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HST 195 – Vietnam

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October 10, 2013

War Heroes -Roger Donlon

The story that caught my attention the most was that of Roger Donlon, commander of the Nam Dong Special Forces camp. He was the first American to receive the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War. Donlon portrays his story with facts as if he is teaching a class on the war. All the stories in this book are history; some are more personal while others are straight forward about the facts and strategy of the war. He shifts gears near the end though and drops emotions into his memories. The setting where the interview takes place was warm and peaceful, “With broad shoulder and firm jaw... Speaking in a calm, even paced voice, he takes time-outs to entertain his baby granddaughter and to point out the red, white, and blue birdhouse in the yard of his Leavenworth, Kansas, home (pg 12, Appy)”. This section reveals a proud American and a good man. Going back to the use of facts more than emotions leads me to believe that he is using credible information and that his account of this attack is accurate. Donlon describes the attack step by step and explains it very clearly and because of that, it seems like this specific battle was done and over with before anyone could blink but this was an all night long fight and probably felt like days for Donlon and the other soldiers. He explains the tasks and rescues that he had to get done in order to survive and to save his men; “I had just finished making my rounds...As a commander, my job was not only to lead but to communicate...Primarily my job was to make sure we got our mortars firing in the key areas...What I remember most was my effort to rescue Pop Alamo (pg 13-15, Appy)”. Donlon finishes his story with a similar vibe as the setting of the interview described by Appy, “When I got out of the hospital I took some visits to the beach where I saw a navy ship that had Old Glory flying. It was beautiful and healing in a lot of ways (pg 15,

Appy). Adding emotions to his factual account shows the sensitive side to Donlon which is also portrayed in the beginning with his granddaughter.

The story I was most disappointed with was that of Ngo Vinh Long (pg 54, Appy). He reveals his fascination and a positive impression of the United States but by the end of his story he had lost all of that and turned against the U.S. intervention. He tells of all the horrors he saw during his time as a hired public relations person for one of the mapping teams and that is what changes his mind. The attitude that American officials gave him also played a factor. A positive attitude was turned into a negative one and that happened all too often during the Vietnam War. I thought this story would lead into Long trying to persuade others that the U.S. was there to help but it was the exact opposite.

Daniel Redmond's account of the Vietnam War was more positive than most (pg 47, Appy). He has negativity in his story but he counters it with his positive feelings; "One day I loaded three thousand people onto one LST. These goddamn French legionnaires were shoving people on like they were cattle. I felt like a war criminal, but at least I got them out of there. Personally, I felt very good about the operation and I'm proud to have been involved with it (pg 48, Appy)". Redmond was a ensign in the Navy and sent to help in the transport of a million North Vietnamese to South Vietnam, otherwise known as the Operation Passage to Freedom. He was just a twenty-four year old man with a heart to do some good.

Work Cited

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