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HST 195
Assignment 1

I feel that one of the most powerful stories I've read so far has to be about Phan Xuan Sinh. His recollection "All my ancestors are buried here" was very profound and moving. He seems a reliable source and his account seems very credible. I feel like his retelling was very objective and he doesn't seem to have forgotten anything. Sinh seems like an average everyday person drafted into the war. He lost a limb in the war, and while the majority of accounts seem bitter and tinged with anger, Sinh's account seems as reasonable as possible given what he had gone through. While reading I feel like he gave off kind of an average soldier vibe, which makes him very trusting and I actually want to believe his account. All of his details are pertinent to his story and nothing that he says seems unbelievable.

The story that most disappointed me was definitely "Boy, you speak just like an American." Chester Cooper's rendition of his experiences I find only too believable and infinitely sadder. His retelling makes the government seem incredibly unprepared and just making mistake after mistake, a parallel that I see a lot with the war in Iraq today. The dichotomy of war is incredibly serious and powerful. On one side you have the soldiers, who are willing to lay down their lives for the war movement and on the other you have the government, running the war effort. We are given the political machinations of the government as the motivation behind the war and then the soldiers who have to carry out the orders of the government. Cooper seems believable in his account, as sadly all too often politicians are easily made out to be blustering pencil pushers who don't really know what is going on. When Cooper talks about the Norwegian ambassador, I find it unbearable that the government wouldn't have halted their bombing of the airport to gain the bonus of a political opening by having him speak in Hanoi. I only too easily can see something like this being repeated and happening in wars of today.

On a more positive side, It was very moving reading the Singlaub story "We sent them all back with a generous gift package." It's great to see that even in the middle of a war zone people care enough to help out people less fortunate. Singlaub talks about how

his unit rescues prisoners and rehabilitates them. The best part for me was reading that they actually did give a good gift package for people returning to the north. What was even better was the fact that, the SOG knew that the gift packages were being confiscated, so they actually gave an auxiliary package for after their primary packages were confiscated. I find it inspiring to see people willing to help and determined to improve the lives of other people, people that they don't even know. Stories like this are too often not heard but are able to instill an amazing sense of hope, goodness, and faith in everyday people.

These recollections that we are reading vary in story and length, but it is important to know that they are real. All of this really happened. The stories are able to inspire horror and disgust or they are able to inspire hope and potential for good. War is immensely confusing, but one of the most attention getting things I've ever come across in my life. These stories are a window to a different era and a different war than the one we are currently fighting today.

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