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Assignment 1

The story that had the largest impact on me was from Roger Donlon. His story is an account of his heroism during his time in Vietnam. I was moved by his story because of its simplicity. He was there to simply advise the Vietnamese and help them move forward with their countries goals. He was not there as a combatant but showed he was more than capable. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions while under attack on July 6, 1964. For any man to be awarded that medal and to still be alive speaks volumes about his character and strength. His duties while in Vietnam were to train the Vietnamese strike force for combat operations. Of the members of the strike force there were Vietnamese who sympathized with the north. The sympathizers where instrumental in the eventual attack that would earn Donlon the Medal of Honor. He speaks briefly about the problem of having the sympathizers directly involved in the training. He say's "they manipulated us." He also says they were unaware of the magnitude of the sympathizers because of a lack of communication from higher headquarters. The cards where stacked against him from the very beginning and he was not ever aware of it until it was to late. On a larger scale you could say that for the entire American military involved in this war. America never imagined the intense patriotism of the Viet Cong. Their beliefs were deeper than any American made bomb could penetrate.

In the case of Malcolm Browne he talks about his experience as an American reporter working for the associated press. He speaks about the Buddhist protests, the "ding a ling" torture technique, John Wayne, and the Special Forces. He characterizes the native people into a group of simple people expressing their views diplomatically while also calling American Green Berets "glamour boys." Malcolm talks about his time in Saigon where he could go to a nightclub in a suit and tie and later that evening catch a helicopter to a remote part of the jungle. He frequently portrays the American fighting forces as low quality, stating that "the entire camp was roaring drunk" when referring to a Christmas Eve celebration. He also speaks about helicopter missions where they would "land at the edge of a rice patty field and everyone would go charging into a tree line, blazing away like crazy. And there would be nothing there." He was a reporter in a war zone, which is substantially different from being a troop in a war zone. His story contains political views and opinions, which can be subjective and unreliable. I would have liked for him to speak of the men that were being shot at not the celebrities getting drunk. I understand that politics can influence a war but the soldier wins it. I do not understand why they were given so much access to the war in the first place. Why is a civilian with their own political views, allowed to be with American fighting forces? This has baffled me for many years. Perhaps the Duke was right when he said, "If it weren't for those panty waste liberals, things would go much more smoothly."

A positive story about Vietnam is still a sad story. Richard Olsen has many sad stories that are positive. He was a young patriot that was awarded the opportunity to fight for his country during a war. He was a 27-year-old Lieutenant flying with men who had fought in World War 2. He was a romantic during his time in Vietnam saying he flew with the best men in the world and talking about how he celebrated being able to stay alive. His story's are pleasurable to read because of his openness about what he did and saw over there. He is also tremendously patriotic stating "I'm not one of those veterans who's embittered with a whole host of grievances." He understands that the decisions he made while in combat were his choice. He is not angry with a politician for something that is out of his control. He relishes in the fact that he was able to share those experiences with other Americans fighting in the name of Freedom. He enjoys being part of World History. This positive outlook of such a horrandous experience is refreshing. So often with the Vietnam War it is only the horror that is disgust not the historic impact and perhaps positive impact even a publicly negative war can have on our future generations.

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