

96/100

1134

Each of the stories in part one of the assigned book stuck out to me in different ways, serving different meanings and provoking different emotions. However, the one story that seemed to really stick out to me was the chronicle of George Watkins. George Watkins was a grunt soldier in Vietnam, where while serving his Country he lost both of his legs and both of his eyes when he unknowingly stepped on a land mine. Before Vietnam changed his life forever, George was just a good old boy from the Appalachian town of Big Stone Gap, Virginia. Throughout the story his Appalachian roots were strongly evident as he talked, ^{of} which at the end of his story he admitted he was embarrassed ~~of~~ and asked the author if he could help make him sound a little smarter. I found the way he talked endearing and honest and am glad that the author didn't change George's speech. When talk of a war started in the U.S and young men his age were being drafted, George knew it was only a matter of time before his name was drawn. In his story he talks about how he almost didn't go to Vietnam because of his high blood pressure but after being ordered to lay low for three days his blood pressure returned to normal. When I first read that, I could only imagine the disappointment George must have felt and the horror of being told that he was really going to Vietnam, a place he'd never even heard of. George maked it very clear that when he was drafted he didn't know where he was going or why he was even going there and just did what he was told, revealing just how young and oblivious he was. I believed every word George Watkins said in his testimony. The way he talked with such innocence, even now, reflecting as an older man, shows just how young he was when he was thrown into the war and the everlasting stronghold it's had on his life. Out of all the stories in part one I found that George's story had the most credibility. No one will ever know what he went through in Vietnam, except him and his brothers in uniform that fought beside him. He lost his limbs for the war, not even knowing what he was fighting for, only doing what he was told. It would be an injustice to tell a man, who's lost his limbs, that his experience isn't credible. Even after all these years, George still remembers every detail of his journey in Vietnam, as it changed his life in more ways than anyone could ever know or understand.

It's hard to point out one story in this book that is more of a disappointment than the other, as the topic discussed is a disappointment in

Careful, why lay low?
did he

isn't that
also an excuse?
Hey I was young
f duns"

Amk

interesting or
commentary on
my question here?
lose a limb =
credibility?

general. However, there was one story that was particularly frustrating for me to read, as the testimony seemed to be filled with one disappointment after another. The story I'm pertaining to was the one of Rufus Phillips; the small town football star turned CIA agent. Rufus was ordered to Vietnam to serve on a team of operative as part of the Saigon Military Mission. The disappointment started right from the moment Rufus landed in Vietnam. He was confronted with the task of learning a culture he knew absolutely nothing about. In his testimony, Rufus list's all of the things that were clouding his understanding of the Vietnam culture, such as; Refugees fleeing the North, the French still living in Vietnam, the Foreign Legion, the Vietnamese army, and Binh Xuyen, a gangster sect that ran and controlled the police. As I read this in the book I could feel the frustration Rufus must have felt, not being able to understand a culture and communicate with the people. The frustration continued when his group began their work, he goes on to explain how there were fifteen men in this group, yet only one of them had any previous experience in Vietnam. So not only was Rufus clueless when it came to this country, but so were his members of his CIA team. That can't be a reassuring feeling, and surely isn't settling. The longer Rufus was in Vietnam he started to realize that the Viet Minh wasn't the immediate threat, but it was all the various sects that opposed Diem, making his task at hand just that much more difficult and complex. It seemed to be the never ending quest of understanding and a situation that had many layers to it. I enjoyed learning about Rufus' experience in Vietnam, however, it was just too negative and frustrating to read and quite frankly, kind of stressed me out. Then again, I'm sure that was his point.

Although this book is written on a dark and sad topic, I can gladly say that there were some stories that had a message of hope and were quite inspiring. One of those stories being Ngo Vinh Long. I truly enjoyed reading his passage because it chronicled his journey from being a home schooled boy living in Vietnam to a genius that worked his way to Harvard. While growing up Ngo saw first hand the atrocities the French were inflicting on his nation and even tells of how when he would go to the ponds he would see floating corpses. I can't imagine growing up in a place where, at that time, it was completely normal to see something so horrendous such as that. As discouraging and depressing as it may have

was referring

all narrative here

less narrative, more analysis & better analysis. I think it stressed you out. -clicker

been, Ngo didn't let it oppress him, instead he used it as fuel to get smarter and make a change for his nation. With his father's help, Ngo started to learn the English language, telling the story of how the two of them walked 100 miles to get copies of Charles Dickens novel's and books in English. At age sixteen, Ngo took the high school graduation exam and passed with the highest score in South Vietnam. This incredible accomplishment made Ngo a world wide name, telling of how he was invited to tea at the U.S. Embassy and got to dance with the daughter of Mrs. Ngo Dinh Nhu, the sister-in-law of President Ngo Dinh Diem. Ngo Vinh Long's story was so inspiring because no matter what he went through, whether it was the status of his Country, his father's beating, or being chased by the police, he never gave up on trying to better the world and grow in his knowledge. After every disappointment, Ngo was able to find hope and a way to make things a positive.

Nicole

Overall good job.

Much of your paper is narrative
(a simple retelling of the story)

Spent more time in future work on the
analysis parts.

But, because you were wise & went for
a longer paper length*, I could have
easily "forgive" the narrative. In the
end, the paper covered what I asked
you to cover.

Good work
* longest in class

1084

David Lahy

Professor Joe Escobar

HST 195

12 October 2013

Patriots Book: Parts 1 & 2

The interview of retired Marine Corps, General Bernard Trainor concludes with a very powerful quote, which sums up Trainor's feelings and those who took part in the Vietnam War. Trainor was asked to expand upon what he had once previously written, a "genie of anguish" that he had bottled up inside. He states, "Well I still can't go to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The genie's still there. I don't know. And I'm not alone. I guess it was the waste and frustration, both seen and what you knew about. You say, 'Jesus Christ, Fifty-eight thousand people—good kids.' That's about all I can say. Deep down there's a hurt and I don't know what it is. I can't control it. It's always there and I think I'll just live with it for the rest of my life." (Appy, 2003, p.8). What's interesting is the belief in American success during his first tour in 1965, relatively quickly turned to disenchantment upon his return in 1970. What were the reasons behind his change of opinion? Perception and reality do not always coincide and upon his return Vietnam in 1970, the Cold War world view of Communism as a monolithic block, with Moscow pulling the strings proved to be a false. America refused to realize although fundamentally Communist, Ho Chi Minh and the North Vietnamese cause were rooted in Nationalism and has historically resisted outside direction. In the view of the State Department, the United States could not "afford to assume that Ho Chi Minh is anything but Moscow-directed." (Herring, (2002), p.13). Additionally, the democratic government under Ngo Dinh Diem was failing. Diem's nationalism and anti-communist views made him the logical choice for the leader of South Vietnam, there were concerns he lacked the political ability to strengthen and unite the people of the south. Despite the concerns, the argument was, "there was no one to take his place who would serve U.S. interests better." (Herring, 2002, p 62) Diem would later prove to be a poor choice and cause trouble for the United States and the war in Vietnam.

Everyone?

PT

No hyphens?

oops NA

OK good exalant use of Herring's text for support

On no, topic
way off here

Diem's lack of capacity to govern lead him to implement often brutal and repressive political policies to crush and defeat opposition, thereby alienated the majority of the population in the south. This only served to drive support to the North and harm any U.S. political objectives. Government policies and political mishandlings were not the only factor in the rising opposition to the United States and government of South Vietnam. General Westmoreland's strategy of "search-and-destroy" proved to be counter-productive. Not only were North Vietnamese being killed in relatively large numbers, civilian casualties were also incurred thereby eroding the trust of the Vietnamese had towards U.S. forces. A major flaw in this strategy of attrition and using the number of enemy killed as a measure of success was to discount the vast number of North Vietnamese with the will power to endure a long protracted war. Once it became clear the current military strategy was ineffective coupled with the corrupt Diem government the American soldier began to believe they were fighting an unwinnable war.

back to Trainor

General Trainor's view of his involvement in the Vietnam War comes across as very believable and sincere. This was not a historian's account of the events but an actual field grade officer who actively took part in both the fighting and direction of forces under his command. Due to his position of military rank he was not far removed or politicized to not see the ground-truth realities of political and military decisions.

Former North Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap's attitude in the story is disappointing and lacks subjectivity in his view on the war. He paints a picture that the atrocities which occurred during the war were only committed by American forces. He states, "The American War can be described as the most atrocious conflict in human history". (Appy, 2003, p. 42) Unfortunately American forces did commit atrocities in Vietnam and this cannot be forgotten or forgiven. But to make such a bold claim as the "most atrocious" in human history denies previous war histories were there are countless documented examples of atrocities committed by the Germans, the Japanese, and Russia in World War II, and others before that. Has he forgotten Communist forces also committed atrocities on Americans as well as Vietnamese civilians? In the early years after the Geneva Accords, under Ho Chi Minh leadership there are reports of up to 500,000 people executed after implementation of a land reform program in Northern Vietnam. (Herring, 2002, p.81) Additionally, terrorism was a primary part of the

objectivity?

no hypo?

PT

Communist strategy in the unification of Vietnam; insurgent attacks in Saigon and Viet Cong death squad regularly killed the innocent. One could argue Ho and Giap welcomed news of American atrocities and saw it as a benefit in winning over the support of the South Vietnamese population. And lastly, let's not forget the treatment of prisoners in North Vietnamese prison camp where routine brutality, torture, and psychological abuse took place. Both sides have blood on their hands! To deny the atrocities of the North Vietnamese army is to deny history and the true price the Vietnamese people paid. Or as Giap, calls a "noble sacrifice".

From the stories in first two chapters of the book I am hopeful books like this will help the many people on both sides who fought in the war or lost loved ones gain insight into the struggles each individual had go through during their time in Vietnam. It is through stories like these that people may come to understand the long term pain and anguish many Vietnam veterans still have to this day. Some of the stories point out definite political errors made in the assumption of the war in Vietnam and that can be a good thing. It helps us to remember the world is not so simple or black and white. Not everything can be categorized as good and evil, only different viewpoints.

Works Cited

Appy, Christian G. *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides*. New York: Viking, 2003. Print.

Herring, George C. *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*. Boston, Mass.: McGraw-Hill, 2002. Print.

David, A strange, unique, but overall good paper. I loved the use of supportive Herring material, but the discussion quickly got away from my posed questions. At least you returned briefly to credibility in Part 1. Part 2 was better in that you definitely countered the arg of inaccuracies (or incompleteness) of Giap's comments. The conclusion was definitely your own topic, not mine. But because of your paper length (long) I can forgive the off topic parts because you ~~beaver~~ ^{said} enough about what I asked.

97/100

1013

Assignment #1

Kristin Sledge

In Christian G. Appy's *Patriots*, Sinh shared two different examples that pounded him with hopelessness while he served as a platoon leader for the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. After being informed that enemy troops were set to land a boat near a small village, Sinh took his scout company so as to inform his army when the enemy had arrived. Upon seeing multiple boats with what he thought were rifle silhouettes, a commanding officer was notified and fire opened upon the boats. After realizing there was no return fire, Sinh asked for flares to be sent up to light the area. Only after the light from the flares burst through the darkness was their mistake fully illuminated. The boats were not in fact the enemy, but fisherman and their families. The impact of this realization was felt instantaneously; not only by Sinh for having experienced it first hand, but by myself in the power of his words on the page. When I think of war it is hard for me to realize that innocent people get caught in the crossfire. I shared in his hopelessness in the thought of being responsible for causing so much pain and death when it was unnecessary. In regards to Sinh's credibility, it seems like a night like this would be something that is hard to forget. This story feels real and seems to have stood the test of time; however it makes one wonder about the rest of his stories he shared. He intercepted bags of mail from the other side a time or two and recalled how much hate the communists had for them. He even recalled some of what the letters had said such as, "don't worry about us, we'll survive." While letters filled with hate would be memorable, I don't believe that specific words and sentences could stand the test of time. Every time a story is told it changes a little. How much hate did those letters really have when Sinh read them versus how much he told others were in them? I see more credibility in the traumatic event of bearing the responsibility for so many innocent deaths than I do in the amount of hate that was present in a letter.

"The Vietnamese had their own ideas" was a statement that rubbed me the wrong way from the start. While reading the stories assigned for this week I found myself with an array of emotions while jumping from story to story, however no other story had me shutting down from the opening

Don't forget. Sharing something
NEGATIVE about your actions
is probably more "Real" than
glorifying about something positive

Very nice point
This contrast works

"firing commenced"

cliche

97/100

sentence. I understood that this book would be telling the story from all sides and I was ready for what the Vietnamese had to say about our soldiers, but I found myself with a scowl on my face and asking aloud into the book "Well who asked you anyway?" upon reading what memories Sergei Khrushchev had to offer. He spoke about how Americans don't think for themselves, accept every lie that the media has to offer, and how we had a moment of awakening only to slip back into our media-induced stupor after 9/11. He said that he felt this awakening with the antiwar movement was an opportunity for Americans to realize that "not everything depended on the will of their government"; but faced in this government shutdown I feel like his statements could not be less true. Perhaps if I had read this book after it was published in 2003 when terror was on everyone's minds I would not be so miffed to read his claim that we have fallen back into the government's arms. But in 2013, while not forgotten but not as pertinent and issue as it was in the first few years after 9/11, I feel that the government has done nothing in recent history to redeem itself. Take this ridiculous shutdown for example: in the first few days it was all anyone was talking about; now 2 weeks later everyone (except for those directly affected) not a single person I have talked with has brought anything about the government into our conversation. I feel like the longer it goes on the more fed up we become while realizing that life goes on. Then again I might be coming about this all the wrong way; after all I did receive my financial aid and would have felt massively different if the funds suddenly were not available.

It's hard to find that diamond in the rough amongst the stories that I read this week, but Richard Olsen's stories served as that ray of sunshine. The way he spoke about the time he spent in Vietnam and what he had learned about the South army gave the Vietnamese troops a bright humanity. The fact that they took a "siesta" from twelve to three made me feel like these troops were not just a working machine for the good of Vietnam. It was nice to read that even though the people of Vietnam had been fighting for independence for so long that they never lost sight of the small things in life such as naps. The fact that Olsen had nostalgia towards his memories in Vietnam gave a hope that there were troops that had genuinely positive experiences while overseas. So many troops had such bad experiences or terrible stories to tell that it was overwhelmingly

really analyzed well here

this part gets a bit off track

yes we rarely hear about these accounts

pleasant to be presented with such a positive outlook. Olsen told of the Thunderbird Lounge and the swapping of stories with friends, the way they announced their arrival by flying low, and the temperament of drinking as much as you could; all things that brought a smile to my face while I read them. Sure this war seemed pointless and a waste of American lives, but stories like this make it a little better somehow. Not everything that came out of Vietnam was a cluster of broken men and shattered families; there were those few rays of sunshine if you looked hard enough.

Well done Kristen!
Because of your paper length, your
"off topic commentary" was completely
fine ... enough words ~~didn't~~ existed
that were directly related to my
posed questions.

Issue in Part 2.

Khrushchev - Hey you took HST 203
with me. I was hoping your
problems with his ego had something
to do with his father Nikita (Kennedy),
the Cold War, & the communist that
he is. 😊