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Part 1

Roger Donlon's narrative of the battle that earned him his Medal of Honor drew my attention the most. The details he shares makes the horror of that particular night so vivid for me as a reader. To be able to give an account of exactly what he was doing before the attack and to remember the names of fellow soldiers so many years later gives his story such a real authenticity. I have no doubt that he speaks the truth as he experienced it that night. I wasn't even alive at the time this event occurred but because of this graphic retelling, I felt like part of me was there. His words create imagery so vivid in my mind, almost as if I had watched a film or seen pictures.

I don't think any amount of time can dim the images or mute the feelings that he has carried with him over the years. An experience like this cannot un-happen, time doesn't change it. When Donlon said "Early in the attack George Tuan, one of Vietnamese interpreters, was running like mad to his assigned mortar pit. Partway there a 57-millimeter round caught him right at the knees and took his legs off. He just kept running the stumps. Within about thirty seconds he was dead. That's one of the things you'd like to forget." I couldn't help feel a bit sick. Witnessing violence and terror like this is something you can never forget and I could hear the sadness and regret seeping into his heroic story.

Another part of this recount that really struck me was how he is able to give respect to the VC who almost ended his life. In the statement "The enemy came over the wire. They were gallant and brave and they thought by being numerically superior they could easily overrun us." even though he refers to them as the enemy, I felt that he felt some sort of honor for his attackers. He speaks of them with a sense of nobility. I think sharing the experience of war bonds people in a way that nothing else can. Donlon's description of 'deep, deep love' for his teammates was so human in a time that was so inhumane.

Part 2

The most disappointing story for me was Daniel Redmond's account of the northern evacuation of the Catholic refugees. Hearing the French soldier's treatment of these terrified people was disgusting. The lack of human compassion reminded me of Jewish survivor stories from Nazi Germany. And I could only feel shame for my country when I read the way the American military used the

situation as a photo opportunity for self promotion and justification of our presence in Vietnam. The sign reading "This is your passage to freedom." is just another way the American government was manipulating both the Vietnamese refugees and the American public back at home. These people were only pawns in a political battle created out of propaganda and fear. Communism was only a threat to the American ego, not to these farmers and fishermen.

I think I chose this piece because of the way Redmond was able to convey a sense of open-mindedness. Even though he believed in the relocation of his fellow Catholics, he saw the way people like Tom Dooley were spinning false accounts in the media, furthering a phony fear of Communism and building the facade of why it was essential for the American military to take action. The deceitful methods used to justify our presence and involvement turns my stomach. I was proud to hear that even a member of the US military did not just believe what he was being told and had the moral sense to think for himself and see things as they really were.

Redmond showed tremendous character by simply questioning the actions of authority. In the letter he wrote to his friend in 1955 he says "But my work has taught me one fact- the problems are too complex for canned thought. A preventive war is no solution. I pray to God we find one." Even though he shared in Dooley's 'anti-Communism' he was not willing to compromise his ethics by lying or spreading propaganda simply created to sway the American people's opinion and gain their support under any circumstances. It was surprising and inspirational to know not all American soldiers were blindly following a government in deception.

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