. policies in Vietnam. Though I do not know what his beliefs were or even if I agree with them, nevertheless I feel like there is hope when someone has a backbone and stands up against injustice.

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