

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

Last edited: Thursday, 7 October 2010, 05:40 PM (1288 words)

Part 1:

I have to say that the story that most caught my attention in the first part was the story told by Roger Donlon. The story he told was just so crazy. I'm not saying that he's lying at all, but what he did was pretty amazing. As it says in the section before his story, he continued doing his job as a commander for five hours while ignoring serious shrapnel wounds to his stomach, shoulder, leg, and face.

I think the reason it sticks out to me is because I think have a rough idea of how he was feeling (though my experience hardly compares). A few years ago I worked for a fancy restaurant called The Black Point Inn. Work there was hard because people were always snooty and rude to you and the waiters were always surly, so it was really difficult to put your best face on for the customers and have a good attitude. One night I had to work on New Year's Eve night, which is also the eve to my birthday. I was already irked that I had to work until the wee hours of the morning on my birthday, but I didn't have time to mope about it. The whole restaurant was packed. 10 seconds after a party left, you were expected to have the table cleared, wiped, set with bread and butter, and water glasses filled or you'd get chewed out, big time. I didn't like it, and since I'm not so good at this kind of work in the first place, I knew it was highly likely that I'd get in some sort of

trouble, if not fired.

I don't even remember what happened for most of the night. All I remember is that my waiter came up to me as I was taking a breather around three in the morning just after everybody left, and told me how good a job I did keeping up with everything. He gave me half of his hips for that night. I don't even remember how I did it.

Now, I said that this wouldn't compare, but it sort of does in an abstract way. It had to do with focus, that determination that you know that this immediate challenge facing you probably won't turn out pretty, but you just have to put your head down and charge through. Roger Donlon knew that the situation was really, really bad, and that it was highly likely that he was going to die. He almost did! But he just kept his focus and did his job, and probably saved quite a few lives along with successfully defending the camp.

The other thing that caught my attention about the story was where he talked about his friend John Houston, who died in the battle. He had gotten a letter from his wife just before that telling him that she was pregnant with twins. And now he was dead. Now, I'm not a father, but that would just be unbearable pain. I thought about what I would do if I grew up a little more, spent a few years dating a wonderful girl, finally getting married and living happy for a few years, deciding to have kids, her finally getting pregnant with twins after trying for a long time, and then her getting in a car accident and dying, just like that. It's heartwrenching pain that people go through just because one country decides to fight another country.

As for credibility, I totally believe him. There really isn't a reason not to. How would he benefit from lying? Sure, in court cases and official documents, eye-witness testimony may be faulty. People may forget one thing or another. Car colors may change. Time of day. People and places. But this was seriously a traumatic event in his life. I see no evidence why Roger Donlon would be unbelievable. In this case, I believe that the fact that he was there gives him all the credibility in the world. Roger Donlon told his story with both objectivity and subjectivity in a balanced way. He didn't seem to swing one way or the other. He just told what he saw and what he did and what he experienced. And that is that.

Part 2:

The story that was the most disappointing for me to read in Part 2 was probably Paul Hare's story. Paul was in the army, stationed in Tunisia. All of a sudden he gets a call from the American ambassador. From there he was shipped off to Vietnam "without passing GO," only because he "was single and spoke French." In his story, he recounts a feeling of dislocation and uncertainty. Why were the Americans in Vietnam? He says, "One thing I realized very quickly was that these guys had been at it for a long, long time. They had seen battles come and go, they'd seen their friends and family members killed, and here we were, the Americans, coming in to try to put the whole thing right."

For me, this story really paints the picture of Vietnam pretty well. Poor communication abounds! Why were we there? Did the Vietnamese want our help? Is it our responsibility to be world

police? If the Vietnamese want Vietnam to be a Communist nation, is it our place to tell them that they can't do it? Who died and put the United States in charge anyways? It makes me ashamed that the people we elect to hold high offices in our government make such poor decisions without bothering to check their sources or care enough about the people whom their decisions affect most to find if they actually want or need help.

Part 2 1/2:

A positive thing that I've seen come out of all this is war business is great history. History gives us lessons, and while many people don't seem to learn from it, there are some people who do, and that makes it somewhat worthwhile. So many different people from all sorts of different cultures come alive through books like this "Appy book" that we're reading. I never would have learned nearly as much about the Vietnamese people if I hadn't read this book. In American history, we generally learn that the United States is the ultimate power, and everything we did was just and right in its time. Before I started reading this book, I didn't know what to think of the Vietnamese as a people. All I'd heard was the horrible things they did during the war and they were Communists, blah, blah, blah. But now I'm reading accounts by them, and it's fascinating stuff. Now I know that a people, just as much as a person, has a history that affects them to this very day. For example, the Vietnamese people had been exploited for many, many generations, and they were willing to fight for what they believed to be freedom with such passion that blows my mind. I read the story of Tran Thi Gung, and it makes my head explode. She did some things that

most men would be afraid to do. I wish I had just a fraction of her passion for what she believed in. American society today is all about pacifism, pretend everything is okay. Just go to work and buy stuff and it'll work out okay. But that's not what life is about. Many people died in Vietnam, but they hardly did in a boring, passionless way.

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