

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

Last edited: Saturday, 9 October 2010, 07:08 PM (613 words)

Tony Francisco
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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PART 1:

I did find the Jo Collins story to be most interesting, mainly because it was one of the easiest stories to identify with. But I also found the story of PHAN XUAN SINH to be interesting to me. I was attracted to this story because it is one that showed me a more personal side to the storyteller. When they were talking about when they hit the ship of innocent fisherman, woman and children, it brought me to realize that they needed to be on their toes, and it was a huge mistake on their part. It was one of the stories that most affected me in the first section because there were so many innocent people affected. I think this story was very believable in the way they brought emotion into it, and it almost made me feel like I was there. I don't think the story is one that can really be forgotten, and I found it very believable. It put me in the moment and time, and shows how on many things can go wrong by hearing one hint or clue of someone coming.

PART 2:

As I read through part two of the book, I was having trouble somewhat finding one that I was satisfied in saying I was completely disappointed. Looking back on all of the stories I would say my most disappointment was in the last one, on page 94. I was mainly disappointing in how the US was depicted. I was disappointed in the way that the student commandos could live "above the law." I was also amazed by the way they just through commanders out there knowing that it was going to be a planned failure. To me it is very low to drop those troops, knowing what they are wearing is obviously abnormal to the area, and knowing that they will fail and never come back. I do not understand what the point of it is to drop all these teams knowing that they are just getting set up to fail. Also I was disappointed in the way the Americans told the ones that were getting captured that they are just "working for Americans" (pg 97). In turn that led to the commandos to not be as loyal because they were pretty much just property. Like said as well on page 97, "But the U.S. destroyed their patriotism, turning them into disloyal people, disloyal even to

the Americans.” Instead of staying loyal to their country they turned on it due to the way they were treated and by the way they were told and taught certain things. I think the U.S. could have done a better job in preparing the commandos for the drop and responsibly teaching them, not dropping them like they were sitting ducks out there.

I found certain accounts in the readings that can be in turn positive if looked into it in the right mind. I find that these stories and accounts from these many people that experienced certain things at this time as a good way to learn. It teaches us how gruesome it was and for me gives respect for the people that were there living it and that are able to talk about certain accounts. For example, seeing someone be burned alive, or have their father be taken away and never seen again, or a man be in prison for twenty one years and be able to account for what happened to them and talk about their stories. It would take a lot to talk about something that was so horrible to you, and bring up memories that weren't really the best part of your life. I also think it is something we should look at for the future, almost somewhat like the quote by William L. Burton, “If you do not like the past, change it.” We can learn from these accounts and try and change what we do not like for the future.

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Part One

Picking just one story to talk about was a tough decision for me because of the amount of emotion and difference in opinion within each story. So I decided to go with the one that burned an image into my head that I just can't get rid of.

Early in the attack George Tuan, one of our 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 on the stumps. Within thirty seconds he was dead.

I can't imagine having to see something like that let alone relive it and speak of it again after all those years, and to have close friends die in your arms after being unable to save them. That is why I chose Roger Donlon's story, the first American in the Vietnam War to receive the Medal of Honor. The way he recollects those events in such vivid detail makes me feel like no matter how much time has passed those memories will be burned into his mind. I do know that after time has passed details of memories can change some and a person's opinions can have a sway on how they remember an event but the amount of detail that he gave gives the feeling of actually being there with him all over again like those memories have never faded for him. His account was very factual to me because when I read his story I felt more like I was watching a

movie other than seeing it as if I were him. As I was reading I felt like I could look around and see all the stuff going on around me or look over his shoulder. The fact that he gave numbers of men and talked about parts of the story that he only found out later, such as when they were being attacked on the 4th of July and they called for air support, that took much longer to get to them on account of the hangers being locked and the planes not being fueled, makes me feel like he talked to other people about this story and has multiple accounts of the different things that happened within his story.

Part Two

I was very disappointed in Chester Cooper's story, not in him but the events he encountered with the leaders who were involved in the war. Just the complete lack of respect for the people who were trying to create peace by negotiation; for example when he met with the Norwegian ambassador and was going to send him to Hanoi to deliver any message the US wanted. "The only condition he made was that we not bomb the airport the day he was coming into Hanoi." When Cooper went to check to see if there would be a problem and in fact they were scheduled to do a bombing he tried to talk them out of it for the sake of the negotiation and no one listened or, from my point of view, even cared.

I didn't really consider any of the stories, as a whole, as hopeful. There were small things about the stories or about the speakers themselves that spoke of goodness and potential for good. Chester Cooper seemed like a good man trying to help with the negotiations and Le Lieu Browne; a woman working in a man's

world just trying to help and live in peace. I also thought that it was really sweet that through all the bitterness involving the war that she still found love with Malcolm Browne, a journalist whom she frequently had to call in for her boss to, "chew him out."

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Nicholas M. Schultz

HST 195 – Assignment 1

Due 10/9/2010 by 9:00 pm

Assignment 1

Part One

After reading the stories in part one of Patriots – The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides, by Christian Appy, the story that seemed to stick with me was the narration given by Tran Thi Gung. I found it to be the most memorable simply because it was a story from a woman fighting for the Viet Cong. Most of the history of the Vietnam War I have seen portrayed in text books and American cinema focus mainly on the point of view of the American G.I. Every once in awhile I have found something written from the point of view of the American woman doing something to contribute to the war effort or possibly even the point of view of a male Viet Cong soldier (And usually the Viet Cong soldier is feeling sympathetic to the American G.I.) Never had I thought about the fact that Vietnamese women must have fought during the war, probably for both sides, a thought that seems so blatantly obvious now.

If I had to venture a guess as to the reliability and trustworthiness of the speaker, I would find her to be both reliable and trustworthy. I would find her story to be reliable because she uses language to

describe her engagements that is pretty vague and general. I know that we don't usually think about vague as being reliable but I like that she didn't try to give a detailed chronology of the events. She simply tells what she remembers and she lays out the overall order of events, limiting specifics to when discussing events that directly involved her. She does not try to fill the rest of her story with details that she couldn't possibly know or details that could easily be confused and forgotten. As to her trustworthiness, I would trust her because of what she says during the last paragraph of text. In answer to an implied question of her guilt she says, "But I never felt guilty about the killing I did. It was war. Wouldn't you shoot me if you saw me holding a weapon and pointing it at you?" (Page 19) I would say that, due to the fact that she does not feel guilt about her actions, she would feel no reason to lie while she recants her stories.

As to her credibility, I would take that with a grain of salt. I believe that she believes that everything she says is true, but she is coming from a very subjective place. At the beginning of her story lists her reasons for why she became a guerilla soldier for the Viet Cong. She was doing it for revenge for her father and to stop the brutality, poverty, and deprivation she experienced in her neighborhood growing up. Also, due to some of the language she uses to describe situations, I would say that she still feels a lot of anger toward the people she was fighting against during the war.

Part Two

The story that was most disappointing for me was Le Lieu Browne's story. I was mainly disappointed because of the amount of

censoring they had her doing of all written materials. They had her go as far as to censor an English-to-French dictionary because it included the word Communism. I read this part of her story and had images of Nazi Germany burning books and then flashes of our own countries current bi-partisan media and it stuck in my mind.

Also, Lieu referenced the Buddhist crisis in 1963 which I had not heard of before. I did a little more research into this and learned of the injustice's the Buddhist's had faced during this time. I just recently visited Thailand with a friend whose family is Buddhist and learned about what a peaceful people they are. Since it is fresh in my mind it stuck with me when I read it.

I found positive lessons in the narrative written by Ngo Vinh Long. This was a man who was born into nothing. He was educated by his father, both of whom learned how to speak English with an English-to-French dictionary and Charles Dickens novels, but only after walking one hundred miles to Saigon to obtain the material. At the age of sixteen and with home-schooled education, he took the national high school graduation exam and had the highest score in South Vietnam. He then went to Harvard and later was an advisor to U.S. government official. I find it very inspiring that, even in the midst of war and poverty, that he was able to accomplish so much.

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Part 1

The one story in part 1 of the Appy book that caught my attention the most was Tran Thi Gung. This story caught my attention because, in my opinion, she had no remorse. She held no ill feelings toward taking another's life. The other part of her story that made my heart sink and evoke anger was when she recalled shooting her first American, she speaks of him falling and his friends rushing to his aid, how "They held his body and cried." As I read this my heart sank, continuing on she says, "From then on we knew that if we just shot one American soldier others would rush to him and then we could shoot many more." This made me angry, angry because they used the compassion the soldiers had for one another against them. It makes me sad and disgusted to see the lack of humanness that I thought we all had.

I believe what she says. I have no doubt that such ugly things happened in such a terrible war. I may have strong feelings come up because of what she said but I am no one to judge. I have never been in a war and have never had to be in her position; to me she has great creditability because she was there. I don't think many could forget such traumatic events. I don't think even small details would be forgotten. I do think she could be slightly subjective because she chose to be on a side and she would be biased toward that side. However, I think that is easy to understand and I can feel my own biases arise as I read these stories.

Part 2

The one story in part 2 of the Appy book that disappointed me the most was Malcolm Browne. His story had many things in it that really bothered me and I found disappointing. War is hard to understand, but the events in his story are especially hard for me to comprehend. He starts his story talking about a town called Dam Doi where the Viet Cong were constantly massacring people there. One of the times that he went there to report on one of these massacres he describes the bloody display that was left for them to find. "The Viet Cong had taken twelve or thirteen of the people they'd executed and laid them out like the spokes of a wheel around a flagpole and on the flagpole they had raised the red, yellow, and blue Viet Cong flag." This made me upset, they massacre these people and then go as far as to make a bloody

display with the bodies. Where is their humanity? How far do they really need to take it just to make a point?

He continues his story with the torture the Viet Cong put their prisoners through, such as sending electric pulses to a man's genitals. I can't believe they could be so cruel and do such things to another human, but then again what have they done that shows they have any compassion at all? It's like they have no feelings, no emotions. Then Browne speaks of the most traumatic event of his story. The Monks and Buddhists don't want to be under the Diem power and they have been fighting for freedom. When they aren't heard they are forced to make the ultimate sacrifice in order to get their point across. A monk sits in the middle of the street and lights himself on fire, burning himself to death. Browne recalls that, "You could see the agony in his expression, but he never cried out." How powerful of this monk to make such a sacrifice and yet I ask myself why? Why did it have to come to the point where someone felt they had to take their own life in a public place just to get some recognition? As I read this, I literally felt sick to my stomach with trying to think about what these people were feeling. Then I was back to feeling irritated when Browne spoke about how everyone tried to start censoring what was put in the news. How he was beaten with bricks and his cameras were destroyed because they didn't want him spreading the truth about what was really going on. They went so far as to charge him with attacking the police, when in reality it was the police that done the attacking. It would be so frustrating to have been trying to relay truth and everyone was trying to stop you.

Although there was so much negative for me in this story, I found hope in knowing that Browne tried his hardest and did his best to let the world know the truth. He did all that he could to show the true colors of the war, show people what was really going on. He had compassion. He had compassion for the troops, monks, and the Vietnamese. The lesson learned is that you cannot believe everything you seen in the news. It is usually bias and censored; it probably isn't even how the journalist wrote it. Truth is an ugly thing sometimes, and there are some people who will go out of their way to try to stop you from spreading it, but you have to always try to do what is right. Another lesson learned in this story is that not everyone is the enemy. He is one of the people who didn't approach everyone as an enemy. He listened to people and made up his own mind about them, he didn't just judge them by race. I think a journalist is a powerful person to listen to about the war because they haven't had it drilled into their head that there is an enemy. They have compelling observations. I found Browne's story moving and haunting, it was a powerful read.

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One particular story stood out to me as I was reading through part one of "Patriots - The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides." It was the story of Medal of Honor winner Roger Donlon. Donlon's story interests me because he is not what you would typically envision when thinking of war heroes and war stories. He was not fighting in his own country, for his own country or even with his own countrymen. His troops were Chinese anti communists, some Americans and Vietnamese soldiers, whom he didn't know to trust. At the end of the story, when he is comforted by the sight of a US flag on a navy ship because he was not even allowed to fly one at base, shows how far he truly was from home.

I believe Dunlon to be trustworthy in his remarks. You do on the other hand take on account the emotion that went into play during his time of distress. It seems that his training took over and he went in "auto pilot." He accomplished many great things but witnessed many horrible events in this battle. I would assume that you would have to tune out much of your surroundings to do the things he was able to do, in the face of such adversity. Such comments made about his mistrust of his Vietnamese soldiers came back to mind when he talked of how a third of them "broke the neck or slit the throat" of the man next to him. I am sure that a number were traitors but a third probably was an exaggeration. I think that someone's presence at such battle can both give them more or less credibility on the actual event. I believe that if one was to panic and lose control, they would have no credibility. A panicked mind is not reasonable by nature and prone to mental mistakes. On the other hand, if one was to stay cool, such as Dunlon was able to, they would gain credibility because a calmed mind can analyze situations and make reasonable decisions. Therefore, I think that I would have to consider Roger Dunlon's story believable.

Part 2

The story of Rufus Phillips in part two stood out to me for a couple reasons. His mission had a clear goal, "Save South Vietnam, God Bless You" and "Find out what the Vietnamese people want and then help them get it." In reality was to tell the South Vietnamese what they want and make them get it. Most the things Phillips tried to establish were undercut by his superiors. The most disappointing part of the story was when they wanted to setup a democratic government with the puppet leader Ngo Dinh Diem and Phillips's superiors did not support it. They thought a system of checks and

balances were too weak and fail. They forced a shadow government with communist principles. Showing a lack of faith for the principles they were fighting for in favor for the ideology they were fighting against.

The positive thing that Phillips did accomplish was to teach the Vietnamese not to just take orders, like the French had them do. He taught those principles and how to make decisions for themselves. I believe this to be the strongest point of democracy, the idea that a population is full of individuals to be able to govern themselves.

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The History of Vietnam

Assignment #1

By: Kristin Maurer

1) Tran Thi Gung "I was stuck in a tunnel for seven days."

Most of the stories in this book really made an impact on me. It has been a long time since I studied war. To hear first hand from people that fought in it is mind-boggling. Tran Thi Gung's story keeps running through my mind. I believe her story to be very true. This little, tiny girl needed no training, just her heart.

She did not care about politics until her father died fighting for what he thought was right. She now knew she must continue and take revenge, that is all the training needed. She went on, fought so hard, and took so many lives that she was awarded a medal for killing many Americans in just one battle. In addition, she would sneak into enemy's bases to gain knowledge for her team (most men were not even that brave.) She succeeded many times in sneaking in, knew the base so well she could draw maps. This woman has not forgotten a thing except that she fought for so long and so many fights, she could not possibly remember them all. What surprised me the most was even years later after the war ended; she still has no regrets for taking lives. She said she would feel bad if she was on American soil, but because they were on her soil, they deserved it. I can understand and feel for what she is saying, but I will never understand her not feeling bad for taking lives. I was not there, so I just cannot fathom that. One of the main things I got out of this story is that the Vietnamese fought with their hearts. The Americans fought because it was their job. Big, big difference.

2) Ngo Vinn Long "If they are making maps, they're preparing for war."

Plenty of these stories just aggravated me. Why wouldn't our government listen to the numerous warnings? From this story, I can really say that we let Mr. Long's boyhood dream of a beautiful America fall through the cracks, and why? His father taught him to highly admire and respect the U.S. He admired America so much that he made every effort, went to great lengths to learn English. When the U.S came to Vietnam, he was excited at the fact that they were there to

help Vietnam's independence. When really the U.S was there to make sure communists were nonexistent. Mr. Long refused to believe that the U.S was there destroying everything in there path. He volunteered to help the U.S out by traveling the countryside to draw maps. As he traveled the countryside, he started to notice all the bad that was happening such as starvation and killing of innocent people. All his beliefs about the U.S. were being reversed. From then on, with all beliefs gone, he resigned and began to protest against the U.S and Saigon. He burned documents and became a rebel to south Vietnam. Many times, he tried to explain to the U.S that they were going about their plan all wrong and by this creating more communists. The U.S said to him that he was naïve and turned their heads. Mr. Long was just one out the many who were warning us and no one listened. Well, we all know what happened next, a war.

The positive I got out of this is not much. I can say that Mr. Long's testimony moved me and made me think. His preconceived ideas of another culture were put to the test when he met the American government face to face in his own county. Yet after he could see what was happening to his countrymen, he chose to come to America where he got a Harvard education. From there, he was able to preach his beliefs so he could try to go about making some positive changes by teaching people about the ill-conceived ideas of what was happening in Vietnam. As America learned more and more about what was really happening in Vietnam, the more protestors got involved in the movement to stop the war.

So many people were trying to warn the government that they were going about things the wrong way. The government ignored it. On a positive note, I am glad now (at least) that these people are finally heard even though it is too late.

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HST195 Assignment 1

David Reagan

Part 1

The story that caught my attention was that of Deidre English. The opening quote, "How can my country be at war and I don't know about it." sums up what grabbed my attention. In today's world, the idea that anyone wouldn't know who their country is at war with is astonishing. The internet and cable news pretty much makes it impossible not to know. It makes me wonder what would have been different if Vietnam had the same level of coverage as Iraq and Afghanistan have had.

I find Deidre's story to be very reliable. She spoke of her own personal experience. So she should be considered an authority on the subject. The only part that needs more evidence is that she says most people didn't know America was at war in Vietnam. She is ascribing her lack of knowledge on everyone else by calling herself part of 'most Americans.' The rest of her story is about her own personal experiences and feelings, so they can be taken at face value, unless something comes up contradicting her.

Part 2

The story of Ngo Vinh Long is a disappointing story. His story of going from idolizing America when he was young, to protesting American policy is sad. It shows what a huge opportunity America missed in Vietnam. If policy makers had sought out and listened to people like Ngo Vinh Long, some or all of the many tragedies of the Vietnam War may have been avoided. It is disappointing to read about a man who was well liked by influential people being ignored and called naive, even though he had demonstrated his love of America and his knowledge of Vietnam. It is good to read his story, and the others like it. With these accounts, perhaps we can avoid the same mistakes that made these stories so tragic.

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

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I chose to share the story called "We were babies in arms in every way" By Roger Donlon. This story catches your attention really early on in the story. By displaying the amount of dedication, passion and just the will to survive the main character in the story had for what he was doing. As a Captain in a Special Forces unit it is your job to stay alert and intelligent about the situations you're involved in. In this story the author paints a vivid picture of what it was actually like there at that hamlet that night. I believe that when you have great leaders surrounding you. The result it going to be good soldiers, for example in the story the author lets the reader know about a few of his men and how they died trying to either hold their positions on the line or how they were trying to get an edge on the enemy. Like I said leading by example is most important. The Captain literally went through hell fire to show his men that he was still there and fighting. Wounded multiple times he was still able to sustain the crucial hold on the U.S position. The harsh reality of war is that people die. As a widow the woman in the story gave birth too twins. Unfortunately one of the babies passed away shortly after. It is bound to happen that certain story's of war are forgotten, I guess it's up to the people reading the story to choose if it was historic or not. In the story it is said that John Houston and his baby are buried at Arlington cemetery. I personally believe that this story is real and the facts a true. That's a decision everyone has to make for themselves.

I decided to write about a story called "It was like 'Terry and the Pirates' " Written by Richard Olsen. Overall a good story but what I was disappointed with was the attitude by South Vietnamese. The author multiple times gave examples of how they would either would be lazy and in result not complete the duties of a soldier. They would be cowards and try to escape the battle. I understand being involved in a war is not a natural thing, but you have to adapt and overcome your fear and look to the greater good of why you chose to be there. Everyone would be lying if they said they were not scared while in combat. The way the South Vietnamese would come up with lies just too pretty much save their own tail is really disappointing. I also didn't like the fact that the American pilots had to fly using out dated equipment. Vietnam was the first war the United States actually started to evolve and use the helicopter as the main source of transportation in and out of the battle zone. You would think that they will have more funding sent their way. The updated UH-1 Huey was put into mass production in 1960. That is two years of production time before these events occurred. They should have had the proper equipment.

It is a rare phenomenon to hear something positive about the Vietnam War. In most cases we the public look at the big picture when really the positive events of the war require us to look deeper into this taboo subject of our history. Even though the main character of the reading said he was an officer and he was flying with a group of Warrant Officers technically officers have superiority. As said in the story he gave the Warrant Officer great respect because of the amount of experience they already had.

Wisdom comes with age. Most of the pilots he flew with were older than him and he was twenty seven. Something I thought was a great idea was to spread the knowledge of the more experienced pilots with the younger ones, by pairing them up into teams. That also created a higher level of comradely within the pilot community.

The Vietnam War is a very sensitive subject in the United States. I don't believe that should mean we as American citizens should shy away from it and not learn about the men and women involved not only in the fighting part of the war, but the political and what happened here on the home front. Those are all important components of the war. I just hope that we as a society can learn from the history books and prevent the same mistakes from happening again. Maybe doing so can create much needed positive closer for the people forever impacted by the Vietnam War.

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Jason Carlstrom

Assignment #1

10/9/2010

Throughout part one almost every story grabbed my attention. Each one has its own unique situation that shows how life was like during the war. The personal story that stood out to me was from George Watkins (p.21) because of how "unfair" his tour was. He was drafted and barely made it due to health conditions, became infantry instead of an engineer, lived in the jungles for a month and was always fighting, then had the life changing booby trap mine that took his sight, legs, and arm. It seemed like it was meant for him because he was almost dead last in a line of 40+ men who walked past it. How it really stood out to me was even through his unfair treatment that ended with such a bad injury he says "I don't have much bitterness." It's hard to believe being drafted and tossed into combat that he has no grudge toward the Army for what has happen.

Evelyn Colbert (p.83) story was short but made me feel the government and Bureau didn't want any negative or "weak" persona shown even if the statistics proved that. Instead of admitting it was going badly they reworded it to say the situation was "not understood" and when she wrote an article showing that the Viet Cong were doing well the military got annoyed and was told never to write on military stats again. They were acting as rulers over the press and information even if it was correct and seems like they were subtly controlling others and acting like what they were fighting against.

I liked the part in Paul Hare (p.76) story how he worked close with the Vietnamese to rebuild and help whats been destroyed by the Viet Cong. He also picked up the hobby of cock fighting and surrounded himself in the environment and got a true understanding of the lives of the people. It's that type of firsthand experience that can make a difference and help the image of whats going on.

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Jinny McKenzie

HST 195

Assignment 1

In Part One of the Appy book the account of Phan Xuan Sinh left a great impression on me. I cannot imagine the deep sense of regret felt at the realization that one has fired upon and killed innocents. At the same time that I feel a great deal of sympathy for the anguish this must have caused, I have to admit a slight feeling of incredulity. He recalls that his recon unit was waiting for Viet Cong to arrive in their boats. The boats approached and they saw what they believed to be the silhouettes of rifles against the night sky and took fire, only afterward discovering it had been a group of fishermen accompanied by women and children. The part that confuses me, the part that makes me question the truthfulness of his account, is that he then states that it is common for fishermen in Vietnam to fish at unusual hours, including late nights. Why, given the knowledge of local fishing habits, were they not more careful to determine who they were firing upon beforehand? I have, as part of my nature, a tendency to assume the good in all people, but there is a disjoint created by what seems like something so common sense here—that one should be certain, in areas where civilians are present, that those they fire upon are those they intend to fire upon. Perhaps the chaos of war overrides ones common sense. Perhaps that ought to be a good enough reason not to engage in it.

In Part Two I was instantly excited to read the account of Malcolm Browne when I learned in the opening paragraph that he was the journalist who captured the haunting images of the immolation of Thich Quang Duc. Unfortunately I found myself disappointed at his somewhat cavalier presentation of the experiences he had in Vietnam. His primary comments on his experience of the immolation were that he sought distraction through the photographing process; he did not speak to the emotional impact, the social message, or the great tragedy of it. He later goes on to state that, “You can’t help liking even sometimes naïve Buddhist monks,” which I thought was a bit smug and even more disrespectful, showing a lack of understanding for a group of people within which he had supposedly formed several close ties. He further makes me a bit uneasy when he remarks that “...by and large war is boring... not just for the journalists, but for the troops.” I am of the belief that the 58,000 Americans and countless Vietnamese who lost their lives in this war would have preferred boredom to death.

After reading the account presented by Mrs. Browne I was even more bothered by the careless statements her husband had made. Having married a woman whose

family is comprised of Buddhists I would think he would be more thoughtful in his assessment of the impact the war had on them, and yet he doesn't give it a mention. She too disappointed me. At one moment she asserts herself as a critic of the First Lady's inappropriate labeling of the immolation as "bar-b-q" but then backpedals later by expressing admiration for this same woman. After reading both of these accounts I felt that they were both trying to float the political middle line, remain somewhat neutral and avoid taking a firm stance. My final impression is that these are not people who are indifferent to the experience of war or of the people or experiences of Vietnam, but that they are perhaps careless in their choices of words; after all, these are supposedly educated individuals.

Despite the horrific nature of war, I did find some personal inspiration in the words of Vo Nguyen Giap. I hope to never know the sentiment he expressed when he stated that the reason the Vietnamese won the war was "because [they] would rather die than live in slavery." It's not a particularly cheerful sentiment, but it is a sentiment wrought with the passionate devotion all humans feel about their sense of freedom, of autonomy, and about their willingness to do anything to achieve and maintain it. As a person descended from victims of the African Slave trade and American chattel slavery, I can certainly empathize with these sentiments, for it was only as a result of my ancestors struggles against oppression that I exist today, and I imagine countless Vietnamese can say the same. My hope in this is that these great tragedies in history will eventually lead all to realize the inherent right all human beings have to self govern, not only on a national, but also on community and personal levels. It is not something I expect my children to know, nor their children, but I hope.

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

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Justin White

Assignment 1

The story that caught my attention was the one of Tran Thi Gung, a woman who had fought against the South Vietnamese government and the Americans during the Vietnam conflict. Her story is very captivating to me because it is a point of view from the "enemy", which I find to be very informative and unbelievably fascinating. The things that she had to endure are simply amazing to me, and the fact that she was the only women in her company of fighters and was one of their best soldiers makes it that much more impressive to me. Tran joined the guerrillas in 1963, at the young age of seventeen. She joined because of the death of her father, killed by the American GI's and the South Vietnamese soldiers. When Tran's father was killed she decided that she would seek revenge for her father's death, and that is exactly what she did.

The story of Tran Thi Gung is a powerful story but is it completely true, that is the question. In my opinion, I believe that it is true, but is it possible that she could have embellished some of her stories? The thing that factors in is the subjectivity, is it factual or is it objective, it is really hard to determine. I personally do not know how credible this person is but I definitely believe her story. I don't know what she could gain from lying about killing Americans and fellow Vietnamese people. So in my opinion the story is completely true. It is really up to the reader to decide if the person telling the story is credible or not.

The story I chose to talk about for part 2 is that of Henry Prunier, a retired brick and masonry contractor who had been an ally to Ho Chi Minh for a few weeks in 1945. Prunier had parachuted into the jungles of Indochina just a few weeks after World War 2 had ended, as a part of a seven man "Deer Team" organized by the Office of Strategic Services. Their mission was to support an anti Japanese resistance called the Viet Minh led by a "Mr. Hoo." When Prunier got to Indochina he began training the guerrilla resistance group. After a few days Prunier met up with a very frail Ho Chi Minh, who had walked down from the Chinese border and was in terrible shape. Minh was suffering from dysentery and malaria. The medic that was with Prunier gave Ho Chi Minh quinine and sulpha drugs which may have helped save his life. Although America and Ho Chi Minh were allies for a short time, Minh could not have seen the coming conflicts between his people and the Americans. When the Americans sided with France instead of Minh, it had to be a great disappointment to him.

When I finished reading this story I was really surprised. I had no idea that

America had been so close with Ho Chi Minh at one point in time. It is shocking to me that America was helping Minh at one time and then not long after we were fighting his people in fierce combat. There is so much politics that are involved in war it is disheartening, and to know that we take sides so easily and plunge into war. I know there is probably more to it than that but it is hard to really determine. What probably disappointed me the most is that the people we help train and would eventually fight were nothing more than patriots that just wanted to do what any human being would do, and that's protecting their homeland. I believe most people in their positions would have done the same thing. The really sad thing is, is that they weren't going and looking to take someone else's land, like what many wars have been about throughout history. They were simply trying to gain independence and freedom.

I am trying to find something positive from this story but it isn't easy. I still can't help but feel like we kind of double crossed Ho Chi Minh by acting like we were friends with his groups and training them for crying out loud. When we decided to back up France instead of Ho Chi Minh's forces I do believe it was in America's best interests but it still seems kind of two faced. I think what we can learn from this story is that war is complicated and unwinnable, in the sense that everyone suffers from it and even if you're on the so called winning side you will still carry the scars, inside and out.

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

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Molly Graham

HST195 Vietnam War

Assignment One

PART ONE:

The story that caught my attention was that of Tran Thi Gung, a member of the Viet Cong during the Vietnam War. What initially made me respond to this story was the fact that Tran was the only woman in her unit and was a very petite seventeen-year old on top of that. I thought her reason for joining in the fight was also moving, having been confronted by her father's murderers as well as wanting to change the horrible conditions of her community. As I read on, I was impressed with her ability to use any type of gun, her description of the elaborate tunnels, her dangerous reconnaissance missions, her capture of the nice American man, her shrapnel to the head, and overall the way that she spoke so matter of factly about each of these experiences.

As for the reliability when it comes to these stories, I am not sure that I have any way of knowing for sure how truthful they are. Do I think that they have been elaborated on? I am sure they have been, but I have no idea to what extent. I believe these experiences must have some truth to them as I know that I personally cannot imagine what sort of events occurred in this woman's lifetime. I do know that some traumatic events can be very vivid in our minds while others almost disappear. I would imagine that over time, our imaginations would fill in the details. I believe that we should listen to what Tran has to say and take it with a grain of salt, accepting most of it to be true but perhaps some of the more heroic parts perhaps to be her personal way of coping with the extreme loss and trauma that she experienced as a young person.

I believe Tran to be more credible in regards to the emotional aspect of the war as she personally experienced it. What I mean by this is that she can paint a picture of what it could have been like as an individual running up against these events in a time of turmoil. As far as the actual statistics and facts, I would expect perhaps that maybe Tran would be a little less reliable of a source

because she was so deeply personally invested into this cause and would clearly have very strong biases. I do not think that you could experience something as tumultuous as a guerrilla war fought in your country and come out with an objective story. There are far too many emotions involved.

PART TWO:

I found Part 2 of Appy's novel to contain many tales which were disappointing. I think that maybe the interview that disappointed me the most may have been the one with John Singlaub, the commander of the American SOG until 1968. His interview made me feel this way on more than one level. To begin with, the events that he described which he had participated in were just awful. His story included kidnapping people and lying to them about their location while brainwashing them, the grey and black propaganda via radio, and dropping commandos in the north to basically be "captured, killed, or doubled" (92).

What disappointed me just as much was his attitude about these events and his opinions about the war. He was talking about awful things that he had participated in with a tone devoid of feeling. Towards the end of his interview, it began to be revealed that he had no remorse and had a very skewed vision of what had happened. He talked of "traitors" at home who were opposed to the war and how this was part of the Communist strategy. He also talked about Vietnam not being a defeat for the United States because "...we slaughtered them. Man, we just cleaned their clocks" (93). He even went as far as to say that he at times had the feeling of being a missionary in Vietnam. I do not know what is worse: committing horrible crimes of humanity or believing the whole time that what you are doing is justified and right.

As far as something that one could take away from Part Two which could be seen as a learning lesson or a potential for good, I felt that the account of the monk setting himself on fire, though incredibly sad and perhaps disturbing, could fit. This man gave his life to send a message. He can be viewed as a hero because nobody can deny that this monk, Thich Quang Duc, had courage and determination. I think what was disappointing about many of the stories in Part 2 was that the person knew about something bad but did not stand up and fight it because they were afraid. Quang Duc was not going to stand by and watch the persecution of his people. He and the other monks did not do this as a rash decision either. It was clearly meticulously planned out, with a ceremony beforehand, a procession, and an organized blockade of the street. I feel that as sad and desperate as this act was, it was effective and perhaps one of the only thought out plans of the war.

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Brock Berg

Hist. 195

Joe Escobar

10/07/2010

Part I

The story that I chose out of part one was the story written by, "Dang Vu Hiep." The story comes from the Vietnamese point of view, which to me seemed a little more interesting as I have not heard this side of any Vietnam 'War Story.' I read this story with a keen eye, trying to investigate the truths, or fallacies.

There were many parts in this story that raise awareness. I am unsure how credible this story is; however, the story told tells us that with or without an attack on Pleiku, the Americans had already put an airstrike into effect named 'OPLAN 37'. Which according to Hiep, Lyndon Johnson wrote in his memoir that the operation had been planned in April, 1964. If this is true it would mean that the attack on Pleiku, which killed nine Americans and injured one hundred and twenty six Americans, was insignificant our own governments 'plan.' To hear the 'enemy' of the time stating that their awareness of the American troops was unknown at the time is a bit disheartening. Being an American, and a patriotic American at that, it is hard to hear that so many American lives were affected by this casual battle during a 'long-term dry season.' I believe the statements made by Hiep were true to his knowledge; however, I do not believe that their intelligence was unaware of Americans in Pleiku. The story was very factual, with little subjectivity; however, there are conclusions drawn from incidents occurring or not occurring. For example: Hiep concluded that even if the attack on Pleiku had not happened, then the bombings would still have occurred. In my sight, I see that there was an operation named 'OPLAN 37' which had been planned for over a year, prior to the U.S. bombings in North Vietnam. But what I do not see is how is it that this operation was not carried out for one year, until the attacks in Pleiku? To me I see a direct correlation between being attacked, and going on the offensive. Because we had this plan in place, does not mean that we would have used it regardless. It is better to be prepared, than to not.

Part II

For part II of this assignment, I chose to use only one story from, "Henry Prunier."

I was most disappointed with the ending of this story. It was very

disheartening to hear the taboo of the time being plagued upon innocent individuals for speaking their mind. Prunier embellished a memory of cause and effect that took effect not on him directly, but on his family. For simply stating in an article that 'he believed Ho Chi Minh had the genuine support of the Vietnamese people' was blasphemy. Classmates of his daughters began persecuting their father, claiming him to be "Communist." At this time in history, communism was the largest taboo of America. Communism was to democracy as Hitler was to the Jews. There was no room for socialism in, or around allied countries. The fear of the spread of Communism could be compared to that of a Leper. For a Leper knows no ally, only struggles for the continuous survival of itself. As I read on I couldn't help coming back to this story, and seeing how, for this particular man, humbling his experience must have been. The story had been written prior to our conflict with the North, and prior to our disapproval of Minh. For Prunier, the experience must have been exhilarating. To be welcomed into another country by proud nationalists who seek nothing more than independence and nirvana. The feeling you get from Prunier, is that Minh was a very peaceful man; a man who's love for his country goes far beyond political views. As they reach Hanoi, Minh made it clear that these American Soldiers were always welcome in his country, as well as always welcome to Minh personally. That to me shows great respect, and gratitude from Minh. It is very unfortunate we did not get to see Minh bring his country to peace.

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The story of Tran Thi Gung sparked various types of emotion in me as I read her account of being the only women in an aggressive guerrilla unit near Cu Chi. What caught my attention was how frank, honest and precise her stories of combat were. I didn't feel as though she was bragging or trying to find her identity through her story. Although she is still broken from the tragic losses of her friends and comrades, she was able to portray war from the side that many Americans would rather disregard. She made very valid points, and brought to light issues that force one to look at the "big picture." One specific example that caught my attention, was when she informed the interviewer of how she noticed when she shot one American others would rush to his aid which made them "sitting ducks." She reveals that her unit adapted this cruel tactic, "From then on we knew that if we just shot one American soldier others would rush to him and then we could shoot many more." I believe that the majority of people have a reactionary response that can be hateful anytime one hears both sides of war (especially when it's your country being the recipient of tactical defeat). It's hard to sustain neutrality when one's ancestors are involved. Gung states that, "In the first battle against the Americans I shot so many GIs I was awarded a decoration with the title "Valiant Destroyer of American Infantrymen"". Once again, as an American I must fight urges of nationalism to view the story objectively, and that's what stood out to me personally and brought my attention to this particular account. Gung exposed my bias feelings with an excellent conclusion as she argued that, "If I went to America and killed people there, I would feel very sorry and guilty. Since the Americans came to my country I don't feel guilty." I don't agree with Gung for many reasons, however, I believe she presents a good point that Americans were on her land, in her neighborhoods, shooting at her loved ones. When one can imagine the

places that they love in their communities being toyed with by an invading force, it's easier to see through Tran Thi Gung's eyes.

The most Disappointing story was the story told by Henry Prunier. The reason it was the most disappointing is because it revealed how easy it would have been for a peaceful and constructive resolution to problems in Vietnam. The efforts of the OSS were well received by Vietnam. When they arrived Prunier mentions that "there was a big decorated archway that said, "Welcome to Our American Friends." That same evening they had a big feast for us. They slaughtered a calf and served us beer." As Prunier continues to tell his story, it's very evident that he holds a special place in his heart for the Vietnamese people. He seemed troubled that Americans at the time didn't understand that the heart of the Vietnamese was towards independence more than communism. Prunier discusses direct conversations with Ho Chi Minh and states that Ho Chi Minh said, "you'd be welcome to come back anytime. At one point in the conversation someone asked him if he was a communist and he said, "Yes I am a communist, but there's no reason why we can't be friends, why we can't live together." What is astounding is that this is the leader of the Vietnehm opening up a door of negotiation that U.S. officials did not take advantage of. Throughout the text it seems as though the OSS opened several doors that could have been avenues toward peace and alliance, however the U.S. did not take advantage of them. If the U.S. used the influential momentum it gained from the OSS millions of lives would have been spared.

It was very difficult for me to find a positive or up-lifting story as I read over such disturbing material. However, the story of Ngo Vinh Long was inspirational because it's a story of overcoming adversity and doing what one thinks is right even if it puts one's life on the line. Long at first helped U.S. generals draw out maps of South Vietnam and became an integral part of U.S. strategy. But after seeing the injustices placed on the Vietnamese people as a whole he switched from being an

advocate to a protester. Already being wounded in battle, shot at by multiple militias, and threatened by the U.S., he kept his dignity and applied to Harvard. Long recalls, "Many of my American friends, some of whom worked for the CIA, said, "Long, you should get the hell out of here because if you don't one of these days you'll be arrested." So I applied to Harvard University and was accepted." After being accepted he continued to advise top government officials of the great mistake a full-scale war would be in Vietnam. What inspired me about this man's story is how relentless he was through so many struggles, and how he fought for what he believed was right, no matter who the opposition was.

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The story in Part 1 of the Patriots book that caught my attention was the story told by 'Deidre English'. I selected this story because in 1966 I was a sophomore in high school and didn't have a clue where Vietnam was. I knew Americans were there fighting and losing their lives, but didn't know why. Deirdre tells of being in Chicago and witnessing a small anti-war demonstration put on by the University of Chicago, of reading the signs and the myriad of questions that flooded her. "How can my country be at war and I don't know about it...". These are questions I asked of myself during this time period. I remember sitting in a restaurant in Eugene with friends and the manager came in dressed in his National Guard uniform, he seemed to be in a state of excitement, when we asked him what was going on he stated that he and his unit were going to the University of Oregon campus to bust the heads of those 'hippie protesters'. The bloodlust in his eyes scared to death, it was not just his anger and excitement, but suddenly this whole Vietnam 'thing' was in my face and I didn't know what to do about it. I think Deidre's story tells of the experience of many people during that time of turmoil and confusion and I think that she stated her circumstances perfectly. She chose action instead of continued confusion and I find that admirable.

In Part 2, the story told by Paul Kattenburg, disappointed me a lot. Not the speaker or his attitude, but the events that he tells about. Kattenburg was a Vietnam specialist in the 1950s and headed the State Department's Vietnam Task Force in 1963 and although our government appointed him to this position, they certainly didn't trust his judgment. When he went to the National Security Council meeting and saw "the abysmal ignorance around the table of the particular facts of Vietnam" and realized that no one had an actual plan for Vietnam, just a reused plan that had been tried in other areas of the world. He saw that although some of the old plans may have been successful in completely different historical experiences they would not be successful in Vietnam. When he told the Council that "it would be better if we just left with honor", he was rebuked by some American government officials. Then he returned from Vietnam, and he wrote a report predicting South Vietnam would lose the war within 2 years, that the Vietnamese never wanted to fight, and they just wanted to be left alone. After he wrote this (in his opinion) honest and upfront report he was kicked out of the Bureau of East Asian Affairs and sent to where you put people who

are really off base. It's disappointing that instead of using the information from someone that had lived in the area for quite awhile and knew the people, knew some of the history and seemed pretty aware of the political climate, they shuffled him off to somewhere as a punishment and based on his last paragraph, it seems like they kind of broke his spirit. He says in 1965 he thought about resigning altogether and making a statement about Vietnam, but didn't think it would make any difference, so kept quiet.

Both of the stories I selected taught me that if I want to know what's truly going on outside my small personal world, I have to be the one to dig and find the truth. And if I want something to change I have to be willing to take the steps I believe are right to make that change. Taking action and trying to make a difference is sometimes scary, but sitting around waiting for someone else to make things right is scarier.

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Jesse Long

Assignment 1

The single story that caught my attention was War Heroes. It was a story that really made an impact on me throughout each page. When you hear about a man losing his legs from being shot and continuing to run on his nubs, and then to hear of a man who had just lost his life shortly after hearing he was going to be a father of twins. These are the kind of things that nobody can read and not take a minute and be grateful of the sacrifice many have made on our behalf. I think the speakers in War Heroes are Very Reliable, trustworthy, and believable. Who are we to second guess what they have to say when as said before, we were not there they were. I have veterans in my family and veterans are not ones to lie and make up things about what they experienced in order to sound heroic. I have heard my grandpa say, "It was not heroic to be over there it was hell." So yes I believe what is being said. I am sure there are things that become forgotten over time but many of the things described in detail are things one does not forget. Just like any traumatic situation someone goes through, it is not easily forgotten if at all. As I have grown up I have realized it is the bad or tough times you remember and never forget so I think the things these men experienced will never be forgotten no matter how hard they try.

For part 2 of this assignment it was difficult as I enjoyed all the stories. I like history but mainly that of the United States of America. In these stories we have been reading I remember things here and there that were disappointing for me rather than a complete story being disappointing. I remember in particular something from "History is not made with IFS". I remember reading how the Vietnamese best weapon was the will and strength to not surrender and to win at any cost. However our soldiers were there training them in the art of combat, teaching them to shoot, use mortars, and bazookas etcetera but specifically grenades, you name it they were taught for there resistance against French troops. It was said however these things were not what won the war for the Vietnamese. Ho Chi Minh and his leaders began by rallying the people and getting them behind his movement. They would not give up no matter what happened and they were ready and willing to accept whatever consequences came with that in order to gain independence. I agree and believe all that I have just said but what I have been getting to is the actual reason for why this story was disappointing. After the war was all said and done, long after all the great and horrible experiences were over with there was a reunion that was held in Vietnam. I don't know how soldiers could go through a reliving of events like that but they did. But at this reunion

Henry Prunier noticed Giap staring at him. He couldn't tell why, he thought he was possibly trying to see if he recognized him? Giap then grabbed an orange from a bowl and went on to act like he was tossing a grenade in Prunier's direction. This could be taken many ways but I can't help but think that we may have trained the very one who killed American soldiers and taught them the way in which they used against us. I realize we may have had no way of knowing we would ever be fighting them in the near future but it is still disappointing for me.

For part 2 of 2 I could not stop recalling how the Vietnamese were so relentless in their fight against a much stronger world power. I find that amazing how they were able to continue in that with such determination and drive. It makes me look at our country and see how there are so many who if we had a war come to our shores in our own country so many would roll over and cower down. I see so many with peace stickers in Eugene everywhere. Nobody will disagree and not want peace but the only way you get peace is by fighting for it because there is always someone or something out there who will try to kill or disrupt our peace, for example 9/11. I think the real reason behind the peace crowd is that they are cowards and would never fight for this country and they hide behind the peace sign but that is just my opinion. They are scared to fight for there way of life. If the Vietnamese were scared to fight for their way of life things would be much different, and a good chance they would be run by another country and possibly speaking a different language. That is what has stuck in my mind about the Vietnamese so far. Their determination that allowed them to win this war without the technology and advances we had at the time.

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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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Thomas Neuroth

Part one

Phan Xuan Sinh

What caught my attention in the story was the miss information just like in some of the other stories. I see that a lot of innocent people died for no more that being in the wrong place at the wrong time. No wonder we were so hated. We were supposed to be doing something good and from what I've read so far, all that happened was a lot of people died for no real reason. I don't know if what Sinh said was truthful or not, or how creditable he is. The Vietnam was changed a lot of people opinion changed about what was right or wrong. The fact that he came to live in America after the war, makes me believe that he's not creditable. I don't believe that a person could watch and help people die. Innocent people men women and children died in Sinh's story innocent people. I couldn't do it and not have some kind of resentment. On the other hand after being part of that I don't think I could stay either. *Also think a lot of time has passed since Sinh's story took place. I would think that some facts have been forgotten and after a war like that you would almost have to have serious emotions one way or the other and that they would influence recounts of what happened over there. What it comes down to for me is that no one but the people there, amid the shooting and the dying really know what happened.*

Part Two

Malcom Brown

I find his story the most disappointing because I feel that even though he was in the war he seems to be more effected by the status it gave him not what it did to the people. His whole story is about how cool a pilot was and how they had their own bar. He only talked about being shot one time and it doesn't say how it happened. He speaks of it as if it wasn't even a big deal. As if being cool was more important than getting shot. I don't know it just seems that there should be more important things going on during a war then being cool.

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Todd Lowry
History of the Vietnam War
Assignment #1

The story in Part One of Christian G. Appy's book *Patriots* that captured my attention was of George Watkins (21-5). Though obviously tragic in that he was so severely injured in a war of which he had so little understanding, what amazed me about his story were the events that led to his situation and his acceptance of it. Although his MOS [military occupational specialty] was to be a combat engineer, he found himself selected an infantryman. He was given an M-60 machine gun and, with no infantry training, was somehow expected to do a job for which he had no educational foundation. Yet, despite his horrific injuries, he holds no hatred for the Vietnamese against whom he was fighting. His ill feelings about his condition are reserved for the politicians whose policies he was sent to enforce. He made a statement in his interview with Appy that really made me stop and think. He said: "They's some of the most determined people I've ever run into. I don't hate them, they did what they had to do. It's the politicians that put everybody in that place" (23). Despite all he has been through, he seems, based on Appy's short interview, to hold the Vietnamese in high regard and without blame for his tragedy. I wonder how I would feel, were I in his shoes. His story seems quite credible because he lives with the results of that war and what happened to him there in such a physical way every day. That he does so without bitterness is the absolutely amazing part of this story to me.

His story touches on the fact that he lives with his sister who takes care of him. I was left wondering how she must feel. I cannot imagine what his situation means in her life, and I would have liked to have heard something from her perspective. What was it like for her when he came home? What is it like for her now? I think the impact on the families of Vietnam veterans, especially those of injured veterans, is an area not given the exposure it deserves. It is an inspiring story, and one that left me with a sense of awe mixed with sadness.

I found Appy's interview with Chester Cooper the most disappointing interview in Part Two (84-86). What struck me was America's lack of fundamental knowledge about Indochina and the Vietnamese people and culture. As Cooper states: "Our ignorance about

Indochina was pervasive. My first assignment at Geneva was to find out if there really was such a person as Ho Chi Minh or whether he had died many years before and somehow the Vietnamese were just keeping his image alive. We had no idea" (84). This type of ignorance has been a theme in several interviews in Appy's book. It is shocking to me that those sent to negotiate, create policy, advise, pacify, and eventually wage war, knew so little about the theater. It seems common sense to me that there should be someone in the U.S. embassy fluent in Vietnamese and familiar with their culture and religions, at the very least. Without this kind of basic understanding, it is no wonder diplomatic avenues for a peaceful resolution of the conflict proved so elusive.

Cooper also made clear in his interview the patronizing way in which President Johnson viewed the South Vietnamese government and its delegates. He regarded them as a people and a government in need of an instructor, almost as if they were children. This is evidenced by President Johnson's condescending utterance at the conclusion of Prime Minister Nguyen Cao's speech: "Boy, you speak just like an American" (86). It is disappointing to me that with so little understanding of the region, its people and their customs, our government would gamble with American lives by entering a conflict there and be so reluctant to explore a diplomatic resolution more thoroughly.

I found some goodness in the first three paragraphs of Appy's interview with Daniel Redman. Redman has an honest compassion for the refugees he was sent to evacuate from North Vietnam to South Vietnam, the same compassion and empathy lost to many soldiers then, as well as later in the war. Describing the refugees situation Redman says: "Your heart just broke when you saw them" (48). Despite the deplorable conditions created trying to move almost a million people, many of whom were simple, almost primitive in the way they lived, Redman was able keep sight of the perceived nobility in what he was doing. He does not lose his humanity in dealing with the Vietnamese people the way the French legionnaires seem to have done. I could really get a sense for his disgust at the way the refugees were sometimes treated when he says: "These goddamn French legionnaires were shoving people like cattle. I felt like a war criminal, but at least I got them out of there" (48). Redman had a real sense of purpose, and he considers his work a humanitarian effort more than anything else. He truly felt that he was saving the peasants from a brutal life under a communist regime. His feelings for the Vietnamese become clear when he says: "I developed a tremendous liking for the Vietnamese, and since I'm Catholic, I felt a religious affiliation with the refugees" (48). In Redman's mind, he was doing the right

thing; he was standing by his convictions, trying to help a people he truly cared for. I think his attitude and the empathy he showed the people of Vietnam is commendable.

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

Last edited: Saturday, 9 October 2010, 03:25 PM (1045 words)

“It was a war with countless heartbreaking experiences” (Appy, p. 25, par. 3), is the foundation of Phan Xuan Sinh’s entire interview. Phan Xuan Sinh, a young man, had just graduated from a military academy and was assigned as a platoon leader during the Vietnam War. Reading through his story, I found that he hated the war and in no way cared about defeating the Vietcong. Sinh states, “We were forced to bear arms and saw no compelling reason to fight” (Appy, p. 26, par. 4). This story is already amazing due to the fact that a man that most likely has had no military experience beyond college, and now is given the responsibility of an entire platoon of men. Being in the South Vietnamese military, I thought, would suggest that he was an avid advocate for the South Vietnamese and a democratic government; however, Sinh never had any allegiance to such cause. Sinh was fighting against the spread of communism and only saw his duty as a task that he had no choice but to participate in. At no point in his interview does he show any hatred or anger towards the Vietcong. He only shows misunderstanding. It was very hard for me to understand that a soldier is able to perform his or her duty without any motivation for success; no matter how they perceive success. I do, however, understand his desire for his passive nature throughout his whole experience; even though, I do not understand how a man can be so passive when other people are shooting at him. For example, Sinh says, “What I didn’t realize was how deeply the Communist side hated us” (Appy, p. 26, par. 5). Sinh was in the war but he does not seem to have any positive thoughts of any battles. I think his credibility is strengthened due to his ongoing problems with understanding the war. This man seemed unable to understand the reasoning behind the war happening around him or at least not considerate to *killing people for a cause*. His statements show me that he was a young and scared man. He did not want to hurt anybody. I believe he simply hated the entirety of the concept of war. I feel that this man experienced a war, which tells me that I should respect his thoughts of the war. I think he was a scared adolescent and had almost the same mindset as any civilian living through the Vietnam War. His accounts are so real and vivid that I cannot help but to believe what he says. He never seemed to fail to show me that he did not feel one way or another about the war; except, that the war was wrong for both sides. He experienced both sides of the bad through his military experience and what he saw happening around him. I believe that him being in that situation; as much as, killing innocent people for a cause and being unable justify any of his own killing destroyed him. This entire outlook saw nothing being important enough to take another’s life was Sinh’s entire outlook throughout his life. In the last sentence of the interview Sinh says, “I never expected them to treat us so harshly, to have such a strong desire to seek revenge” (Appy, p. 27, par. 2).

After reading part two, the most disappointing story to read was of Le Lieu Browne because of the strong single-minded and oppressive representation she makes regarding the government regulation of propaganda during her experience in the Vietnam War. Browne remembers, "If they found something that was politically sensitive they alerted the Ministry of Information" (Appy, p. 73, par.3). The Ministry of Information was a censorship bureau that would read any letter or document being sent out of the country and would change or erase the information being sent to foreign countries only show the information that the United States wanted the world to know. I was upset with this representation of the United States because it shows how high American leaders thought of themselves. This act of ignorance makes me sick to my stomach. This propaganda censoring, in my opinion, does not show the characteristics that I feel America possesses. I believe that if a person or group makes a mistake that they should admit to that mistake, not dig a hole too deep for them to dig themselves out of.

Also, Browne regards while away at school in France, "I had heard that the South was peaceful and free" (Appy, p.73, par. 3). This proves how the effect of the United States creating a false representation of the facts of the war impacts a person. South Vietnam is portrayed as the "good guys" who represent justice, equality, and freedom. I find this funny because that is how people view the United States. The United States banked on the idea that people are ignorant and did not realize that they themselves were the most ignorant of all because they did not predict that people would find out about their hidden actions. Browne states, "I read novels to see if they had anything in them that was pro-Communist. If so, we'd cross off the names of those books from the list of titles" (Appy, p. 73, par. 4). Her job was to not allow any ideas that would promote an alternative way of thinking that was not permissible by the United States. This is an attempt to brainwash an entire country and by pushing for one way of thinking seems more Communist than Democratic. I was very upset with the game plan the United States tried to cover up. I believe the leaders at that time were confused. I believe that too many mistakes were made by the leaders of the country, and when the curtain was pulled back it was too late for anyone to do anything to change the events of the war. Although this horrific catastrophe happened, I believe that the more knowledge common people have about the United States Government's history of lies, deceit, and ignorance the more the world will understand that we must think for ourselves.

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David Ross

History 195

10-08-10

The story told by PHan Xuan Sinh really grabbed my attention the first time I read through it. I actually stopped reading the rest of the assignment for a bit and reread it. It is such a basic illustration of all the problems that both sides faced in the Vietnam War and how truly awful any war can be. Also it showed how dedicated the people of Vietnam are to their heritage and their beliefs.

He spoke first of accidentally killing fishermen coming back into shore. I can't say that I think he or the men he was with did anything wrong, they were fighting a guerilla war after all and I can believe they thought they saw weapons. When I read it I started wondering how a person lives with that, knowing they accidentally killed a person who meant no ill will toward them. I suppose that the only way to deal with it is to know you were doing your job and that hesitating could mean you were the one killed if the circumstances were a little different.

Later in the interview he spoke of the elderly couple that was living in the "free-fire zone". I was a little surprised when he said that he had the pilot land in that dangerous area the move an elderly couple and even more surprised that they took them with them on the helicopter because they could have easily been the enemy for all they knew before they talked with them. A war like Vietnam and you don't really know what the enemy looks like. Even more than that, I had to respect this couple's commitment to their ancestors, to return to such a dangerous area simply to be close to the ones that came before them. In our culture we will move 3000 miles away just to get a better job, not that there is anything wrong with that, but it seems like such incredible dedication to family that they were displaying to live in an area that was probably being shelled on a regular basis. I have to respect anybody that is that committed to family. It especially makes an even bigger impression that he has carried that memory of that couple for all of these years.

I was a little surprised at the end of the interview at how surprised

he was by the hatred the Viet Cong had for him and the people that he served with. I know that he was most likely drafted as were many of the men who fought for the Americans and many had no idea why they were fighting. However the Viet Cong weren't fighting because they got told to, they were fighting for a way of life that they didn't only believe in, but one that another group was trying to steal from them. It seems to me that that is enough to make almost anyone hate another group of people.

As I read on through the assignment I came across the interview with Luyen Nuyen. Although I found parts of his story very inspiring, like his survival for twenty-one years in prison and his refusal to give his captors anything they wanted from him, I was disappointed in the attitude displayed by the US government toward the commandoes and the attitude of the commandoes themselves.

The US government gave up on the commandoes before they even got out of training. He spoke of something called "planned failure". In other words the only reason they spent the money on training them and sending them out was to keep their mouths shut and most likely send them to their deaths with no real benefit to the war effort. Even more they didn't even bother to pretend to give them any sort of discipline. They made these men to be above the law and in doing so made them outlaws who could do as they pleased. The idea that holding a rank or a certain place in any government or organization has always bothered me, I think that's why that part of the story really got to me.

The other part of the story that gets to me is that these men who were supposed to be so well trained and highly regarded were left for dead. This man spent twenty-one years in prison and the government that trained him and sent him out to get information for them. I understand not being able to take any immediate action, but that is way too long to allow them to stay in jail, being tortured.

At least there is the happy ending of him finally making it back to his family. I have to respect the man for sticking to his morals and never giving anything up and never taking one bit of a handout from the captors. The other thing that stands out to me at the end of the interview is that there is no mention of hatred toward the men that hurt him and his family. That is very impressive to me given what he went through. It may be that enough time is past that the hate isn't on his mind as much anymore but I can't imagine that it would be an easy thing to let go of.

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Assignment #1:

I have to admit that before starting this course I knew fairly little about the Vietnam War and at times I have felt a bit guilty about my ignorance on this topic. Every time I drive past someone on the side of the road holding a sign that says, "homeless Vietnam vet", it reminds me of the sacrifices that have been made by so many, and I feel I almost owe it to them to educate myself on their experience. With that being said, I have learned a lot just in the last two weeks about this war and I have basically been glued to the Patriots book. I have found myself captivated by just about every entry, and anxious to read one after another, as I learn something new from each of them. There was one entry in particular however that seemed to stick in my mind after reading Part I, so that is the one that I have chosen to write about.

Phan Xuan Sinh was the platoon leader of a scout company in the largest branch of the South Vietnamese military, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). It was his heartbreaking accounts of the war that still replayed in mind days after reading them. The first was of a fishing boat that his company mistook for Viet Cong. It was only after his company fired upon the boat at full force without receiving any fire in return, that they realized they had just slaughtered a large boat of Vietnamese civilians; elders, women, and children included. He goes on to tell an account of an elderly couple living in a thatched house in the middle of a highly dangerous, "free-fire zone". Sinh took it upon himself to explain the dangers of living in this zone to the couple and help them relocate for the sake of their own safety. He even went as far as to burn their house to the ground to ensure that they wouldn't return. A few weeks later, while on another mission Sinh flew over that area again and saw a new thatch house in place of the one that he had burned to the ground. Once again he landed there to investigate, and once again he found the same elderly couple that had been living there before. When he asked the old man why on earth he'd return after being warned about the dangers, the man replied saying, "All my ancestors are buried here and this is our land. We're not going to leave". This encounter reminded Sinh that for many poor Vietnamese peasants, land was literally all they had and therefore of the greatest importance. When I think about war I tend to forget about all of the innocent civilians affected by it. They

never asked for, or wanted a war but it showed up on their doorstep anyways. I don't think Sinh was a monster or enjoyed taking lives, especially those of civilians, he was simply following orders. I also don't overlook the fact that these are secondhand accounts and could possibly be inaccurate. In fact, I suspected a few of the entries I read from others to be exaggerated. It is human nature to at times be boastful, and hold oneself in a light that is more favorable than it is accurate. In general I would consider myself slightly untrusting when it comes to listening to secondhand accounts of anything, much-less an event that happened decades ago in a foreign country. I'm skeptical to believe everything in this book is perfectly accurate, without bias, prejudice, or embellishment, whether it is subconscious on the speaker's behalf or not. However, I find Sinh's story to be credible. You can bet that the story of the fishing boat is one of his least favorite, and yet he shares it anyways. Instead of painting himself as some sort of glamorized war hero, he admits one of his biggest mistakes that had terrible consequences. He clearly was deeply affected by his experiences in war as recounting them still brought him to tears all this time later but in my opinion he isn't jaded from them. He also appears to remember at least these two accounts with substantial clarity. For these reasons I find him to be a credible source.

From the watching the very first episode of Vietnam: A Television History, until now I have had the same lingering question about Vietnam; what went wrong? How could we invest so many resources in this war and still come out defeated? Some of the accounts in Part II began to answer this question for me. Over-all I think the U.S. had an enormous ignorance about Vietnam as a country and culture. Coupled with this ignorance was an even bigger sense of arrogance. This turned out to be a fatal concoction for the United States. To me the most disappointing story in Part II of Patriots, was the one told by Chester Cooper. I was not displeased with him as an individual but his depiction of the U.S. political and military leadership (assuming of course that is it accurate). According to Cooper, Kennedy's team was comprised of highly intelligent men, but they had one key downfall; the inability to acknowledge what they didn't know, or merely the fact that there were indeed things they didn't know. It is my personal opinion that too many egos got in the way of attacking the war in the most efficient and educated ways possible. Cooper also states that at least until the late 50's, Americans had to rely on the French desk at the State Department to provide them with any information they sought on Vietnam. He also mentions that at the beginning of the war there wasn't a single American in the Embassy in Saigon who spoke Vietnamese, or knew much of anything about Buddhism.

Cooper goes on to tell of a conversation he had with an economic warfare specialist, Mike Deutch, from which he learned that about 2/3's of everything being sent to the aid ARVN was being stolen. Later Deutch took him to the Saigon docks so he could witness this robbery for himself, and sure enough he watched as an 8-foot pile of materials shrank down to about 3 feet in the middle of the night. Cooper also explains that there was very little public interest in negotiations between Vietnam and America because just about all of them were made in secret and nothing ever came of them. He also paints political leaders such as President Johnson and Walt Rostow as being stubborn, inflexible, and arrogant. His story of the U.S. purposely bombing the airport in Hanoi the same day that the Norwegian ambassador to Beijing flew in was a good example of this arrogance. It is also stories such as these that I find so utterly disappointing. The American defeat in Vietnam is no longer such a mystery to me. The U.S. entered the war overly confident in its abilities and poorly educated on its enemy. It is nearly impossible to put up your best fight when you are operating under ignorant and arrogant leadership.

It is said that history can be the best teacher. I agree with this statement, assuming our country isn't too proud to learn from the mistakes it has made in the past. I hope that our political and military leadership has learned the importance of studying your enemy. Had the American army known more about guerrilla forces, for example that they hid in small man-made tunnels while they were under fire; they probably would have developed better, or at the very least different tactics of attack. If Americans had tried to learn more about Vietnam's recent history before going there, maybe they would have been able to learn from some of France's mistakes, preventing some of our own. If they had tried to learn more about Vietnamese culture, maybe they would have better understood what the Vietnamese people wanted, and in taking steps towards providing it, would have gained their support. I think failure of any capacity has value in the lessons that can be learned from it. I realize that some of the things that I have mentioned as ignorance, arrogance, or miscalculation may be easier to recognize in hindsight. However, I also think that some of the people who were in Vietnam saw the light during the time of chaos and war. People like Chester Cooper and Paul Kattenburg saw this war for what it was, unwinnable. Unfortunately anyone who spoke unfavorably of the war was silenced by military and political leaders. It is also my hope that in the future, people who have unpopular opinions won't be silenced but considered. Most of those who were involved in the Vietnam War, regardless of which side they were fighting on, remember it unfavorably. Hopefully every nation, even those who weren't involved, realized how high the

costs of war really are, and that everything possible should be done to prevent another Vietnam from occurring.

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

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In the Patriots book, the story of Tran Thi Gung caught my attention. Partly because she was the only woman of her unit, a sniper even who killed many men. Yet the fact that she was a *woman* fighting *with men* in the *fifties* was only a statement of fact and not one of pride. In addition, it is because in my mind's eye I can see that photograph of her clearly "lying on her stomach in a sun drenched field, perched on an elbow. A braid of waist-length jet-black hair falls across her shoulder. She's aiming a rifle, the butt of the weapon against her cheek, the barrel resting on a decaying log and her right finger on the trigger." Tran reminds me of myself and of my friend who lives in Vietnam; it could have been us there. If the speaker is untrustworthy or forgetful it is only because of her age and even that seems unlikely. Her story, although translated, comes across as straightforward. The fact that she was there gives her a certain degree of credibility. She killed American soldiers, watched her comrades die and was even wounded herself. Still, I do not get the sense that she hates us, which also helps her believability. Hatred can cause lack of judgment and misguided mudslinging. Tran Thi Gung gave the facts as she saw them, just like everyone else in this collection. I do not think there is any real way to be objective about war especially the Vietnam/American war. It is a very difficult thing to do. The people there were too close to see everything that was going on while others were too far away to feel it at all.

In the second part of the Patriots book there is an entry called "Paradise Island", the account is from a man named John Singlaub. In it he tells the reader about an island that was used as a lure to the Northern Vietnamese. Southern Vietnamese troops would kidnap peasants and take them there. On "Paradise Island", the villagers were treated, fed well and lied to. At least to me it seems as if the SOG program was

just out and out lying to those people. Vietnam was supposed to have a free election in 1956 and yet America backed Diem and kept it from happening. Free elections are as much a part of democracy as equal pay to ability and contribution. I am disappointed not because the U.S. wanted to stop the domino effect from starting in Vietnam but because our foreign policy was so hypocritical. Perhaps hypocritical is the wrong word, flippant is more suitable. It is no wonder our forces could not form a resistance in the North. Moreover, what help did those gift packages really do? They were often confiscated and given to the Vietminh or their neighbors probably ousted the individuals who had them to the Communist party as traitors. I was also disappointed that Singlaub did not sound guilty or sorry once. Granted it was war but they were people too.

The positive aspect of this entry was harder to find at first glance. Looking through it again there was a little sign of hope. He had requested that the U.S. drop the SOG program when it became apparent that it was no longer effective. Troops were captured and killed at an alarming rate. The Northern enemy had a source on the inside so there was no hiding any movement made by the program. It was a military decision but it shows that he did not just see the Southern Vietnamese troops as cannon fodder. The Vietnamese were troops no matter their skin color, and no good military man likes to lose them. In addition, his company managed to gain contact with the ethnic minorities that lived in the mountains. They helped the Montagnards (the old French name for these people) with sanitation, putting bathrooms in huts and drinking clean water that type of thing. The medics went around administering aid to those who needed it, all good things that came with the war. At the end of his narration, John Singlaub says that those small good deeds made them feel like missionaries. It made him feel good as a person and sometimes in situations like that it is the best any one can hope for in war. Some help to the people in need and if not a feeling of guilt in bad situations a sense of, "I did something good."

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

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Tikoya Wiget

October 9, 2010

Assignment 1

Part 1

The Dang Vu Hiep interview really caught my attention because it explained something about the war that I was interested in knowing. And that was how in the world did these people (the Vietnamese) even begin to be able to fight against our military. We are far more technologically inclined than they are and it seemed that our military was simply far more advanced than theirs. It was amazing to see how they were able to react to the advances we had over them. Such as the helicopters and the air bombings. And being able to deal with the problems caused by "leapfrogging". This showed me how smart they were and why it really isn't that surprising that they were able to fight us off.

I trust what Hiep is saying. Mostly because of his regards to the story of why they attacked at Pleiku on February 7, 1965. It's obvious that this is his side to a two sided story. Which should make the question of reliability questionable. A lot of what I have read in this book so far has been each side believing what they believe. Whether that is believing in the south Vietnamese side or the north. This has made it extremely difficult for me to decide which side was right. Both sides having done horrible things and having faults with their reasoning. Also both sides having, to some extent, valid arguments. Having all this in mind, when I read Hieps side of the story regarding the Pleiku attack, I didn't find myself questioning his reliability. I think that's because I didn't feel he was trying to convince me that his side of the story was right. Rather he says that is was simply a normal ole' battle. That they had no idea that Bundy or Kosygin was around. That he only found that out years later. Somewhere in his ignorance as to what was going on I find, what ultimately seems to be, the truth. His truth.

Part 2

The biggest issue that disappointed me in part two of the Appy book was the passage "History is not made with ifs". What I'm disappointed in is the way the U.S. decided to get involved with Vietnam after WWII. In Ho Chi Minh's declaration of independence on September 2 he quoted OUR declaration of independence. He was in favor of being friends with the United States. But because of our unreasonable hatred towards anything communist, and our need for french allegiance we didn't even think to consider cooperating with Ho Chi Minh. I wouldn't be surprised if he were perhaps open to some kind of compromise. His main interest was Vietnamese independence. The U.S. should have understood this best, having had the same issue just 200 years before, themselves. But no, instead we underestimate the Vietnamese and think we can control them into doing what we want them to do. And I'm not saying that we had to let them go on being communist. But the least we could have done was talked first. The second part that upset me was the fact that we didn't come through with the agreement to have the nation wide election that would make Vietnam whole again. Because of this, the two sides still to this day hate each other. A problem that could be getting solved all this time, had they become a whole nation again those many years ago.

Despite the disappointment I found in that passage, I found many things that showed perhaps some good to come from this. Such as the respect that I now feel for the Vietnamese that is being shown throughout books like this one. In that these are people just like us that want to be a free nation. They are dedicated in finding a government that works for them. That may not be Democracy. It may not be Communism. It is simply a government that doesn't allow these people to starve to death, or be executed for having opposing ideas. They have not yet found this government, but the accounts in this book show that they are a determined people and I believe one day, they will have the freedom they deserve.

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

Last edited: Saturday, 9 October 2010, 08:51 PM (643 words)

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The story that caught my attention the most in part one was Ta Quang Thinh's. Sole survivor of a bombing, paralyzed, unable to see his family for six years, what is not interesting about this story? It was intriguing to see the kind of attitude Thinh had toward the war, he hated it. It ruined six years of his life, he lost the ability to walk, lost his family's money and house. "I have many memories but I don't want to remember them." My question is, was Thinh's attitude toward the war always like this? Or did it change after the war took a piece of him? I think of the people who enjoy war, many of my friends are in the marines and say they love it. They will love it until war takes something very special from them. In Thinh's case, I feel as if he may have lost some patriotism for his country after the bombing.

From reading this short account of Ta Quang Thinh he seems to be a very trustworthy man. One who heals his brothers in uniform, loves his family and waits six long years to see them. I would like to see an argument that takes the side of saying these people's stories should not be trusted because they do suffer from too much subjectivity. Their subjectivity only enhances the impact these stories have on me and I hope others as well. Emotions run very deep in war stories. Subjectivity may bring a little bias tone to a story but that should not take away credibility from the story teller.

Sergei Khrushchev's account of the Soviet Unions involvement in the Vietnam war was very interesting. The fact that U.S. And Soviet naval ships would routinely give each other visits and exchange goods even when there was some tension between the two countries. The only problem I did have with this article is the amount of prejudice Khrushchev seemed to have toward the U.S. "Americans tended to believe what they read and saw on the television." Khrushchev is making a stereotype that Americans are easily influenced. "During the Vietnam war I thought the U.S. antiwar movement was a sign that America was awakening." This statement just sends off the vibe that Khrushchev believes he and the Soviet Union are above the U.S. Lastly he criticizes our actions in the past decade, "With all this fighting terrorism since the 9/11 attack they're making the same mistakes, oversimplifying and creating more enemies than friends."

Out of all the stories in part two the one that I enjoyed the most was Richard Olsen's experiences flying an H-21 in Vietnam. The fact that he was not allowed to fire unless fired upon shows a great deal of courage in his character. Flying around not being able to get the first rounds off made Richard and his flight crew sitting ducks every time they flew. The missions he would take on were transporting South Vietnamese troops, he was risking his life not only for his country but his country's allies as well.

"The first thing I thought was, Viet Cong!" Richard said as he was being rescued from drowning by a local Vietnamese lifeguard. For the most of his life Richard pictured the Vietnamese as his enemies, but when his life was on the line his enemy was there to save him. I believe this was no coincidence, this was a gut-check for the H-21 pilot. You can't remain enemies with someone forever. Eventually all of us need to forgive and forget those who have wronged us. This is the valuable lesson I learned from Richard Olsen.

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

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As I set down to kick my feet up after a long hard week, month, heck year at work, I remember my kids have sports, running in 10,000 different directions, my wife has a honey do list as long as I am tall, no time to relax, homework is due and that is just a little taste of my crazy life, I could complain and go on and on for days! Then I set down and dive into these books, I find myself realizing that I am taking advantage of a life that is so easy and simple. I am reminded of the soldiers who did not sleep, eat or get to see their families, who were injured and suffered to protect our country and give me this right to set back and relax for the five minutes I have, I take my hat off and respect all the many men or woman who died protecting us, right, wrong or indifferent.

I chose the story by Roger Donlon " we were babes in arms in every way". This story in particular grabbed me a little more than the others for a lot of reasons, but the main reason being that Roger Donlon was the first American in the Vietnam War to receive the Medal of Honor, the highest military decoration in the United States can confer, a green beret captain and commander, a highly trained killer but his love and compassion still bleed through, not only towards his country and fellow comrades but for human life in general, if it was the Vietnamese or Nung mercenaries the kindness in his heart still shined through like the sun in Vietnam. He was there to train and keep peace to the best of his ability. He also showed a lot of feeling and respect for our former war veterans and took it upon himself to do what he could to physically keep them safe and out of harms way. I honestly believe this war hero was deeply affected emotionally and physically, but still very credible in the story he tells, he is a humble man, does not regard himself as the hero he is but as a average man in a harsh world doing what he is supposed to do as an American soldier.

The story I chose for part two was by Vo Nguyen Giap " the most atrocious conflict in human history". This story stood out to me as far as the arrogance of Vo Nguyen Giap. A lot of the quotes he made about how they conquered the Americans in war seemed to be very opinionated, but not factual in a highly negative way

against the American military intelligence. There is one quote in particular that expresses what I am trying to say " History is not made with ifs, but if American leaders had been wiser I think we could have been spared the war. In my opinion, the Vietnam war was not in the American interest." The biggest percentage of this story was not about the experiences he went threw or learned in this war, but instead it was on how the Vietnamese and its leader where so much more advanced in the logic and strategies of war. Then in the same breath talks on how un educated we are in warfare. I personally believe that Vietnam was the worst blood bath of a war than any other war in history. It has permanently effected so many people and there families. So I take it personal when anyone slanders the intelligence of the Americans or the Vietnamese in this war. All in all it is very sad for both parties.

The story by Vo Nguyen Giap had a lot of negativity towards the American Military, but on the other hand u can also look at how this man started his military training from books and his own life experiences. When he was eighteen, Giap was sentenced to three years in prison, his wife died in a French prison during World War II. Even with all these life setbacks, his dedication and love for his country rose above all. Giap recruited and trained thirty four men for a anticolonial army. By the time Giap and his army had a glorious victory against the French, his army had over three hundred thousand highly trained men. As u can see his dedication to his country has led him to great achievements along with being the most prominent surviving members of the revolutionary generation.

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

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Colin Gabrielson

Part 1:

The story of Roger Donlon and the battle in which he got his Medal of Honor award caught my attention in many ways. One quote, which has stuck in my head days after I first read it clearly made this the story I was most attentive so far in this amazing grouping of accounts. The quote "...Partway there a 57-millimeter round caught him right at the knees and took his legs off. He just kept running on the stumps. Within about thirty seconds he was dead. That's one of the things you'd like to forget." This was one of the couple quotes in part one that made me stop reading for a minute and just think about the intensity of what the people involved in this war were going through. There were many other things in this recount that I found amazing, one being the fact of how many of the Vietnamese soldiers who were supposed to be on the side of Captain Donlon and were actually fighting for the enemy. I would assume with this type of situation where some of the Vietnamese would be spies but one third of them being spies was a statistic that astonished me. Just to imagine how tough it would be to fight off a surprise attack when a large percentage of your soldiers actually turn on you. I was also interested in the Nungs, how they stayed a step ahead of communism in China and were recruited by the CIA as militants. Another thing that surprised me and caught my attention was how the Vietnamese soldiers and the Nungs had the fight. For something to be escalated to the point where gun shots are fired at supposed allies is disturbing, let alone close to 500 rounds. Something the story didn't explain is how this fight started. I think possibly because of the difference in pay but since one third of the Vietnamese were actually fighting for the enemy its possible a group of them tried to sabotage them.

The author seemed trustworthy to me. He included some details which led me to believe that he has solid memory of the event. For example he mentioned there was no time to use code while contacting Danang. He also was of higher rank allowing him to possibly know more about the situation of the battle. The fact that there is an official recount because of his medal of honor could have been in favor or against the credibility of the story because in one way it could have allowed him to retain better memory of the event. In another way the truth could have been bent for propaganda purposes. Something that could have made his recount less accurate is that the battle happ4ened in the middle of the

night. Also, the injuries he sustained probably made him a little less than lucid on later details. Since he talked about how bad their communications were with higher officials, this displays to me that he is objective and factual about the events. He is not in the belief that everything they did was right on and perfect.

Part 2:

I was disappointed with the first two stories of part 2. I was not disappointed with either of the speakers I think they were very interesting level headed. I was mainly disappointed in how the Vietnam War played out when it seemed like we could have been great allies. These stories portrayed the Vietnamese as very hospitable and friendly towards the Americans in the beginning. I am disappointed with the case that Henry Prunier was not better listened to when he briefly spoke out against the war in his local paper. Someone who was experienced and had trained the Vietnamese and understood them should have been sought out by the government for counseling about America's Vietnam policy. Instead he was dissuaded to be openly anti-war because of fear of it negatively affecting his daughters. Vo Nguyen Giap's perspective was also disappointing, He said "if American leaders had been wiser I think we could have been spared the war." Of course this should be a great disappointment. With better decision making tragic wars can be avoided. But of course, history is not made of "ifs" as Giap pointed out but past is prologue and America should retain this lesson for the future and present. Giap's last quote showed a very powerful perspective of the war. "...Maybe it was a tragedy for you, but for us the war was a noble sacrifice." It's clear that the war was something from Giap's perspective as a necessity for him to fight in. It wasn't the North Vietnamese Armies goal to be in a war with America, it was their goal to be an independent country. It is disappointing to realize this and compare their fight for independence to America's revolutionary war, both smaller groups fighting for independence against large ones. It disappoints me that we found war to be our answer instead of trying to build a strong relationship with Ho Chi Minh and maybe offer him a better alternative to communism.

With disappointment those who are optimistic can find positive lessons and maybe some reconciliation. I was glad to read that Giap was still in contact with the OSS commander. It seemed from the content of the letter that their conversations were positive. It's clear that Giap thinks Americans need to learn more about Vietnamese history and culture and learn more about the atrocities America inflicted on Vietnamese during the war. He pointed out the My Lai massacre and the bombing of Bach Mai hospital. It is interesting because in a way, that's what this class is doing. Before this class all I knew was small things learned from overall history classes in high school and a little of the anti-war movement during

the 1960s but I don't think that Giap would be close to satisfied with that little amount of knowledge. Hopefully after this class I can meet his goal on my understanding of the Vietnam conflict.

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950 words

David Verner

History 195

Joe Escobar

Part 1

There were quite a few hard-hitting and brilliant stories in Part 1 of this book, and was greatly enjoyable to read. Well, enjoyable as far as eye-opening goes – but it was also quite hard to read at times, so visceral and was almost like being there.

The story I found the most intriguing however was the one by Tran Thi Gung. I didn't want it to end, and I think a whole chapter of her accounts would be fascinating. I think one of the main things that drew my attention to it was, not to be sexist, but the fact she was a woman. As is with all wars, it is such a male dominant world and most films and accounts alike rarely mention much about women, apart from the occasional good-looking nurse falling in love with a GI in hospital. So to read the account of a Vietnamese woman, a young one no less, fighting side by side with her fellow country-men, was truly amazing.

To me, she does not sound like she is suffering from any cases of forgetfulness from the time gone by. She seems very confident in her words, and her memories of the situation. Being that she was still in her teens when the war started is well in her favor, as she is still relatively young in comparison to a lot of the others who have their accounts in the book. I think this makes her story very credible, at least from her point of view. War is different for everyone, but this is the way it was for her and you can't dispute that.

I found her closing statements quite profound, and honest at the same time. She acknowledges the horrors of war, stating here nightmares at what she did and what she went through – but she does not regret it. This to me tells a lot about her personality as an intense patriot of her nation. She may hate the idea of war and having to do it again, but you know if someone ever tried to invade again, she would be right there on the frontline to stop them again. I salute her for that.

Part 2

To be honest, I found it hard to exactly pin-point a story that exactly disappointed me too much. I take everyone I read as knowing they are their own individual person, and understand all will have a different opinion and feel we can't judge too harshly until we know all the facts. However, as far as attitude goes there was one recount in particular that caught my eye - that of Daniel Redmond on page 49.

For the most part, I did agree with him on most things. He seemed like a genuinely nice guy who just wanted to help the people of Vietnam. Being that I'm not a heavily religious person myself, I ignored the parts about religion as I find using religion in a war-time situation is the very essence of irony. War and religion just don't mix for me, as I feel if god really was at work in war, then he/she is frankly an asshole for letting it happen. But, I digress.

Dan was going really well in my mind until he started his rant about the book *Deliver Us From Evil* by Tom Dooley. I feel that Dan really let himself get too personally involved in his recount, and let his own personal bias against Dooley get in the way. Not that it seems he has much of a bias, as he says that at times he acknowledged his genuine kindness – but it also seems Dan didn't agree with everything Dooley said and although

opinion is opinion, he seems to completely dismiss anything Dooley says that he does not agree with.

Now this would of course be okay if I saw Dan make his case, and maybe prove his point about the book – but he does not. He says he hates it, produces one example about the photograph of the deformed guy, but that's it. And that example of the deformed guy was not really backed up too much in my opinion. He seemed to just use the fact that the guy never actually said he was tortured by the Ho Chi Minh as proof that he was nothing more than a regular street beggar. But how was he to know any better, really? He bases his assumption on just that, assumption. Now, Dooley could be just as wrong, I would have to read the book and see how he tells the story – but the attitude of Dan really disappointed me in that he went on a tear about being 100% right, but without any real backup.

To me, in history you need to make sure you back up your points before you release them as gospel. Otherwise, understand that you may be wrong. Dan did not acknowledge that really, to me.

As far as hope goes, there was a lot of positivity as well as the obvious negative points. I found the story of the guy who lost both his eyes and legs, for example, as one that through some utter brutality that happened to him, he seemed to still look on the bright side of life. He didn't show a lot of hatred to anyone, simply mourning the fact the war ever happened and wishing something else had been done. For a man to go through such torment, but still be able to look at things in an objective way, lifted my spirits a little after reading about the horror that happened to the poor man.

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

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Shellea Montgomery

10/9/10

Part 1

In part 1, the story I found the most intriguing was that of Tran Thi Gung. She was the only women soldier in the guerilla force Trung Lap Ha Hamlet. I was drawn to this story because Tran Thi Gung was a woman after my heart, she was standing up for her people, defending her father's honor. She was fighting for the simple necessities like food, and clothing for her people. I can relate to this loyalty to one's family, especially as a mother, I can definitely relate to this, in a way it is a nurturing thing.

I would never discredit any of the stories in this book, as these people were all there first hand, and everyone is entitled to their opinion and their emotions and memories can never really be judged as they are personal remnants from an awful war. I might not understand or agree some opinions but that is okay to disagree. I think that Tran Thi Gung was giving a reliable and accurate account of her experience. I feel like she was just telling her story from her point of view, I feel that she was credible and factual. I think that she was just telling about her experience, and sharing her stories.

Part 2

Hmm it is hard to pick a disappointing story, but I would have to go with the story of Paul Hare and his cock fighting. It is very hard for me to do this assignment as I really don't have a feeling of disappointment on what he did talk about I think it was disappointing because of what he DIDN'T talk about. I prefer the other stories because they seem allot more personal and offer more insight to the psychological and emotional aspects of others experiences. I think it is also disappointing because he doesn't talk about how his experiences affected him really. He talks about his cock fighting. I think it is just a little insensitive all the things that happened over there and this is what he chooses to share.

I found several positive points in the readings, I think the most creditable readings are that of the people defending their country,

their hope and their faith and their unwavering desire to defend what they have fought to protect for centuries. I find it all very moving, I think that the lessons learned are self-respect and a sense of belonging and protection of a history. I think all the stories have accounts of bravery and never-ending hope.

I love reading these accounts of people's time in Vietnam; it is such a refreshing insight to the war. I like to read the different opinions and personal accounts.

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Deanna Middlestetter

10/9/10

History of Vietnam

Instructor Joe Escbar

Assignment # 1

Tran Thi Gung (Part #1)

("I was stuck in a tunnel for seven days ")

This story caught my attention for the fact that the story is about a woman named Ginger. This is unusual for that time period and I found it interesting and somehow inspiring due to her age at the time and her reasons for the action she took. She is recalling events that took place during the Vietnam War. As a young woman she experienced the murder of her father by the "Puppet Soldiers". She vowed that she would have revenge for her father's death and so at the young age of seventeen, she joined the Guerrillas. Ginger goes on to say that she lived in an area of, "poverty and deprivation", and that the people there were continually, "brutalized by the police and puppet soldiers." (pg 16) She explains that she felt that she was helping her country and her people by fighting against the Americans. At one point she said, "I killed so many GI's I was awarded a decoration with the title, "Valiant Destroyer of American Infantry Men". (pg 17) She then goes on to explain some strategies they used and also some weaponry.

I believe that her story is a reliable source. As she tells her story from her point of view she gives her reasons for her quest. As a young woman she is traumatized by the death of her father and outraged by what is happening to her people.

I feel like trauma many times makes events so clear in our mind it is as if it happened just yesterday or it sometimes has the opposite effect and we block it out completely. I believe her description is factual and objective perhaps she is a bit biased but aren't we all for one reason or another? As for the time that has passed, I don't think that any amount of time that passes for this particular woman

will cause her to forget this part of her life.

Deanna Middlestetter

10/9/10

History of Vietnam

Instructor Joe Escbar

Assignment #1

Luyen Nguyen (part #2)

"She divorced her second husband and waited for me"

This story was one of the most disappointing one for me to read. This is because of the unfair treatment the man in the story and his team of student commandos received. Luyen Nguyen was told basically that these commandos were above the law and could do whatever they wanted. This to me obviously creates tyranny. I do not see how you can execute justice without a set of strict rules and ethics. It is disappointing to see that their motivation was money and not the cause that was at hand. It was frustrating to read about how this man, Luyen Nguyen, tried to instill some moral standing in these young inexperienced men but was ridiculed and ignored for this. He and the young men were captured by the enemy. When asked why they fought they said because they needed money and said the Americans were trying to take over the country. One of the saddest things about those statements is that these young men's cause for fighting was themselves. They believed this was a good investment in their own freedom unable to see the bigger picture.

The unfortunate twist of this story is that the man who tried to help them understand what they were actually doing there was captured and repeatedly tortured for twenty one years. He lost his life not his mortality, but was left for dead.

A positive part of this story is that even in these brutal and horrifying circumstances this man stayed loyal to what he believed, who he loved, and showed true character and courage in the face of his enemies in a time that they and everyone expected him to turn his back on it all. He was eventually released and reunited with his family. He is a true hero, blessing, and inspiration to anyone who will and has read this story. I have no doubt that he inspired many of his captors who with disbelief watched this loyal and courageous man.

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Dustin Wilson

Assignment 1

PART 1: Interview of George Watkins

When asked to pick a story from part one of the book that caught my attention, it was somewhat easy for me. After about a week having passed since I've read it, the story George Watkins tells is still stuck in my mind. With his simplistic Virginian speech he tells the story of how he lost his legs and eyes to a pressure-detonated mine. He describes how forty people had walked by this mine before he stepped on it. The visualization of him looking down at his watch and remembering the time is stuck with me. His general mentality is that he doesn't hold a grudge, except "for that one that set the booby trap". How can someone who has lost so much not be bitter? His story seems a lot more factual than some of the others in that it is told through the point of view of a blind man. The last things that he saw have been etched in his mind. Without having his vision, he could easily go back and 'see' the story as he tells it, no visual obstructions. It must be like having a nightmare that you can't wake from.

After he is done telling his story he says that he does not think he is bitter, he just wishes "none of it ever happened, for everybody's sake". He solemnly describes his visit to the Vietnam Memorial wall in '85 as "the worst I've felt since I've been home". I went to the

'Wall' this last summer and I can't imagine sitting there in a wheel chair, blind and feeling the names of friends lost in that war. The man has a mental strength that is inspiring. Myself being 32, growing up in an age of violent movies and video games, I am not easily shaken by violence but George's story will stick with me in vision and memory.

PART 2: Story of Ngo Vinh Long

There were many negative and disappointing accounts from part 2, but one of the stories that stuck out to me was that of Ngo Vinh Long. After reading of dysfunctional, ego maniacal leaders it was refreshing to read about Ngo. He was a smart young man who was chosen to make maps of South Vietnam because of his nationality and commonality with the people of the south. What was disappointing to me was that Ngo showed so much promise intellectually and genuinely cared for the people of Vietnam only to be in turn disregarded and because he voiced his negative opinion of the South Vietnamese government, ultimately he was forced into exile in the United States. I see his story, in some aspects, similar to those of our past Presidents like FDR and Abraham Lincoln. If you think about it, where would our country be if instead of Lincoln we had someone like Ngo Dinh Diem? To have someone who cared more of himself than of his country would have been devastating to the U.S. I guess what I'm getting at is it is disappointing to know that with a different circumstance, Vietnam could've had a leader that was centered in the well-being of his country. I'm not suggesting that Ngo Vinh Long was at any point during the turmoil qualified to lead the Vietnamese, all I'm saying is that there were

people who could've led Vietnam that would have done better than Diem. The true tragedy is that people like Long were never given a chance to excel within their own country.

PART 2: A positive story of Richard Olsen

I immediately related to the story of Richard Olsen who saw the beauty in a hostile land. Olsen, in 1962, was a 27 year-old lieutenant "adviser" who flew the South Vietnamese army into and out of combat. It was inspiring to read about his "romantic" view on his situation. He saw Vietnam as a similar concept to an old African hunting trip with Teddy Roosevelt. Under his command were veterans of World War 2 and the Korean War. He felt lucky to fly with such men. It seems to me that he would have fought shoulder to shoulder with the South Vietnamese if they were given the opportunity to fight. But he saw the negative side of the troops also. When he was called to fly in to pick up a dead body ten soldiers would want to get on the chopper to "get the hell out of there". He thought that they should stay out there and fight their own war. He also thought that "we needed Americans in there to show them how to do it".

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

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Part 1

Reading personal perspectives of the Vietnam War allowed me to step into the shoes of many. The story that captivated me the most was that of Tran Thi Gung. A girl, similar in age to myself, fighting in a war: bold. Her decision to join the guerillas fascinated me and her story thereafter engulfed me. Such bravery found at a young age left me wondering what she must have been thinking. The obvious answer I found was that she was driven by vengeance, fueled by the death of her father. Gung was still young when the rebellion started, and losing her father at such a terrifying time most likely made a huge impact on her life. The urgency for revenge makes her story somewhat difficult to trust thoroughly because many can be blinded by such an emotion. Although she could not bring her father back, she seemed desperate to kill anyone who was "the enemy". Is it possible that her reason for killing was not for hate of the opponent but for the love of her father? After all, the first time she captured an American, she did have compassion for him. Nevertheless, this is her story. Whether blinded by revenge or not, her tale has enough of a rough edge to make it believable. The "rough edge" I speak of comes from her blunt viewpoint, along with emotions on her sleeve. Gung had a reason to fight. In fact, it seemed that was all she could think about. She didn't seem at all concerned with whether she lived or died, proven by her courage to participate in even the most dangerous tasks. Gung is objective in her story. Her purpose was to be the best daughter she knew how to be. Fear was not a factor once she realized how easy it was to kill someone. She didn't even think of her enemy as people, but as mere targets. I believe she is satisfied with her efforts to honor her father's early death.

Part 2

With the Vietnam War came disappointments; there is no doubt about that. What I found time and time again to be unacceptable in two of the stories was the lack of knowledge America really had about the country of Vietnam. In Paul Kattenburg's account he brings many pessimistic ideas, but is justified due to the circumstances he had to face. His conversations with the National Security Council (NSC) seemed useless because the Council was set in their ways and saw no place for Kattenburg's idea of withdrawal. The reason why I am upset with such rejection is because the Council, like Kattenburg stated, appeared very ignorant. What good was it of the NSC to say they knew best, when they had never really taken an unbiased look at what Vietnam really needed? Without dedicated time living in several parts of Vietnam, how could they truly know what the Vietnamese were thinking? After all, it

is THEIR country and not ours. Even though I mentioned earlier that Kattenburg's pessimism was justified, I was still frustrated to see that he gave up. With views like his, I was hoping to hear of him fighting for others to see where he was coming from. Another form of ignorance of the Vietnamese people came in the story told by Luyen Nguyen. The lack of knowledge came from the U.S. advisors of the commandos. Nguyen was smart enough to realize that these commandos needed to believe their fight had a cause and their efforts would benefit Vietnam. The downfall was that U.S. advisors had a different idea: to tell them to ignore their people and follow orders. In the end, the statement from the advisors ended in unfaithful commandos. In this story, these advisers show a deep disrespect for the people of Vietnam. How could they expect the commandos to be loyal? If they were told this was all about America, why would they ever want to fight? I find this a huge disgrace because, again, if America truly knew the Vietnamese, they might have kept their mouth shut.

Continuing on with America's portrayed ignorance and lack of true relationships with the Vietnamese, I found two stories that showed a great potential for good in Vietnam. The story of Malcolm Browne, an American journalist, showed me that people in Vietnam were willing to make relationships with Americans. Browne spent time with some of the Buddhists because of his friendliness. The idea that the Buddhists ate lunch with an American at a time when the U.S. was still distrusted showed the potential for relationships to be built. The reason why this story only had a potential for good is because the Buddhist's friendship and hospitality to Browne was probably for media attention. With a journalist close by, they would be seen around the world when their "ritual suicides" took place. Nevertheless, relationships are possible. It is likely that if America took more time learning about the various beliefs of Vietnamese people, we could have created a better plan. Another story that showed potential for good came from Paul Hare, a guy who knew little of Vietnam when sent. Again, I will stress that hope was found in relationships, even if they weren't personal. Hare spent time helping rebuild many structures that had been destroyed. This form of assistance allowed Vietnamese people to see that America was not there with the soul purpose to destroy. I believe that Hare's hopeful associations with the Vietnamese also came from his interest in cockfighting. He was spending time with the people; time that allowed him to see what Vietnamese really needed, to feel that they could trust America. Both stories show that hope was plausible if America took the time to gain trust.

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

Last edited: Friday, 8 October 2010, 03:14 PM (1192 words)

In part one of the Patriots book, all of the stories "caught my eye", as all of them were very interesting and all had lessons to be learned from them. The George Watkins story probably had the most effect on me, and I think had some really great lessons in it, however, the story that really jumped out at me and caught my eye the most was that of Tran Thi Gung. The first reason that this story jumped out at me was the fact that she was the only woman in her unit, and how hard that must have been on her. She was out here with a bunch of men doing just as good of a job as them, if not better. The second thing that stood out for me was when they were describing her, how tiny she was. It just shows to me that the Vietcong didn't care really as much about training, or who they had fighting for them, as long as they had huge numbers fighting for them, (something you read earlier in Bernard Trainor's passage, about how the North Vietnamese "pecked away" at us). Another reason why Gung's size really jumped out at me was because of her size compared to the size of American soldiers, she said "I felt very scared and very nervous because I was just a small girl and the Americans were so big" (pg. 16). Another thing that stood out for me in this story was how easily this war could ruin family's, and how easily it could change someone's life. Gung's father was killed when she was a child, just because he was a Viet Cong. Things like this would ruin a family, and deaths in the war would be a heartbreak for all the soldier's families back home. In Gung's case, her father's death caused her to be filled with longing for revenge. It changed her life, the whole reason she joined the guerrillas is because of that event. It makes me wonder how many of the Vietnamese joined the war because it affected their family in a negative way. On the other side I wonder how many Americans joined the war because they were "fighting for their country" even though they had no idea of the horrors that the war would bestow upon them. The last thing that stood out to me in her story was when she recalled killing an American soldier, and how his comrades rushed in to his aid, and sat mourning their lost friend, and how the Viet Cong used this as a tactic to slaughter more Americans. It shows me the bond that fellow American soldiers shared. I'm not saying the Vietnamese soldiers didn't share this bond, but I think they were trained to not let their emotions get in the way on the battlefield, while a lot of our soldiers since it was their first time at war, they couldn't prevent things like this from happening. I think most of these stories, if not all, are trustworthy. I think some events may vary by how they were perceived by the people fighting

the war. But I think for the most part, things they talk about are truthful and did indeed happen. They were there, they know how things happened. Sure, it has been a long time since the war, but something like the Vietnam War, is something you never forget, although they may like to, I think the events of the war are burned in the minds of all soldiers who are still alive today.

In part two of the Patriots book, the story I found most disappointing to me was the story of Vo Nguyen Giap. His story not only disappointed me with the content it contained, but with the overall attitude he had. I felt his story had not so much information, but "ifs". If the Americans had done this they would've had a chance to win the war. I also think his general attitude towards the Americans was just ultra negative, I don't expect someone who fought against us in the Vietnam War to have a positive attitude and like us, I just didn't like the story because of how he talked about us. He also talks about the North Vietnamese President's final days. This, along with the rest of the story, did not have much information in it that I found interesting. It was more of just where they met and his final words.

I didn't know if you just wanted positive lessons that I had seen from only part two, or part one included. As I had seen some positive moments from a story in part one, I am including those as well. The first thing I read that I think really showed some good was the bond between the American soldiers. "I killed an American. After he fell, some of his friends came rushing to his aid. They held his body and cried." (pg. 17). The bond these men formed in such a hard time of war is incredible. It shows me, that if they can form such a friendship in a time like that, there is no excuse why everyday people cant form a bond that strong with people they have known for much longer. The fact that these men wept for their dead comrades in the middle of a heated battle is really something special. The next thing I read that really showed me will power, was in the story of George Watkins. He had lost both his legs and both his eyes in the war. "She cooks and cleans the house, but I take care of all my personal needs--getting on and off the couch, into bed, and going to the bathroom." (pg 21). When I read this I thought about what I would do in his situation, and how hard it would be not to just give up and roll over. He has the will to continually take care of his needs even though he is blind and has no legs. I honestly cannot say I would do the same thing. The heart he shows, and the willpower he shows is something I should strive to have someday. The last positive lesson that really jumped out at me was from the same story (George Watkins story). He says in the story " I'll tell you what's surprising. I didn't think about my legs. Legs was a second thought. For some reason my sight meant

a lot more than my legs.” (pg. 24). The reason why this spoke to me is because it really got me thinking how much we fail to appreciate the little things, and how much we underestimate the importance of everyday things such as sight, or our senses. I couldn’t imagine living without my sight, but I never really thought about it until I had read that. I guess the lesson from that would be to not underestimate and under appreciate the simple everyday things in life.

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

Last edited: Friday, 8 October 2010, 08:54 PM (588 words)

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Part 1:

The story in part 1 that caught my attention was Tran Thi Gung's "I was stuck in a tunnel for seven days" because of how young she was and how matter of fact her story was. Reading a story from a soldier from the opposing force is different. Reading about all the Americans she shot was a little depressing. Her story did seem biased and exaggerated which hurt her credibility. The author seemed subjective in the fact that she only told stories about herself. She never really brings up people she fought with. If everything was factual, it's no wonder we lost the conflict. Her description of their battles helped illustrate the differences between conventional and unconventional warfare.

Part 2:

Daniel Redmond's article "The doctor who won the war in

Indochina" was disappointing to me because it was unclear exactly why he considered the Viet Minh to be murderers. It seems like, because of the anti-war movement, you only hear the good, or romantic, side of North Vietnam. I wish his point was more objective, and expounded upon. A lot of the information presented reflects the atrocities committed by the south on its people, which is why I was surprised to read about the land reform in the North and the estimated 8,000 executed. With all the positive information about Ho Chi Minh, and the Viet Minh struggling for independence and freedom from oppression, reading about the land reform made the story of the North more human.

I liked Henry Prunier's "These were not ragtag farmers" because I like reading about clandestine operations. The only bad thing was that, I couldn't help thinking about how similar it was to Afghanistan. It seems like the Cold War made the United States short cited. I really like how described and detailed Prunier's article is. I wish more of the stories gave this much insight into the history of the conflict.

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

Last edited: Saturday, 9 October 2010, 08:21 PM (945 words)

In part one of Christian Appy's *Patriots: The Vietnam Remembered From All Sides*, the story that caught my attention most was that of Tran Thi Gung. From the beginning of her story when she described the soldiers coming to her door and telling her they had killed her father and her vow to avenge his death, I knew she was going to have a powerful story. Other than revenge, I believe her cause for fighting was just. She wanted freedom for her country, and enough food and clothing for her people. How she described fighting against American soldiers was heartbreaking to me as an American, but looking at it from an unbiased point of view, it was very tactful to realize if one American soldier was shot, the others would immediately scramble to his aid, making themselves 'sitting ducks', and what's more is the fact that the soldiers also left their rifles after retrieving their fallen soldiers. It was a weak point Tran Thi Gung targeted and strategically used to her advantage. Her knowledge of use of weapons expanded quickly, and soon she knew how to use any weapon in use from either side. When Tran describes the Cu Chi tunnels, as much as I imagine what it must have been like, I still think there is no way I can do so accurately. When she said she was stuck in a deep dark tunnel for seven days and nights with only a few grains of rice and a few drops of water, and had to dig her way out of the tunnels with a bayonet, I was in shock. I wondered if the Americans operating the tanks actually knew or not if they had closed all the exits to the tunnels, because she described it as an accident. After that, it seemed like nothing as she described her shrapnel wound to the head, and that she 'only' had to stay in a jungle hospital for three or four weeks. I felt terribly sad that she has nightmares every time she talks about the war, and knowing I had read this story of hers, meant she experienced one more war nightmare for my benefit. Overall, I think while stories become a little bit embellished over time, the core story still remains true. While she may have had more than a few grains of rice and a few drops of water a day in the tunnel, the fact still remains there was very little food to go around for everyone stuck down there. I think in general her story is reliable. At the end she says she isn't sorry for what she did, and I think she has every right to say that. She did what she did out of necessity, she didn't blindly shoot people for the fun of it, and she did experience times of compassion for the other side, like when she took the hostage American, or when she recognized someone she knew who fought for the other side. I feel as though the interviewees who talk about emotions are more reliable than not. It's something we all have in common, what makes us all human, and a factor that adds a truly personal touch in a story, one that can't be fabricated.

In part two of Christian Appy's Patriots: The Vietnam Remembered From All Sides, the story that disappointed me the most was Evelyn Colbert. Purely on the basis of its shortness. It makes me wonder why that little flit of a story was included when so many others were not. If anything, I wasn't disappointed in the story itself, I was disappointed in Christian Appy for including it in the first place. It didn't even seem like a story, it could've been a newspaper clipping for all I know! I actually read it several times over, and a few more times just now again to make sure I wasn't missing anything important in it, maybe the used book I bought was missing a page? No. Compared to that, no other stories were that disappointing to me. To be honest I signed up for this class because I had forgotten to register in advance last spring, and needed something, and this one sounded interesting although after the first day I was having second thoughts, seeing that I had two books and a set of DVDs to watch. I surprised myself though, and actually quite enjoy it, especially the Appy book, reading people's actual stories of being there make the DVDs and Herring book a lot more interesting to me. When I got to this short factual story, I was flabbergasted, I had expected so much out of these little stories and got absolutely zip out of Evelyn's.

The a couple of stories that portrayed positive messages to me were John Singlaub's and Luyen Nguyen's. Firstly, through the war and destruction was this guy and his fellow personnel found Veitnamese peoples who were hurt, starving, sick, and nursed them back to health and fattened them up. Even in spite of this huge war, there were these people going around helping the 'enemy'. Secondly, it was really heartbreaking, but romantic that Luyen refused to write letters to his wife and children when they thought he was dead, to save them from any more grief. Then when he came home alive to find his wife had remarried and had another child, and she divorced her second husband to wait for her original. I'm actually pretty surprised Hollywood hasn't decided to make some crappy movie out of it yet.

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

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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 ½:

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

Last edited: Friday, 8 October 2010, 11:56 AM (729 words)

Patriots - The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides by Christian

Apply

Part 1.

As I was reading part one in the patriots book, I came to a story that caught my attention. The speaker was George Watkins, the reason why this story caught my attention, was because this story that he told really happened to him, in Vietnam War. Cause of the hurt and pain he was in. he lost some and saved some platoon.

George, in 1968 near camp evens, He stepped on a land mine and ended up losing both his legs and lost sight out of both his eyes as well. He mentioned that the only thing that kept him alive was the sand.

Before all this took place he thought he was going to engineer battalion, but instead he ended up in Vietnam, He had two minute training then was released and moved straight to firing weapons. George mentioned one day, him and a couple others dropped explosives down into a hole and ended up killing a man that delivered mail. George opened a few letters while walking back and the letters mentioned just how much the Vietnamese disliked and hated the Americans. I give George creditability, because this actually happened to him and his platoon.

This story was clear that he was hurt and in pain in regards to what the war has done to him. He was clearly traumatized for all that has happened to him. I know by reading this story about George Watkins that he has suffered from too much subjectivity, because all that has gone on in with him being in Vietnam

War really made an impact on his life.

I believe George Watkins is trustworthy and honest he was there in Vietnam War fighting for freedom. He felt all the pain of losing some of his platoon and losing friends. He was a brave man for doing all he did.

Part Two

This story I picked next is about Daniel Redmond, The doctor who won the war in Indochina. This story was disappointing for me to read because of all the events that took place in this story.

This is the reason why the story was so disappointing is because, Ngo Dinh Dlem was not who Daniel Redmond thought he was, Ngo Dinh and his people would advertise and Take pictures of people getting their heads chopped off by a guillotine, They even put pictures in the paper for everyone to see what they have done.

The other reason why this is so disappointing to me is because this story mentioned gruesome stuff, about how they cut off heads and how they let the heads roll down and into a box of saw dust. I know they were doing it to intimidate everyone, so they wouldn't want to join revolution against dlem. In 1959 they chopped off heads and put them on stakes with ciggerates in there nostrils and all because they thought they were communists. They were proud of what they did. Then with the draconian decree passed in 1959, Diem's created oppositions and the fueling went in the south. The southern have not been jailed or executed.

They ended up fighting back with arms. They even launched unauthorized attacks on the government troops.

Daniel, in 1962 resigned, and became involved in the Saigon student union.

Now the positive lessons were that Daniel resigned because he was in disgust. And like I stated above he joined student union, then he applied for a college called Harvard University and he had a one way ticket to Boston. He got his visa and passport that he thought he would never have gotten. There was compassion in his friend who was a U.S general. I noticed there was hope for Daniel. This made all the potential become good. In this story Daniel sounded like he was a nice and strong hearted man. But couldn't stand the sight of gross stuff. This story I read made me realize I don't have it bad, the fellow platoon had it all rough and the war its self was rough. I couldn't even imagine the hurt the pain, being scared, all they have around them were killings, fighting's, smoke filling the air, they all must have courage and strength to be able to go out there and fight.

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

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Samantha McCourt

HST 195

Due:10/9/2010

Assignment 1

The story which caught my attention was in the section War Heroes. The story is the account of a woman named Tran Thi Gung (Appy, 15) who fought as a guerrilla soldier for the Viet Cong in the southern part of Vietnam. I think what caught my attention was the fact that she was Vietnamese. As an American everything that I have heard about the Vietnam conflict comes from Americans, thought many of them were against the war and tried to give reasons for both sides of the fight it is will never give a totally true depiction of what the opposite side went through. I was also drawn into her story as one of the few females who told stories of fighting as a soldier against the American troops. The way which she talked about the fighting had such intense emotion, not like that of the shell shocked American men, it was pure loyalty to the cause of Ho Chi Minh and his followers. She believed so much in what she was fighting for that she barely seemed to feel very much remorse for the soldiers she was killing, as she said " ...if I went to America and killed people there, I would feel very sorry and guilty. Since the Americans came to my country, I don't feel guilty." (19). I was drawn in by the way that she has reasoned the violent acts she committed, so many of the American soldiers in their account still seem so traumatized and hurt by what happened to them while fighting in Vietnam and she seems to be telling a story which, by its tone, could be about something as mundane and normal as doing her laundry. I felt that her account was reliable, at least as much as it could be years after the event, she seems to be very blunt about the events she participated in and witnessed. She clearly believed in the guerrilla warfare she was a participant in, this made her story biased towards the side of the North Vietnamese. She paints a picture of American soldiers who were not very smart and seemingly unorganized which is, of course, very different from that of the American soldiers accounts. This doesn't make either of them more right I just think that it means that a reader has to take each story as a piece of history. I trust that Tran Thi Gung gave an account that is true, but very subjective. Her story helps to see into the minds of one group who was fighting against America in Vietnam.

I found the account by Richard Olsen (62) to be the most disappointing story in part two. He talks about being a pilot during the war along with his twin brother and begins his story talking about what terribly unsuitable plane he piloted while he was stationed there. I think what I found most disappointing about his account is the fact that I was automatically reminded of 19th century archeologists talking about the cultural groups they studied, the way which they would refer to people and their practices as barbaric and glorify their own travels. His accounts also reminded me of Robert Ripley, whose accounts of all his travels were almost completely fictitious and mostly about making himself sound more impressive and worldly. Richard Olsen is like that, he is telling stories of war and hideous sadness, but he doesn't seem to have any connection to what he saw. He even says "So I'm not one of those veterans who's embittered with a whole host of grievances. I have nostalgia and enormous reverence for my experience." (62) I know that I was not there, which means I obviously have no idea what it was really like, but I feel like looking at the Vietnam conflict through the framework that all of the other accounts in the book have set up, his story seems like a completely unrealistic portrayal. While everyone else was fighting a war and going through intense emotions, he seemed to be on his own romantic holiday.

The story that I thought was the most hopeful was the account by Malcolm Browne (64). It seems strange to me that a story which talks about a man burning himself to death could seem hopeful, but I think that he seemed to be realistic. He was a journalist, so came to Vietnam with the purpose of documenting the events that were happening. Even years later he still has the pictures and articles he wrote in the moment which were brutally honest. He doesn't sugar coats anything that happened to him or anything he witnessed. He does, however, seem to think that people on both sides are good people with potential to grow from these harsh experiences.

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

Last edited: Friday, 8 October 2010, 06:14 AM (859 words)

Tran Thi Gung (page 15)

"I never felt guilty about the killing I did...since the Americans came to my country, I don't feel guilty." Imagine. You're at home in Eugene, Oregon, possibly preparing a meal for your family and you receive a loud knock on your door. You answer. Several Vietnam soldiers in uniform, armed with weapons, inform you they just killed your father at the old Federal Court House and you must go collect his body.

I was struck by the passion of Tran Thi Gung. At a tender age she rose to the occasion to save her people and avenge her father's death. Tran Thi Gung paints a realistic picture of her experience. She presents herself as an opportunist. She realizes if she waits until the "big" Americans get close enough, she can pick one off, wait until the others come to retrieve him, she can kill more; and finally she gathers the rifles left behind by the soldiers.

Tran Thi Gung also strikes me as a woman who has a tender spot for the underdog. She fights to help the people in her neighborhood impoverished and intimidated by the "puppet soldiers." She keeps her head about her when the unarmed southern soldier recognizes her and she releases him. Tran Thi Gung even expresses sympathy for the captured GI soldier.

This amazing human being tells an incredible story about courage and perseverance. I don't think that there will ever be a point where too much time has passed for her to forget what she experienced.

Henry Prunier (page 38) & **Vo Nguyen Giap** (page 41)

I am disappointed about opportunities missed. I am disappointed the United States did not listen more. I am disappointed that Henry Prunier did not have a seat at the table when the United States of America were making decisions that would affect so many people, in so many places, for so many years. I am disappointed Henry Prunier felt the need to fall silent in his community when he returned to the United States. I am disappointed and ashamed of the United States government.

In a short period of time, Henry Prunier had a unique

experience. He was at the birth of the United States of America's physical involvement in the Vietnam war. Little did he know he was actually sleeping with our so called "enemy". Better yet, he was actually sent by our government to train this small group of warriors for weapon use. Our government introduced "carbines, M-1 rifles, machine guns, grenades, bazookas, and mortars..." that would later be used to kill the United States soldiers.

Thanks to Henry Prunier we see a far different side than the United States government portraits of Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap. We are introduced to a frail and gentle man, Ho Chi Minh, who cares deeply about Vietnam and the people who live there. A man dedicated to the liberation and freedom for his country. A man of the people. A man of hope. We have the opportunity to meet the curious, future commander of the North Vietnam's People's Army, Vo Nguyen Giap. We meet a Vietnam people who welcome and embrace the United States and are hopeful that we will help them gain their independence. A smart, dedicated group of people, willing to do whatever needed to save their country.

Vo Nguyen Giap teaches us the lessons of "...self-determination. That spirit provided us with stamina, courage, and creativity in the face of a powerful enemy." He exposes the United States government as the evil force behind the war, the air raids, the My Lai massacre, and the bombing of a hospital in Hanoi.

The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) knew the real story. They took time to know the people, the culture, and how to work together. They accomplished good will that persevered in spite of all the bloodshed. Fifty years later the General (Giap) and the Private (Prunier) meet again, the orange demonstrates the acknowledgement. After all these years, I think it is a tribute to the Vietnamese people that Henry Prunier has the silk-embroidered tapestry which was a gift from Ho Chi Minh alongside his other treasures.

Unfortunately, the United States government officials still don't get it. As recently as the mid nineties U. S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara quoted as wanting to review the Vietnam war as a "misunderstanding" and "tragedy". Giap response: "...tragedy for you, but for us the war was a noble sacrifice."

Vo Nguyen Giap eloquently speaks of "history is not made with "ifs," but if American leaders had been wiser I think we could have been spared the war." What a shame we didn't listen...

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

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Joe Maxwell
Hst 195
Oct. 7, 2010

Assignment 1

While reading the first section of this book the selection that most caught my attention was that of Tran Thi Gung. This story I feel had the greatest impact on me due to the how much it opened my eyes that civilians were fighting for their country and honor. Reading about this woman who joined the war to seek revenge for her fathers unjust murder makes you realize why these people were fighting until their death. The way she explains how scared she was the first time she was about to be attacked and killed a soldier is mind boggling. I can't begin to imagine myself at 17 years old facing an oncoming strong army then realizing the easiest ways to kill them. Her recollection of hiding in the tunnels and getting trapped for days at a time shows the commitment and dedication each person had for their country. It would be interesting to see how our country would react in a similar situation with the fight on our home soil. Would our civilians be as ready step out to do whatever it takes to live, or would they rely on our Armed Forces for their protection? I honestly don't think that many Americans, including myself, would have the inner fight and strength to engage in warfare like Tran Thi Gung became accustomed to. I feel Gung is a very trustworthy and believable account of what happened during the war. When showing her emotions about the captured American Soldier allowed us to see there still was humanity in these fighters, they were just doing what they had to in order to protect themselves. Although she may seem a little blunt on her remembering of killings, in her last statement it shows why she had to do what she did under those circumstances it wasn't out of hatred, "I think it was justified. But if i went to America and killed people there, I would feel very sorry and guilty. Since the Americans came to my country, I don't feel guilty."(Appy pg. 19). I am sure many of her country men felt the same as Tran Thi Gung in that the killing of the American soldiers wasn't what they wanted to do but had to in order to survive.

In the second section one of the stories that was disappointing to me was Paul Kattenburg's. I found this selection disappointing in the way he was treated and how he observed our higher ranking officials acting. In his recollection of how ignorant and un-intelligent our officials ,who are supposed to be doing the best for our country, makes it very clear as to why our war strategy wasn't working. Reading that Walt Roscow had actually said, " Whats good for Peru is good for Vietnam" (Appy pg. 82) allows us to see how closed

mindful and unwilling to look at alternative options our government was with this war. With no idea about the Vietnamese cultural heritage Americans were oblivious to the rooted importance just the land was to the native people and how hard they would fight to keep it. It was truly a war of stubborn egos and keeping up appearance. When Kattenburg blurted out idea of backing out of Vietnam he was quickly reprimanded by a higher official saying there is no evidence to do this, and instead of looking at this as a viable intelligent option Vice President Johnson simply stated, "We haven't gone this far with this whole thing to give up now" (Addy pg.82). It should never be just a case of not wanting to give up and admit defeat when it is coming at the cost of humanity. Paul was later relinquished of his position due to his vocalization of wanting to back out, clearly speaking your mind isn't what is supposed to be done in critical situations

For me the readings thus far have been very heavy and impacting. Being in the generation born to the Vietnam veterans and survivors we hear all the stories but I have never been as affected by the stories as I am in this book. When asked to find any good in this book I was first confused on how anyone could find good in something so tragic. The few bits of hope I found in these stories so far is the impact and strength of Nationalism. The fact that the Vietnamese people were so proud and willing to stand up to protect their country, shows the valiance and strength banding together against something can be. With our country at such strong disagreements about whether we should be involved with the war or not lead to such a strong division which made it impossible for us to win. The other bits of hope and compassion was how many times people on both sides said that they didn't want to be doing what they were and eventually knew what they were doing was wrong. With such a gruesome and horribly fought war I would hope that the American government would learn to truly know who they are fighting against, and why the opposition is fighting back rather than use the tactics they used in this war of "shoot now ask later". I also hope this war has taught us that lives are precious and no one should be put into a situation without full knowledge of the reason for them being there like so many confused soldiers were during the Vietnam assignments.

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Dylan Roberts

10/05/10

HST195

Patriots – The Vietnam Remembered From All Sides

Part 1:

As I read the story, though it did not affect the Vietnamese soldier, the theme seemed to linger upon death. Death is often feared and he did not seem to carry fear with him at all. This is why I believe he was a heroic character in the story. Often in war it is predicted that life will be cut short. I think the story portrays a noble character but it is unrealistic to not fear the end of your life or the pain of death. I think that parts of the story are very realistic and he is portraying a hero because he is willing to give his life for safety others. The soldier deserved his metals and rewards and also deserves a large chunk of credibility. I think the amount of subjectivity portrays the value of a soldier like the one in the story because of the many trials he encountered throughout the story. The soldiers possess courage and compassion.

Death is often a prevalent theme in Christian Appy's short stories. In this story there are a few examples where death is the focus. He says, "It was such a dangerous mission the commander feared I might be killed, so my unit conducted a death ceremony for me before I left." In the story it tells us that it was just as if he were already dead. The significance of this death ceremony was that there was an absence of fear from the soldier. This draws me to the conclusion that he was a brave and courageous soldier. In the story the soldier received credibility for his bravery and accomplishments. I think it was well deserved due to his willingness to die for his country.

In the story the author shows that the soldier had compassion. He says "I hated the enemy but when I captured an American, I felt sorry for him." The story also shares that he had nightmares about the horrifying experiences which tells us that it was mentally draining for the soldier to kill other people.

Part 2:

The story *All My Ancestors Are Buried Here* disappointed me the most. When trying to move the Vietnamese couple that lived in a free-fire zone, American soldiers burnt the house down to make the move permanent for the old couple. After a few days the couple returned to the land and built a new house to live in the same place. They explained that part of their heritage lies within the land because many of their ancestors were buried there. In this story American soldiers lacked attention and precision and fired at anything that could possibly be a threat. This resulted in loss of loved heritage, deaths and wounds of innocent people. The drafted soldiers were forced to face tragedy that took a toll on everyone. In the story you can see that taking the lives of innocent people affected the American soldiers in a negative way but they could have taken more precaution that could have saved lives.

The writer portrays the heartbreak and compassion that the soldiers had for the people. He also states "With so many experiences like that, our overwhelming hope was simply that the war would end." The soldiers had hope that the killing would end. They sent the old Vietnamese couple to a refugee camp with the intentions to protect them and not hurt them. This tells us that the characters in the story have compassion and goodness in their hearts. The story also says "In general, my generation hated the war, but we had no choice. We were drafted." The soldiers didn't choose to go to war and they didn't want to kill anyone but they weren't given an option. The writer's tone shows us that it was despairing to kill innocent people and that the American soldiers were remorseful. I believe that parts of the story display that the soldiers had compassion and were not cold hearted.

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I found all of the stories to be very moving. However the Joan collins one was the most interesting because it was on someone that lived in the same city.

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Allie Wrede

L00528332

Assignment #1

Part 1

The story of Tran Thi Gung caught my attention for numerous reasons. After first reading of her story I had a difficult time believing a tiny woman such as herself could be a killer. After re-reading the passage I truly connected with her and understood why she joined the guerillas at the young age of seventeen. Imagine being told your father was murdered and having to go retrieve his body. It was impressive at that young age she consciously thought that she wanted to "aid in the liberation of her country and continue on her father's cause". Gung continues to explain how she learned how to use weapons of the GI's she killed. It amazed me how the little creature such as herself managed to lead so many attacks against the Americans and be so war savvy. The thing that struck me the most was her kindness but obvious pure devotion to her land and country. She explained how her killings were justified, "if I went to America and killed people there, I would feel very sorry and guilty. Since the Americans came to my country, I don't feel guilty" Gung stated. I believe her story to be very credible. It was unbelievable at first but her firsthand accounts of the war and her injuries, struggles and killings, it was difficult to not believe her and feel her patriotism for her country. Her accounts seemed very factual and to the point. Her last statement as mentioned above proved her to be very level-headed. She killed because they had weapons, they were on her territory and trying to take away everything she believed in.

Part 2

Malcolm Browne was faced with many different hardships as a journalist. He was forced to report from the field itself the horrors of a large Viet Cong unit called the U Minh battalion. He went out with Vietnamese marines to find out what had happened

to the Dam Doi town radio. Not only was it a difficult place to get to the sight he endured was horrid. His personal account of the tortuous things the battalion did to the civilians of Dam Doi had to have taken a large toll on him. The sights and smells were so inhumane. It was so frustrating that he yearly witnessed these slayings and understood that the Dam Doi were helpless against the battalion. It angered me that nothing was done to prevent these slayings. Browne basically stated that America knew that there was torture going on, " but it was a rough war and there were no nice guys in Vietnam."

The attitude of Le Lieu Browne truly inspired me. She had been through so much facing discrimination because of her religion, losing her father because of his "nationalist" beliefs and seeing the rise and fall of a women's rights activist (Nhu). However, after staying so strong she knew in her heart that the Viet Cong would never persevere whilst everyone else was losing trust with the government and sympathizing more with them. She knew what was right whether or not she agreed with it. It showed that there was light at the end of the tunnel for her. After a long childhood she married her friend and the war finally ended. Even after she stated she thought, "That the war would go on forever."

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ASSIGNMENT 1

PART 1

The story that caught my attention is the first story in the textbook. I have read the first two stories. One, by Bernard Trainor, and the other by Dang Vu Hiep. It would have more interesting to me, if I had been asked to draw a comparison between the two leaders. I am therefore going to concentrate my efforts to answering the posed questions.

The story of General Bernard Trainor caught my attention right away. Besides serving as a general, Trainor was a military correspondent for the New York times, a lecturer at the Kennedy school of government, makes commentary on occasion as a military analyst, but also an accomplished author. These tasks require tactics, an ability to be an effective communicator, a clear and balanced approach to be objective and subjective in the interpretation of events. That is mainly why I chose his story.

I find General Bernard Trainor to be trustworthy, reliable, and believable. Besides the fact that I trust what he has to say, the war has been over for a long time now, which makes senseless to lie about. My trust of the General wouldn't have been the same if the war was ongoing at the time of publication of his story. At times of war, military strategists, the likes of General Bernard Trainor, make a habit of sending out mixed messages when making media appearances. This is because the intention is to protect the security of those in the battlefield, not because they are untrustworthy.

Just because they were there at that specific time does not make them less credible. They are speaking from firsthand experience. That is not to say there won't be a disparity in the unfolding and interpretation of events. For the most part, I find him to be a credible man. The two stories I have read so far, are objective but probably not all together factual. Since the military acts on a command line, and field officers are required to carry out orders without questioning them, General Trainor's interpretation of orders from his superiors may not be all together factual. First hand experiences for the most part, live with us humans for most if not all of our lives. The library of congress also has records of the events during the war. I therefore don't believe time is a factor in

this case.

PART 2

After reading "the emperor has no clothes", I will comment on my disappointment by the events in the story.

As a nation, we Americans believe, by no fault of our own, that we are the best at everything. Common sense tells me, in order to have prevailed in South Vietnam and eventually North Vietnam, we had to have paid close attention to those of us who understood the culture, history and politics of the region long before we deployed. As McNamara wrote in his memoir, he attributed much of America's failure in Vietnam to lack of intelligence. My disappointment is in the fact that, we had the intelligence all along and never made use of it. Men like Paul Kattenburg who featured in the story, and makes a contribution to the story had first hand knowledge of the region. Unfortunately, when he forcibly made a contribution to the national security council (NSC), his views were rapidly shot down.

The bottom line is, the Vietnam War was a conflict between the super power, fought on the third world stage.

PART 2 SECOND HALF.

There is a very old African proverb, "when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers". There is however, some good news that came out of this. We learned that despite their looks, the Vietnamese are just human like the rest of us. A majority of those who immigrated to the United States have turned out to be productive members in their communities.

Another lesson we learned from this conflict is that, in times of conflict, in foreign lands especially, an understanding of their culture, politics of the region, and their history plays a significant role as to who prevails. I have no proof as to whether these lessons have been learned from or put into use, but common sense tells me that it is the right path to take.

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

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Part 1

which single story, other than that of Jo Collins, in Part 1 of the Patriots book caught your attention? Why? How reliable, trustworthy, believable do you believe that speaker to be? After all, unlike you or me, THEY WERE THERE, at that specific point in time. Does that give them more or less credibility? Are they objective and factual or do they suffer from too much subjectivity, too much time having passed, too much forgotten?

It is so hard to just choose one story. I really like the story of Tran Thi Gung "I was stuck in a tunnel for seven days" on pg 15. There are several reasons that this story caught my attention. First it is a story from the Viet Cong, which I don't know much about. The second is it's from a girl. Of course the first time I read the story I believe it start to finish, there is no reason for me not to believe it, after rereading it I notice that the way the author opens the story is with a description of a picture the woman pulls out of her purse from the war and she is laying holding a gun. This could be a posed picture. Another thing that I don't quite understand is how an Asian culture would let a woman be a part of the guerrillas war fare. Her back story about why she joined is believable, because the Americans killed her dad. I want to believe this story because of all the interesting tactics that she has on the way the guerrillas worked and how she helped them out so much. But I wasn't there and this

could have been common knowledge for the people of the north after the war ended. She mentioned that she had forgotten lots. But the way she told the stories were very straight forward and factual, which leads me to believe her. She does not seem to be mad about what happened just that she was there and lived through it.

Part 2 of the 15 stories you've read, you will comment on the following questions.

Which story or stories (definitely one, but not more than two) were the most disappointing for you to read and why? You may have been disappointed with the speaker him/herself (with their attitude, for example) or disappointed by the events in their story (with the frustrating way in which they were treated or in the negative situations in which they had to interact with others). Start your answer to Part 2 with this negative, critical point of view first.

I can see how you can interpret some of the stories as boring. But when I read the story I feel the disappointment in the way the people were acting even before the war started. I have very little knowledge of the events of this war and the way it affected the people or even why it really started or what we gained from all the deaths of the Americans dying over there. The story I choose is from pg 54, NGO VINH LONG. It is about a Vietnamese boy who believes in America and wants to learn our ways and help our government until he sees the way it is really affecting his people. I was not disappointed with the speaker but the events that took place in his story. He believed in the American his way of life and

he thought that we were there to help his country. Because Long spoke English he helped with map making. He thought that he was doing right and helping to map around the villages save people's lives. What really got to me and to him is that they were destroying the villages and moving people around and that the Americans were destroying the field where they got their food. And by doing this they the villagers lives were destroyed and most of them died from starvation. Another part of this story that was really disturbing is when they act of cutting off people's heads and posting them on polls outside the walls of the outposts. Long said that this reminds him of the mid-ages and I agree how barbaric. I guess it is war but the war hadn't even started yet and the villagers were so naive of the fact of what was going on in the world.

In the second half of Part 2, address any positive lesson(s) you may have learned from one or more of these accounts. Is there any "hope", "compassion", "goodness" or the "potential for good" that comes out of any of these stories?

I think Long gained knowledge through compassion of his people and the world. It's too bad that there are not more people like this in the world because I bet there would be a lot less war and famine. Before coming to America long fed his people and kept them from starving and then tried to tell the government what they were doing but this did not help. Long took his knowledge of what was really happening in his country and went to the United States to Harvard no less. His power of compassion for his people brought to important people like Henry Kissinger, and Samuel Huntington.

He become an anti war activist at Harvard and had a role in the U.S policy's in Vietnam.

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590 words

Thomas Rathbun-Moser

The story that stood out to me the most was Bernard Trainors. What struck me as interesting right away was the fact that Trainors enlisted. Most of my previous education involving the Vietnam War deals with the draft. He states that when he first went to Vietnam he had to become use to the way the Southern Vietnamese fought, "...they always left their enemy an opportunity to escape." (pg. 4) This becomes even truer when Trainors intelligence found out that a building was a communist R and R center. It turned out to be a leper hospital and many people were killed, resulting in nothing more than losing the trust of the Southern Vietnamese. The reason I chose this story though has to be because, although he fights for his country and what she feels is right, he can see the harm that is coming out of it. Trainors states, "We were destroying the North Vietnamese, but we were also destroying innocent civilians and destroying ourselves." Later he describes how he would go after enemy locations biased on intelligence reports. From his descriptions one gets a sense for his trustworthiness, if no enemy was there he could go to the next location. By doing that he saved American lives, because they didn't risk setting off booby traps. Following this philosophy lead General Trainors, then a colonel, to discover the largest find of intelligence in I Corps during the war. Trainors does strike me as a trustworthy person. He didn't blind follow orders but rather found the best way to keep his men alive and achieve his goals. One wouldn't believe that as an intelligence officer his account of what happened would suffer too much, but rather would very factual. Continuing on Trainors theory for American's defeat, how the Viet Cong bleed America dry, and connecting it to how America did the same to England makes sense and adds credibility to his whole account. For these solders to forget about what they experienced, what they witnessed, no measurable amount of time will every pass.

Henry Prunier's story disappointed me the most. Prunier explains that he and other Americans trained the Vietnamese men in the end day of World War Two. While no one could know what would happen in the future, the fact that we trained the very people that we then went to war with is disturbing. We created our own worst enemy. The attitude I received from the entry when reading about the training was one of pride. Prunier explains that the men he taught could almost take apart an M-1 the first time they saw it. Its one thing to be proud of a student, but when those skills later took the lives of American soldiers it's wrong. Finally Prunier seems to go against himself in the last paragraph. He stats, "I was sort of a silent antiwar person," (pg. 40) Prunier was against the war so he should have stood up, however he was too worried about protecting his daughters. It's hard to criticize a father for watching out for his daughters, but not if it means going against what he feels is right.

I found some positive in this story as well. It is a twisted idea of hope. They were friends, in a way. In 1995 when Prunier returned to Vietnam for a reunion, he saw General Giap. General Giap acted like he was throwing a hand grenade. One must

wonder how Prunier felt when he realized that what he taught cost people their lives.