

Part One

The story of Roger Donlon captivated me the most. His was one packed full of the type of absolutely traumatic experiences we think of when Vietnam is brought up. In particular the story of the attack of the traitors was unbelievable and although it is hard to catch the tone of a personal story in writing, it's almost as if he is rather indifferent to the whole recollection:

“The first thing each of the traitors did when the attack started— and they knew it was coming— was to slit the throat or break the neck of the person next to them. So right off the bat our Strike Force went from three hundred down to two hundred, and possibly closer to a hundred. And the people we thought would be shooting outward were now shooting inward. It got pretty spicy very rapidly.”

Appy, Christian (p. 14).

Mr. Donlon's story paints a vivid firsthand picture of what sounds like Hell itself. This event stuck with me the most of all Part I. The bluntness and gore of each story like this give reason to believe that one could not make this up. Of course overall feelings and judgments of the war cannot be considered factual, but Roger Donlon seems to be a reliable source for this story if only for the fact that many have vouched for his even harder to believe endeavors (specifically the tremendous list of reasons for receiving his medal).

In this particular situation the sheer adrenaline of the situation would probably aid in its remembrance just as the terror would aid in never letting it go. Roger tells of another frightening occurrence that struck the imagination. One of his Vietnamese interpreters happened to get caught up in the attack on Fourth of July when 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.”

Appy, Christian (p. 14). There really aren't words to describe that feeling you get in your stomach when reading a personal account of that measure.

Andrew Tignor

1 assignment

Roger Donlon was one of the first Americans in the Vietnam War to receive the Medal of Honor. Reading through Roger's story had such key points in what was happening in Vietnam that most of Americans could not begin to understand in less they were there. He was a Green Beret captain who commanded the Nam Dong Special Forces camps in the mountains of northern South Vietnam. Roger shares with us the amount of danger that there was on a daily bases in his time in the Vietnam War, this makes his story so hard to read because of the amount of pain that it seems to cause him as he recites the past events. It was so hard to think that what this man went through was real but you could tell by the way that Roger choked up and the pain that it was causing him during the interview that his story was not over stated but rather burned in to his mind ever since.

This was a man that has given everything for his country and yet what good was it when he lost so many good friends. Roger had suffered many wounds while trying to rescue some of his fellow comrades. He was a man that made a lot of great sacrifices for other men and his country. This made it so sad to read this story and think about the things that went on overseas in that most horrible place.

Part 2

1. Rufus Phillips was a little disappointing, at the beginning of his story it has some good insight about him but not much about the reason he was in Vietnam. A man that after graduating from Yale joined the C.I.A and then three years later was sent Korea as a lieutenant just did not seem relevant. Even though he was later ordered to go to Vietnam and help out Lansdale a person considered by the U.S as a master of psychological warfare. He was sent to Vietnam with one message save South Vietnam. Even with this in mind reading through Rufus story just did not seem like it was going to help with the war.

Even though the story was a little bland it seemed as Rufus was trying to do his best to do what was right. It just was that by himself he could not

achieve the things that he wanted to in the war. He seemed to be a man that was set on trying to find a better solution.

2. Ngo Vinh Long's was another that was quiet disappointing. The events that he gave in his story were really bland and unexciting. Ngo spent much of his time with his father learning and studying for English schools. He really did not go into anything too serious, he mostly talked about him traveling around Vietnam and mapping it out. This was not an easy task at the time but it was just not all that horrible either.

Although the story was not that exciting, as Ngo got older he traveled to the U.S and studied at Harvard. During his time there he spent it telling people that the War in Vietnam was not going to end the way that they thought it would. It was the most positive part of his story, this was showing people that the war was going to have a very negative impact and there could have been other ways to deal with the situation then going to war.

Assignment 1 HST195

Barbara Lay

Part 1

George Watkins really took my heart to hear his tale. This man had every reason to be bitter over what happened to him, yet to me it doesn't sound like was. What a terrible thing to lose both eyes and both legs. It seems so amazing that this man is capable of taking care of his personal needs. You have to give much credit to his sister for taking care of his house and meals all those years. What a close and courageous family this is. Perhaps part of this man's courage comes from the determination he saw in the Vietnamese people while in the Que Son Valley. After being driven out of their villages in the valley, the people would return to the burned out homes and try to rebuild with little of nothing that was left there. He said in his interview that he does not hate them, but yet he still has a sense of humor being able to laugh when stated, "Although I would like to get ahold of that one that set the booby trap." I would only hope I could still have a sense of humor under the same circumstances. Would his attitude have been different if the other two soldiers would have been killed during that explosion?

Part 2

I was most disappointed in Malcolm Browne's story, not directly about any of the events he witnessed dealing with the war, but about his encounter with John Wayne.

John Wayne disappointed me the most with his attitude while at the officer's club. Here was an American legend, drunk and shooting up the officer's club. I have always been a fan of John Wayne, but here was Malcolm Browne, and ex-soldier-turned-reporter. The reporters had a very important and dangerous job during the war, putting their lives on the line also in order to send the reports off on the war. John called the man a

“pantywasted liberal.” This man had been over in Vietnam as a soldier, and now as a reporter. Malcolm deserved respect from John Wayne.

Most of the people in this book telling these stories, wished the war had never happened, and what seems amazing is they don't seem to hold resentments towards each other's countries. They were just doing what was needed at the time, even having to kill or be killed. But now that the war is over, some even feel regret and wished the war had never happened. Those of us who have never fought in war really have no clue what feelings or emotions these people experienced at the time of the war, and even now after the war have been over all these years.

Camren Bernico

HST 195

Assignment 1

Part 1:

Bernard Trainor was a general in the US Marines and was one of the first soldiers to enter and be apart of what would become the Vietnam War.

I chose Mr. Trainor because I felt his story gave me a very large overview of not just war scenes but also that of culture and politics. What first caught my attention and lead to my choosing this story was when Bernard was not even a part of the war yet, just attending college. His shock at being asked "why" and how this opened his mind was very telling of the time in which this all took place. His amazement at being asked why and establishing his own views showed us a time in which people trusted and followed more. Before World War 1 we were a nation of faith and God, we did not question and what could not be answered would then be excused by God. After World War 1 and 2 and the industrial revolution we as a nation began to question things more. Not so openly or brashly as the story of Mr. Trainor but the seed was planted. When we skip ahead into the peak of the war we have the Hippy counter culture movement and which this movement "why" became the new way to approach the world.

By reading his story and the few parts that had less to do with combat but

the world I was able to see a clear picture of the innocence people had and the image that was AMERICA to what came to be during and after the Vietnam War. A nation that always asked "Why", a nation torn on what is America and the global view of our nation.

To move further I also enjoyed when Mr. Trainor said;

"One thing I learned about the South Vietnamese was that they always left their enemy an escape. When American get into action, you aim to "kill 'em all", but that idea of a battle of annihilation was not part of their culture and I had to accommodate my plans to take this into account". (Bernard Trainor, "Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from all Sides. Pg 5 part 1)

This gave me a lot more insight into the culture of these people. Honestly I mostly have seen movies on Vietnam which I am sure take many artistic liberties. In these films the Vietnamese are always so nameless, faceless, just blurbs of brown and yellow screaming harsh words in a harsh tongue either dying or killing off a beloved American. Knowing more about the Vietnamese culture helps me to identify them as people and understand them.

Bonus to all of this was just how they found the super secret underground lair, Quang Da Special Zone Headquarters.

Part 2:

Ngo Vinh Long was at the time a twenty year old south Vietnamese man

who came to USA to study at Harvard. He later became involved with the hugely important task of making the maps that would later be used by the US military during the Vietnam War.

Like many people he was naive and believed fully in the virtues of the USA, the terrors and evils of Communism and lived upon faith and good intentions.

However his story of his time working for the US military making maps is one that shows clearly the change not just in his own self but the world at large, at how this war ripped the world asunder and heralded in a new age and way of thinking.

What bothered me about this story was not the speaker or their actions but rather the openly speaking about the bad things that happened and that our country did.

I found it interesting when you asked if we believe the people who wrote these stories. It is a good question but also a bold question as you openly ask us to challenge the very stuff we are being told to learn.

This applies to the greater picture, how much of history do we truly know? At least when we are growing up and being spoon fed "facts". Growing up I learned a lot of history and I ever watched History Channel daily. Very rarely was America shown in a negative light. In school this was very rare indeed and in fact we were shown as heroic, powerful, wise. We were the good guys fighting off the great evils of the world and protecting those weaker than ourselves. I truly believed this for a long time. It saddens me that true history is swept under the rug as that is a direct lie and insult not

just to us but the memories of those involved.

In the case of this story I do believe him and I believe that America was not being honest, being open or doing all the right things. I think many of us see this more clearly now and how to interrupt that is difficult. Do we accept that war and running a nation will have to fall into corruption, deceit and shameful acts in order to retain power and image? Or should we be appalled at the stuff our country keeps from us and the heinous acts committed to others and ourselves and fight for change such as the Hippy Movement?

The Korean War from what I have read is much more then a war but was a global social revolution that changed the very way we think, talk and view things forever.

Chelsae Staton

Assignment 1

Escobar CRN 21233

10/13/13

George Watkins

Part I

“He stepped on a land mine. He lost both legs and both eyes” (Appy 21). Immediately George Watkins is of interest because of what he lost in the war, doing what his country told him. Not asked, as Watkins was drafted into the war. Interesting more than that is the fact that he had a blood pressure condition that could have kept him from the draft and inevitably the war. It seems almost intentional that he would be monitored, *resting*, for three days to ensure his blood pressure could in fact be brought down to a level that would allow him entrance. The impact from Watkins’s story comes from his realization of the extent of his injuries, mostly the lack of concern or awareness he had about his lost legs. “I’ll tell you what’s surprising, I didn’t think about my legs. Legs was a second thought” (Appy 24).

Watkins laid back story telling leads to a relaxed trustworthiness. He laughs through his reminiscing and speaks in poor English that opens the heart. One wonders what his life could have been if he hadn’t gone to Vietnam, or at least not stepped on the mine. He becomes likeable and easy to relate to. Like an every-day blue collar American, you find yourself having more questions and wanting to know him personally for reasons other than the war. Credibility comes from almost emotion-less speaking. It feels as if he loses himself in the story and just breezes through telling it without much thought or pulling for important facts. For parts of the story it feels like you’re right along with him, learning, losing and accepting.

He speaks of the Vietnamese with a soft respect and almost nostalgia, “They had to be some good people to withstand all that. . . They’ some of the most determined people I’ve ever run into. I don’t hate them.

They did what they had to do” (Appy 23). Watkins displayed complete objectivity in that statement alone. Showing that he has an understanding of why they were fighting for their country, and never appearing to give up or falter from what he could see. The main point of the story is supposed to be about the land mine and how he lost his legs and eyes, but if you read between the lines you find so much more and it’s deep and very real.

Part II

Daniel Redmond, “The doctor who won the war in Indochina”, and the events surrounding their stories respectfully are disappointing. To hear that a man who was so respected and idolized by multiple sides of this war was basically a lying quack is sickening. Redmond leads the story through a positive experience in supporting and transporting the North Vietnamese to South Vietnam. However, this Operation “was our first commitment to the disaster that happened in the sixties” (Appy 48). The story goes into the anger Redmond clearly has towards what he was a part of and the people exploiting the situation. Tom Dooley wrote a book that many assumed was an accurate account of what happened and how the Vietnamese were affected. Using a photograph of a beggar to tug at America’s heart strings, claiming the man was actually a victim of torture is insulting and painful to those who actually were tortured.

“There were no nice guys in Vietnam”-Malcolm Browne (Appy 66). The description of torture that Browne brings to the table is gut-wrenching and sickening, but his story is that of an American immersed in the Vietnamese culture and tales. Unique in the way that American stories were usually those told of the men fighting in the war as soldiers and not as journalists. Definitely it seems that he had a deeper relationship and understanding of the Buddhist movement in the war. The idea of a martyr is not one that is normally looked at as instilling a sense of hope, but Thich Quang Duc does ignite inspiration. After being doused in gasoline and inflicting a painful, drawn out death on himself he had the attention of his peers and others. He set an example by protesting the Diem government, who announced (but never implemented) reforms regarding the treatment and unification of Buddhists. Even though the change he had hoped for didn’t happen he is immortalized in history and for the people especially of his time. There

may not have been any nice guys in Vietnam, but there were definitely those who tried. That one man can indeed motivate change is inspiring, and hopeful.

REFERENCES

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Part One

George Watkins' account is a subjective view of his time in Vietnam. Exact dates are often omitted and feelings replace them, but that's part of what makes his account so striking. Watkins was drafted into the army in 1967. He admits that at that point in time he "knewed very little about Vietnam." (Appy, 22) He was called upon by his country to do a job and that's what he did. In April of 1968 Watkins stepped on a landmine and lost his eyes and both of his legs. That would be enough to make anyone angry and spiteful, but while referring to his opposition he says, "I don't hate them. They did what they had to do." (Appy, 23) It may have taken him years to get to that point, but that kind of insight makes his account reliable. It shows that he's taken the time to look at both sides, and he realizes that they were human too. Multiple times throughout his account Watkins was very honest with how he felt. Whether it was in the past or at the time of the interview, he told it like he felt it. A pivotal moment of his account comes at the end when he's talking about the time he visited the wall in 1985, "I sat right there and just tried to think, 'Why did all these people die?' The majority were my age. Their lives and their families all messed up." (Appy, 25) Watkins' credibility doesn't come from his ability to recall every date or name of place that he was. It comes from the way he makes the reader feel like that if they lived in that time it could've been them or someone they knew. He makes it real. He makes it believable.

Part Two

Luyen Nguyen was a South Vietnamese soldier sent on a mission that was guaranteed to fail, and because of that he spent 21 years as a prisoner of war. Americans were sent to Vietnam to assist the North in the fight against communism. How could the people in charge continue to send soldiers behind enemy lines knowing that they wouldn't come back? How could their collective conscience allow this to continue for years? Did they even consider the lives they were tearing apart? The officials' lack of consideration for other people's lives and well-being was disappointing and frustrating to read. Luyen Nguyen was an innocent. He was fighting for his people and his country, and in return he was awarded with a "planned failure" mission and years in jail. While he was imprisoned he spent eleven

straight years in solitary confinement and was subjected to numerous torture tactics. One of which required his feet to be shackled to a rod and another shackle placed in a spot that caused his feet to swell up and his body to go numb(Appy, 96). Luyen Nguyen refused to say that he worked for the United States. He believed in South Vietnam. He was proud of his country and saying that he worked for the United States would have gone against everything that he believed in. He survived unimaginable horrors, and after 21 years he was released and reunited with his family.

Luyen Nguyen's account is a reminder of some of the tragedy of Vietnam but other accounts hold moments of hope and morality. Ngo Vinh Long is one of those accounts. As a boy he was homeschooled by his father and he stated, "My father taught me everything I knew"(Appy, 55). At the age of 16 he had the highest test score in South Vietnam. This opened a lot of doors for Long and he met a lot of important people. From 1959-1962 he worked for the Americans on one of their five map making teams. During these years he witnessed things that made him question the way he viewed things. He saw people being torn from their homes and relocated. He saw people starving, and people executed(Appy, 57-58). In 1962 his morals had been pushed to the limit and he resigned. After his resignation he joined the Saigon Student Union and even protested the government(Appy, 58). It is not always easy to stand up for your beliefs, especially when the people you see committing wrong doings are the ones that are supposed to be stopping it. Long did everything he could to stand up for what he believed to be right. That is pretty admirable.

Assignment 1

George Watkins story caught my attention in the beginning, when he's talking about his family's upbringing in the coal mines. My mother had a similar rule while I was growing up about logging. Mr. Watkins seems to have a good memory of his time in Vietnam. Including how he was pulled from his M.O.S and lumped in with the infantry. He remembers dates and places really well for a man who lost his legs and eyesight. The way he talks about his time is directly affected by what he was subjected to. He doesn't seem jaded or angry towards the Vietnamese. He admires their resilience and blames the politicians. Which I seem to read in many things I've read about the Vietnam war. The way he asks for Addy to "fancy it up a bit" to me this comes from a man who's not bitter or too factual but speaks from experience.

Part 2

The second part of this assignment is hard for me cause the subject matter is so interesting. There were many things in certain story's that were disappointing to me. Although there were many single instances I wanted to write about I finally chose Mr. Malcolm Browne. A reporter.

Mr. Brown who was a reporter seemed to wanna tell the side of the war people weren't hearing about "the secret war". Yet he talks of not being allowed in places such as the air base in Bien Hoa to investigate whether Americans were training Vietnamese as pilots. Or being beaten and having their cameras smashed as they tried to report of the Buddhist up risings.

This part of the assignment was hard for me, I hope this is right. Feedback thanks.

Craig Nelson

Dan Duerfeldt

Assignment 1

Part 1:

Dang Vu Hiep

This account by Dang Vu Hiep was very impactful. I thought it was interesting that his account of the attack on Pleiku was not planned to incite an American response, as was claimed by Americans. This story was also compelling because of the desperation faced by North Vietnamese soldiers in regards to food and medical shortages; “In the North, because of wartime food shortages, people had to mix cassava into their rice (Appy, 11).” It makes me think that they had a very strong resolve to go through those hardships.

I believe that Dan Vu Hiep’s account to be reliable mainly because at the beginning of this story, it is noted that the “retired general speaks [as] he flips through a small notebook bursting with inserted pages and note cards, full to the margins with his jottings – tactical principles, statistics, key events, reminders of a history that consumed thirty years of his life (Appy, 9).” I also believe that his rank of General lends to his credibility because he would be privy to more information than your average soldier.

Part 2:

Malcolm Browne

What really disappointed me and disgusted me about this story was that Malcolm Browne, being a journalist, regularly went back to the same village, Dam Doi, to report on the many massacres that took place. Browne goes on to describe his first account: “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 (Appy, 66).”

In this same story by Browne, he discusses “a rare respite” from the conflict that occurred on Christmas eve 1961 in “Trung Lap, a Vietnamese Ranger camp run by a half dozen American Special Forces advisers (Appy, 67).” He recalls that, “at one point, the Special Forces troops broke out sixty-millimeter mortars and fired into the sky, creating a warlike star in the east. To their surprise, firing began from the direction of the Viet Cong tunnel complex, but the guerrillas weren’t aiming at the Special Forces camp. They were shooting tracers up at the star shells as if to participate in the celebration (Appy, 67).” This sort of event could have been hopeful that common ground could have been found to lead to a resolution that never came.

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.

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. 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

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.

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Elizabeth Bruno-Hibler

HST 195 – Vietnam

J. Escobar

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

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The story that caught my attention the most was that of Tran Thi Gung. This story stood out to me because it is about a young woman who fought in her countries revolution and was the only woman in her unit. You would think that that would be a big deal in the 1960's, but the passage barely mentions it, like it is not even something that made the seventeen year old special. I believe her to be a reliable source of historic information, the details and personal observations that she reveals to the reader are very detailed and her reasoning for joining her countries military force are very understanding. However, because of the way she was told that her father had been killed, that also puts her on the objective of hating Americans without having actual evidence that they were the ones who killed her father. She is most definitely subjective because of this and it becomes evident as the story goes on when she captures an American but is unsure of what to do with him and leads him back to her units camp without a blindfold on. This story was a unique one, but certainly not the only one of its kind from that era. A lot of crazy things happen during times of war, the story that Tran Thi Gung is a believable one because of the facts, details and historical accuracy it reveals to the reader, but at the same time, reads more like the Disney story of Mulan in which a young girl runs off to war to avenge her father. Whether it be fact or fiction, it is a very compelling read.

Part 1

I have found all of the stories to be interesting so far, but the account from Roger Donlon probably impacted me the most. It was chilling to read of the scenario where a significant number of the Vietnamese army that he was sent to train and support turned out to be enemy infiltrators. I thought of myself in that situation when he described how their first action when the attack began was to slash the throat of the soldier next to them. How terrifying to have prepared your mind for battle, focusing outward toward the enemy, only to find at the outbreak of fighting that the enemy is right next to you. This betrayal is in stark contrast to what he says toward the end of his interview; "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 a deep, deep love." The situation seems to summarize my understanding up to this point in my studies of what may have been the primary problem with our involvement in Vietnam. We didn't know who our enemy was. We couldn't distinguish them by physical traits and we didn't understand their mentality, what was driving them. I do find his story to be credible. He does a great job of describing the details of the situation so that you can imagine being there such as the burning buildings that silhouetted their movement, revealing their position, and the casualties that he witnessed. My belief of his account is significantly supported by his receiving the Medal of Honor for his actions during this battle. These Medals are of course rare and require substantial documentation of the true actions of the recipient.

Part 2

I was most disappointed by the story of Ngo Vinh Long. Not because of his behavior or the story itself, but because he had started out as a young man with such affection for the United States, but after seeing what U.S. policy was doing to his country he began to oppose American intervention. My feelings are that we had such a great opportunity to make a positive impression on the people of Vietnam, but we let them down. We were fighting more for our own selfish reasons, than for the good of the Vietnamese. Continuing to treat them the same as the French had done and supporting a South Vietnamese government with its own record of injustices was a recipe for disaster. The approach of the U.S. seemed to turn the

people away and strengthen the position by the Communists. Long put it best when he was told that these policies were how the communists were going to be defeated. He replied, "No, this is not how you defeat Communists, this is how you make more Communists." This is such a simple statement and yet so very true. Our attention was on battling Communism at all cost, but by focusing on the battle we lost sight of the people who would ultimately decide the victor. I am disappointed to think of all the people of Vietnam like Ngo Vinh Long who had such great hope in the U.S, yet found themselves later opposing our forces.

One thing that I have noticed from the stories is that there doesn't seem to be animosity on either side of the conflict toward the other. I'm sure that if the accounts were being told immediately after the war this would be different, but with the decades that have passed since these events, those involved appear to have developed a better understanding of each other. For the Vietnamese it was a confidence-building victory. For the United States it was a humbling defeat. The Americans seem to see now how the Vietnamese were fighting for their independence and freedom to control their own country. As Americans we can respect that struggle although we may disagree with what is done with that freedom. Their view of freedom took the form of Communism which completely contradicted the American view of what freedom meant and yet all these years later we have survived despite all the horrors that a Communist Vietnam would supposedly bring to the world. From the stories I get a sense that the Americans have learned that it is good to question our leaders and that changing one's position on a subject such as Vietnam isn't showing weakness, but wisdom. Our national leaders kept building off one another and throwing more money into Vietnam until they found it too difficult to change the direction. The building momentum carried us into something that so many, even then, knew we could not win. I would like to say that we have learned to admit when we are wrong, but our political climate still does not permit such honesty.

Jacob Nelson

Professor Escobar

History 195

October 13, 2013

History of the Vietnam War (Assignment #1)

Part 1

The one single story in part one of the “Patriots” book that had the greatest influence on me was Roger Donlon’s “We were babes in arms every way” under the war heroes section. This particular story caught my attention because I thought it described similar military action and tactics that we currently practice in Afghanistan. During the Vietnam War some American soldiers were sent to train Vietnamese soldiers in their homeland and amidst the conflict. Author Roger Donlon describes the lack of faith he had for many of the Vietnamese troops that were being trained by his outfit within this passage. He even goes to the extent of saying that some of the Vietnamese soldiers that were trained by American soldiers in his regiment were aligned with the enemy. These type of tactics used by the Viet Cong described in this excerpt draw parallels to the type of warfare used by Taliban in Afghanistan. Like the Viet Cong, the Taliban has used the opportunity to join national security forces for training and to commit attacks behind enemy lines. Another piece of this story that I found hard to read about was the part about a fellow soldier in the authors outfit that’s wife had a miscarriage following the news of the death of her husband. It really emphasized the trauma that the families of soldiers had to deal with during this war. Roger Donlon puts it’s perfectly by saying, “The casualties of war go far beyond the immediate battlefield.” (Donlon 15) I personally think this phrase stood out within this story because it remains constant to this very day. During these last two wars the United States has most recently been involved in we have more vividly seen the immediate effects of PTSD.

I personally thought that this story was an accurate account of events that this soldier had in Vietnam. While I do believe that the author

displayed a prejudice towards the Vietnamese soldiers that he was training and fighting with I still believe his story was objective. I also believe that the story about the soldier's wife having the miscarriage towards the end of the passage added some real life emotion and credibility to his story.

Part 2

In part two of the book "Patriots" I was disappointed to read the first story of the section entitled "Deliver Us From Evil". This specific story made me upset because I was appalled by the amount of effort our country exerted just to stop country's half way around the world from becoming communist. I personally thought that President Eisenhower's "domino theory" was a sham used to gain support for various military activities against communist countries. Thus, hearing about the amount of funding the United States government spent on deterring this political philosophy was disturbing. Lastly, this story made me upset that the United States didn't learn from Frances military failures in Vietnam. The communists of the North Vietnam proved the power they bestowed and it made me form the opinion that the United States CIA and tacticians failed to recognize this.

The second story in part two of "Patriots" that I found disappointing was Vo Nguyen Giap's "The most atrocious conflict in human history." I found this story upsetting because it gave me the impression that the Vietnam War was avoidable. The author of this passage expresses this same viewpoint within his story, which makes me believe that if there was only more communication between Washington and our communist foes that there would be many avoidable conflicts. Because of this sentiment I was upset with acknowledging the massive loss of life by all sides in the Vietnam War that possibly could have been avoided in the first place.

Part 1

Dang Vu Hiep's account of his experience in the war stuck with me the most. The way he describes the attack on Hanoi as "just a normal battle, part of a long term dry season offensive in the highlands" seemed very aloof. Or the way he shares the song of Cassava as if it were a national anthem gave me chills. However I can understand his point of view. After all it was war; nothing in war makes any sense. And yet while I read his interview and many others it becomes clear to me that this wasn't just a giant war but several small pointless battles that caused death and destruction to not only soldiers but civilians as well. These battles were fought with ever changing enemies depending on who you asked, and when you did ask you were given a different answer every time. It's beginning to become very clear that we were our own worst enemy the whole time. Certainly when you hear the accounts of the war from each side you are going to get a different answer. You are asking people who each fought for what they believed in, or were ordered to do so. I do feel that the parties interviewed are credible to what they saw and felt was real. Judging the truth in war is a difficult task. When a person watches their family and world destroyed by other countries, the men of that country will instantly become evil no matter what the truth is. Many good and virtuous men did a lot of unthinkable acts based on their need to survive, orders given or the belief that they were justified in their actions. This doesn't make them evil. Thus the "truth" becomes subjective to the acts of the men involved.

Part 2

Reading Ngo Vinh Long's accounts of the war were very disheartening. Especially his description of America. He grew up with such an idealistic view of our great country thru his father and yet our actions throughout the war were anything but great or beautiful. He speaks of prisons disguised as villages. Places where people of all ages were treated like caged animals, left to starve or die at the hands of the government that was supposed to help them. The way Long was dismissed when he tried many times to help these people just sickens me. Listening to the way these humans were made to suffer for political reasons, to help us gain French alliances in future

wars is appalling at best. American leadership at the time was no better than the French or Chinese. In fact we were probably worse since we were supposed to help not hinder their independence.

That being said when I read Rufus Phillips interview I do see a renewed sense of hope in humanity. The way Lansdale was trying so hard to do right by the Vietnamese in a time when all political figure heads were doing so much wrong. Or how he was able to gain the Vietnamese trust so easily because he was working to rebuild their independence and self-confidence. He taught his troops how to treat the Vietnamese with civility and respect. Thus earning their loyalty and debunking everything the Viet Minh had said about the troops being there to destroy and pillage their lives. Instead it destroyed Diem's credibility.

Jonathan Rowlett

October 13, 2013

Assignment 1

HST 195 – Escobar

Part One:

The story of Bernard Trainor was most interesting. The story was interesting because Trainor had a different perspective on how the war should be fought as compared to General William C. Westmoreland. My main interest, however, was that Trainor had two tours in Vietnam which provided him with a broader perspective of the events. He was able to see the effects of the war in the beginning when there was more enthusiasm for, and trust in, the activities of the South Vietnamese and American soldiers. When he returned a few years later, he witnessed the distrust of the Southern Vietnamese and the exhaustion of the American soldiers. Most of the people that Trainor encountered after his first tour were certain that Westmoreland's strategy was not the answer to Vietnam's problems and that a strategy of collaboration would be far more affective. However, in Bernard Trainor's conclusion it seems that ultimately America entered into a war misunderstanding, or entirely ignorant of, the ultimate goals of the Southern Vietnam government.

Because of Bernard Trainor's multiple tours and his time spent teaching at the Command and Staff College, as well as his position within the Marines, his account bears a greater level of reliability. Trainor was fighting alongside his men, but he was in charge of men's activities and bore responsibility for their lives. His position gave him a middle-ground perspective as he was high enough on the totem pole to understand the objectives of the Americans, but not so far removed from the battle as to not see and hear the reaction of those within the battle. Also, Trainor interacted with men returning from service in Vietnam to the United States. He listened to the experiences of these men to further formulate his perspective on the activities of the war. "You could see the disillusionment and unhappiness that officers returning from Vietnam had toward

Westmoreland's strategy of search-and-destroy" (Appy, 5). Finally, upon his return to Vietnam in 1970, he was able to compare the present to the past on the issues of trust and method-effectiveness. Trainor does an excellent job of recounting both positive and negative moments during his service. He tells of America's "holy crusade to stop the spread of godless Communism and to give the budding democracy in South Vietnam an opportunity to take root" (Appy, 4). But he also mentions the devastating blow to the faith of the Vietnamese after they returned from an ill-advised mission. It "really did a great deal of damage to our credibility. These people were going up north based on their trust in the accuracy and dependability of American intelligence" (Appy, 5).

Part Two:

The story that Paul Kattenburg told was the most disappointing. Kattenburg's tone was, from the beginning, very negative and critical. It portrayed our country's leaders as ignorant and uncaring. "It was robot-thinking about Communism and no distinctions were being made. It was technocratic talk" (Appy, 82). It creates within the reader a sense of severe disappointment, disapproval, and distrust in our country's leadership. Kattenburg portrays our leaders as arrogant and desensitized. Many of the people making the major decisions for the war in Vietnam were entirely ignorant of the history, customs, and culture of the area and disregarded anyone who challenged their theories for development in Vietnam. This is disappointing because it makes it harder to trust in our leaders, or at least trust that they will listen to outside, educated opinions on major issues. The only good that seems to be present in Paul Kattenburg's story is the presence of someone who was unwavering in his beliefs and willing to put his career on the line to voice his concerns. He possessed conviction and determination in regard to his cause.

In the story told by Luyen Nguyen a man's perseverance is inspiring. He lived by, and suffered because of, his convictions. Also, he had a deep sense of love and respect for his wife and family. Knowing that his wife acknowledged the anniversary of his death each year, he refused to write from prison because: "All of them believe I'm dead and their tears are dry. I don't want to make them cry again" (Appy, 97). Nguyen's story, though

sad, also lends a more human side to the war. It creates a more personal connection to the war and thereby invokes another level of interest. The emotional and physical suffering of Luyen Nguyen also invokes a level of compassion that is more difficult to assume from a story about a man who was merely removed from one lofty government position to a less lofty position. The dedication Nguyen displays toward the Vietnamese soldiers is inspiring. For him the war was about more than political advances. The war was about earning the freedom and independence of the Vietnamese people.

When I first began reading Christian G. Appy's book, "Patriots; The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides", I didn't know what to expect. Within the first story I knew that I would love this book for the personal and honest truths of what it was like for these men and women that served their countries so diligently. However, when I came to Roger Donlon's story, I was completely engulfed by what he had to say and the emotions that I could not help but feel. His words cut through any would be distractions and the way that he had explained so clearly and vividly transported me to the moments that were passing as I read on. I believe that Roger was a reliable and trustworthy source and his rank, job, and specific details of the events preceding the catastrophic events in the chaotic and confusing fire fight that led him to be awarded the Medal of Honor. The fact that he was a Green Beret, let alone awarded the Medal of Honor is testimony to his merit and reliability. I do not think that the time past has done anything to cause him to leave out any key information. The vividness of his memory was crisp when he spoke of the Vietnamese interpreter, George Tuan, when "a 57-millimeter round caught him right in the knees and took his legs off. He just kept running on stumps. Within about thirty seconds he was dead." I could never think he had a hard time remembering anything that happened when he was assigned to serve in Vietnam.

When I came across Vo Nguyen Giap's story in part two I was disappointed in it. For a man that was so important I found myself turning the last page of his story back and forth searching for the rest of it. He was a key player and had great memories that helped to draw in an audience but it was as if what he said was the prolog to a story but there was no story. He was great at holding attention of the reader and his connections with men like his Uncle Ho who had much to offer the understanding of the war and how they won as well as he did, I was expecting more details or an account of what his Uncle Ho had said "Don't worry, if we have the people, we have the weapons." Giap himself even said "we won the war because we would rather die than live in slavery." So where was a personal count of this? Other than they won. He briefly touches the subject of accounts of this happening few times but with such small detail it was as if a passing thought instead of a supporting detail.

It's easy to get lost in the horrific scenes that play out as I make my way

through the book but when I came to Daniel Renmonds accounts I felt my heart lighten. He assisted in the evacuation of almost a million people from North Vietnam to South Vietnam. At times he said that he felt like a war criminal because of the treatment the refugees at the hands of the French legionnaires. However he believes he was right to take the people down to South Vietnam. He even could religiously relate himself with them which you don't hear often. You hear of people liking the Vietnamese but rarely that they could relate with them. He was kind when kindness was a rare thing when it came to the treatment of the Vietnamese. I wish his story was longer. The impact he made was monumental and I doubt that it will be forgotten by those he help.

Assignment One

Kaedyn Drake

This man was thrown into the war with hardly any experience at all. During a road sweep one morning, George Watkins was walking along with his platoon and some others as well. As they walked along everything seemed fine, until George stepped on a pressure detonated landmine. The mine had been passed over by around forty people, but as George walked over the mine it went off, which caused him to lose both of his legs and eyes. Moments before this, he had told one of the other soldiers in his group to move away from him because he was too close. The soldier did so, and moments after that the pressure-mine was detonated. The soldier that had just moved lost his left ear and eye, and some movement, but other than that was just fine.

George had no idea that he was going to lose both of his legs and eyes that day. Many men passed over that mine without it detonating, but George just happened to be the one that set it off. There is a positive side to this story though. George lived through the explosion, and he also saved another soldier's life by telling him to not walk so close. If he wouldn't have told that soldier to move, he probably would've died. This story is very credible because the man has proof of the incident. He lost both of his legs and both of his eyes to that mine, which is definitely proof enough.

Part Two

The story of Ngo Vinh Long was rather disappointing. The events of the story were pretty bland and unexciting. He spent much of his time with his father learning English and studying for school. The story didn't really get into anything serious, other than him roaming

around and mapping out the country of Vietnam.

The story wasn't all bad though. After Ngo got a little older he came to the United States to study at Harvard. While he was here he spent time trying to let people know that the war in Vietnam wasn't going to end up the way they thought. This is a positive side to the story, because it shows that Ngo really wanted to show people that the war was going to be a very negative experience and that there were other ways of dealing with the situation.

In no one story has there ever been so many instances of a person being in the wrong place at the wrong time. While we read the words of George Watkins as interviewed by Christian Appy we learn that George was the survivor of a long series of untimely and horrific events. It began with him being drafted on June 19th, 1967, despite his blood pressure tending towards being too high for enlistment. Shortly after being drafted, he was pulled out of his assigned military occupation specialty and was thrown into the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. Not even a full year later, he stepped on a pressure-detonated land mine that had already been passed by roughly 40 other men, leading to the loss of both his legs and his eyes as well. In the interview, George states that he had looked down at his watch to check the time, and had he not been looking down he wagered that he may have kept his eye sight.

All in all, after reading George's various accounts during the timeframe in which he was in Vietnam, his recollections have an undeniable clarity to them. It is important to realize that the few months he spent in the field were the last few months which he had his eye sight, and would have been the most easily recalled events of the time for him. When one loses their eyesight, events closer to that fateful day when everything goes dark will stand out more than memories of other years gone by. In his recounting of the events, his memories are vividly depicted in his mind. The morning George stepped on the land mine, it was just after daybreak on an early Sunday morning. These memories were forever etched in his mind as they were the last visuals he would ever have.

Reading further ahead there is one story in particular which pulls on my heartstrings, that of Daniel Redmond, "The doctor who won the war in Indochina." It is not so much his personal tale which disheartens, as it is that of the events and propaganda used to influence the civilians involved in the war. In his tale, Daniel recounts how the CIA used operatives planted in northern Catholic villages to hand out leaflets saying that Jesus and the

Virgin Mary had moved south and that it was the duty and salvation of all Vietnamese Catholics to do so as well. In the interview, he recalls how many of the people relocated from the north to the south had never been more than a few miles away from home. It is incredibly disappointing to witness how an agency backed by the U.S. government turned to twisting religion to influence a population, though it is nothing new in history.

Almost equally disappointing is the story of Thomas A. Dooley, a navy doctor who wrote a bestselling book about the Vietnamese refugees called *Deliver Us from Evil*. While his words may have stretched the truth of the conflict in Vietnam to cast Communism in a worse light than it really was, it was the treatment and stigma surrounding his uncovered sexuality which casts the darkest cloud. Despite his great contribution through his kindness towards other human beings and his skills as a doctor, he was ultimately disgraced by the U.S. government when he was kicked out after his homosexuality had been discovered.

In hindsight, it appears that his efforts to put out a top book on the Communist threat in southeast Asia may have been a great pitch to find personal recognition and validation when he secretly knew that society would not accept him for who he truly was.

“All my ancestors are buried here.” While reading through part one and all of the interviews this quote was, to me, one that struck me with being one of the most meaning full. Its meaning instantly made me feel that there was a great love and a great burden that this war put on the people of Phan Xuan Sinh’s country.

As I have read through these stories and began to learn more about this war, I have definitely been enlightened to a lot of things that I was not aware of. The little bit I all ready knew about the Vietnam war was mostly about the tragedies that happened to our American soldiers. Delving further into the readings, I have started to sympathize for with the Vietnamese. To think that the only thing they had was their land doesn't really hit home until you here first account stories. The simple story about the old man and his wife moving back to their land after Sinh had burned the house down made me feel more trustworthy of him and his personal story. As he said “at the time I didn't fully understand, but of course the land was unimaginably important..” and “With so many experiences like that, our overwhelming hope was simply that the war would end.” He does not over exaggerate, he tells a simple memory that hits home for him and makes you feel apart of what he experienced. I don't think there is much subjectivity in this story, He makes a simple point at how his people lived and what they had to live for. He did not have a choice in what he was doing, he was a drafted soldier, he did what he had to to make it though the war.

Richard Olsen, A man living out his childhood dream as a pilot. A man who thought he was “in the middle of world history” fighting for the better good of Democracy.

One of the more up beat stories told of Vietnam, Richard a pilot of a “Banana” looked at the war as one of his passages into manhood. Being able to fly, land and maneuver his aircraft how he wanted gave him great pride. He liked what he did, he liked being a pilot. His story definitely differed from most, after a long day he got to take a shower, eat a hot meal and then go to the Thunderbird lounge and have a drink. I feel disappointed in how Richard spoke of Vietnam as a almost a good thing in his life. He made it sound almost as if going there was like having a regular job back in the states. This made me not appreciate hime at first, after reading so many sad

and tragic stories this felt like it did not fit into place for me.

Contrary to my first point after reading the ending dialogue and learning about his some what horrid images, I do realize that each account will vary drastically. Yes, most of the stories we read are going to be of the more sad things in war and how each individual will express them selves and how they cope with it. In Richards case A positive outlook when telling his experience in war may be how he deals with what happened. But, The paintings that he does that show gruesome images give us an actual image of what he saw, unlike the image we paint in our own mind from the reading of other individual accounts.

-Kirby Bullinger

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

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

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.

Matthew Schroeder

Joe Escobar – HST 195

October 12, 2013

Assignment 1

Each of the interviews in part one of the Appy book had a powerful story to tell. However, there was one story that grabbed my attention more than the others. The actions that are detailed in the interview of Roger Donlon paint a clear picture of what a true American hero is. During the interview Appy describes Donlon as a man “with broad shoulders and a firm jaw, he looks like he could be an aging star of movie westerns.” There are many ways one can define a soldier, but one of the truest definitions is someone who fights for the man next to them. This definition is described several times throughout the interview. Donlon’s continual fight for the man next to him was what earned him the Medal of Honor. The way in which he describes his experiences in Vietnam is captivating; visuals of the reading begin to flow through the mind. “Early in the attack, George Tuan, one of our Vietnamese interpreters, was running like mad to his assigned mortar pit. Part way 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.” This quote is just one the several examples that has powerful imagery associated with it. Donlon went into Vietnam with the look of a great American soldier and left a great American Hero. Throughout the reading, the creditability of the information was never in question. The fact that he was surrounded by his fellow soldiers throughout his story, as well as the fact that he received the Medal of Honor, adds an extreme amount of creditability to his story. His account of what happened seems to be factual and does not seem to favor any side other than the truth.

Paul Kattenburg’s story was one of the most disappointing stories in part two. This did not have anything to do with Kattenburg himself, but in the way he talks about the clear and blatant arrogance policy makers and leaders of the United States when dealing with Vietnam. “But what struck me more than anything else was just the abysmal ignorance around the table

of the particular facts of Vietnam, their ignorance of the actual place.” It is frustrating to read about all of the atrocities that took place during the Vietnam War era, and to then to read a story about a individual who tried to pass along information that could have helped to avoid some of these atrocities, but was instead ignored or ostracized from his position all together. In his story there is a quote by President Kennedy, “When it’s too hot in the kitchen, get out of the kitchen.” In his situation it was applied that if you don’t believe that the war is going the way you believe it should, quit. However this quote could and should have been applied to the overall war. There were far too many people being killed and the United States should have gotten out of there much sooner. In reality we should have never been involved in the capacity we were, but during the time Kattenburg is talking about we were already there.

The story of Ngo Vihn Long was an inspirational one. It was surprising and refreshing to read a story where something good had came out of a time and place filled with so much bad. Through the teachings of his father, Long became an enlightened person who didn’t seem to hold any preconceived notions about the world around him. While most Vietnamese might have hated the French, he understood that all of the atrocities that were committed in his country were done by French Policy and not by the French people as a whole. His view of the world and openness to seek out the truth seemed to guide him throughout his travels. The readings thus far have shown that while it took only a handful of people to wreak utter havoc and destruction upon Vietnam, it was the combined effort of thousands of people like Long that helped get the Vietnamese people through the war. These people were not the ones who were fighting with guns, but rather with their voices. There is a difference. It seems as if every person starts off wanting to do what is best for their people, but somewhere along the road they often change. They find that to attain their own achievements they have to sacrifice their individual beliefs of what is right and wrong.

The story from Part 1 that had the greatest impact on me was that of Ta Quang Thinh, from the section "*Paying the Price*". It was so impactful because it really showed that we are all human, and it gives us an idea about the "enemy" that Americans do not often hear from anyone on their own side. Thinh was simply performing his duty and was trying to help a wounded soldier when a bomb was dropped on the building he was in. The explosion left him paralyzed from the waist down. He wasn't even a soldier fighting the Americans; he was just a doctor's assistant. After a period of healing he was literally carried the entire way back to North Vietnam from South Vietnam by interchanging groups of men. It seems that people only really hear those stories from their own side and therefore think that only their own people are so extraordinarily heroic and brave, but really those things happen on all sides, with all groups of people. Thinh was being a healer for the country that he wanted to see grow and prosper, and for that he was given a life in a wheelchair, unable to use his legs. I feel that Ta Quang Thinh's story is reliable and I do not have a problem trusting it. He was not there to hurt the Americans in the first place; he just wanted them out. He never even said anything bad about Americans, so I don't believe that he would have any reason to be dishonest about his experiences. Also, his story came from a place of subjective emotion, but obviously he was going to be emotional about it with all that he lost. At the end of the story we find out that his wife only visited him once a year, so it is understandable to me that he would be coming from an emotional place. He was a victim of the Vietnam War just as many other Vietnamese and Americans were.

The story from Part 2 that I found most disappointing was the one from Evelyn Colbert in the section "*The Emperor Has No Clothes On*". This story addressed the fact that stories telling the Americans how bad things were in Vietnam were, in fact, actually being published even though the secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, said in his memoirs that today we can see that while the war was happening we did not really know how bad things were in Vietnam. Colbert said, "...dissent which contradicted the public optimism was ignored." I found this story disappointing because it is really frustrating to see how hard some people must have worked to try to convince the American government that we were not up to the war, and to find out that they were just ignored and that the public blindly followed the

politicians' words of optimism. Another story that I found disappointing was Richard Olsen's story in the section "*Kick the Tires and Light the Fires*". His attitude about himself and the other Americans among him in the beginning of the war was very off putting. While the Vietnamese were struggling with their own war, all that Olsen was really concerned with was how cool he looked to the older Pilots that he was working with. Also, he expressed disappointment at the fact that he was not allowed to shoot random North Vietnamese people without being shot at first. He had no compassion and did not care to have any sympathetic feelings toward the Vietnamese.

Paul Hare's story from the section "*Kick the Tires and Light the Fires*" gave me some hope. Paul talked about how the entire time he was in Vietnam he was never convinced that what he and the other Americans were doing there was actually helping the Vietnamese people. While there, he treated the Vietnamese with respect, and even "rubbed elbows" with them while enjoying the local life of the small town he was living in. He recalled that even though he had experienced encounters with seemingly nice Vietnamese men that ended up being Viet Cong spies, he still kept a faith in the Vietnamese people and refused to assume the ideal that they were all evil and out to get America. Paul Hare exhibited compassion and a true goodness that people like Richard Olsen did not.

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, 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 made 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

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 to 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

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.

Part 1

The story by George Watkins grabbed my attention the most in the Part 1 reading. Just reading the subtitle “That sand was probably the only thing that saved me” of his story made me want to read what happened to state that kind of a comment. I am a pre-nursing student and am interested in doing disaster relief when I get my degree, and that is why I think this story had a large first impression on me. I am not sure if it is because he was wounded or if the way that George speaks that makes the story more attention grabbing, but this story really made me think that not all soldiers come home, and then many that did were badly injured physically and mentally. George’s story also reminds me a lot of my grandfathers, one worked in a coal mine and the other was a truck driver and they both went to the Korean War where one of them worked as communication specialist in Morse code and I am not exactly sure what the area my other grandfather worked in. Thankfully both of them came home from the war alive and in one piece. The only problem is they both refused to talk about the war and when it was brought up in conversation the topic was avoided and redirected.

The story is definitely believable since he came home with both of his legs amputated and completely blind. There are parts of the story that seem to be maybe a stretched idea of the truth. For instance, when George was injured he said that “roughly forty people walked by it before I hit it.” He also mentioned that he was placed into the infantry instead of the area that he had trained in as a combat engineer, because there was so much going on in Vietnam this may very well been possible, but this may also be the reason he was hurt because he was doing a job he wasn’t trained for.

Seeing how the speaker was actually there in the war during the time of events experiencing the noises, smells, seeing comrades dying, and fighting against the Vietnamese it gives them more credibility. George seems to have an objective opinion in his story since he stated that “I don’t have much bitterness. Well, I don’t think I do. I just wish that none of it ever happened---for everybody’s sake. It was a bad political mistake.” By reading the detail in George’s story he has not forgotten he has to live with the repercussions every day of his life never forgetting how he went blind

or why he is missing his legs.

Part 2

The most disappointing story was that of Paul Kattenburg and how he was in a National Security Council Executive Committee and how they were speaking in a general manner as if all countries are the same if they were in a predicament or Communist. The committee was comparing Peru and Vietnam, yet they were not seeing firsthand what was happening and were not willing to listen to Kattenburg's idea of "it would be better if we just left with honor." Unfortunately Kattenburg was told that "we haven't gone this far with the whole thing to give it up now." If this little bit of advice was listened to or even pondered over there could have been way less of a catastrophe in Vietnam. Le Lieu Browne's story showed a glimmer of compassion and hope for the love that she and Malcolm had for each other even if it was against the Vietnamese rules. Also in Le Lieu Browne's story she spoke about Madame Nhu the sister-in-law of Diem. Browne mentioned how she admired Madame Nhu for what she did for the Vietnamese women. Nhu was a role model for the Vietnamese women because she encouraged the idea that the Vietnamese women were just as good as the men. There were Vietnamese women doctors, lawyers, politicians, educators, and businesspersons. There was the story of Luyen Nguyen that shows that he was loyal to the army and was tortured and held as a prisoner for twenty-one years. He was given the opportunity to write to his wife and children but he refused to write them because he did not want them to suffer knowing that he was alive. After the end of the war, one of the other prisoners gave news to Nguyen's wife telling her that her husband was still alive. She had remarried because of economic reasons, but when she heard the news that Luyen was alive she divorced her husband and waited for the return of Luyen.

Part I

In Part 1 I choose the story by Roger Donlon. Roger Donlon was sent to Vietnam just before large scale American troops were sent in. At that time the US Government sent in small groups Americans to train much larger groups of Southern Vietnamese troops on how to fight. Roger Donlon, was the first American to receive the Medal of Honor in the Vietnam War, and it was this part of his story that really touched me. Roger Donlon and his troops were attacked early in the morning, and Donlon was able to save not only himself but many of his fellow troops, all the while being shot numerous times, so many times that when help finally arrived they thought he was dead. I have always liked hearing stories of heroism, it brings back nostalgic memories of when I was younger and hearing about great acts of heroism. The Vietnam War is not one one hears positives things about, usually its full of brutality towards women and young children, so hearing a story where the hero was actually in true a hero and saved lives was quite nice. I would say that I really couldn't find anything untrue or false about what I read in Roger Donlon's accounts of his story.

Part II

Just like in Part I I had strong emotional connections to a few stories in Part II. In Part II I read the story of Henry Prunier. Henry was sent into Vietnam in 1945, long before Americas involvement in Vietnam. Prunier was sent to help an anti Japanese resistance called the Viet Minh lead by "Mr. Hoo" and "Mr. Van" Prunier was to help the Viet Minh on how to fight the Japanese in guerilla combat. There he trains the ill equipped aviet Minh, they don't have enough weapons to even train half of them at once. They are also using confiscated French rifles, left behind from when the French occupied Vietnam. My biggest problem with Prunier's story however and the thing I find most disappointing is that after war he becomes silent. He doesn't participate in any sort of protests and only really talks of the war at the rotary. Now I know I haven't fought in any war nor have I had to endure any kind of the trauma that these men must

have had to endure, but I have had to endure quite a bit of medical issues throughout my life and my main goal is always to talk about it to help others, others who have lost loved ones or others who are going through the same treatments as me. I really do feel that if I saw the horrific events of that war, especially in the latter half of the sixties then I would speak out, speak out so none of my fellow soldiers would be put into harms way.

I found the story of Paul Kattenburg to be particularly hopeful and showing quite a bit potential for good. Kattenburg is described as an expert of Vietnam before most people knew what Vietnam was. Kattenburg was a supporter of Diem who later became President of South Vietnam, Kattenburg later returned to Vietnam in 1953 only to discover that Diem was not in tune with the people, in fact he had gone off the deep end, speaking incoherently for hours about anti communism attitudes. So Paul Kattenburg returned to the US and spoke with high ranking officials where he spoke of not getting any further involved in Vietnam, their man Diem was losing control of his supporters and his country. After hearing about the possibility of an overthrow of Diem. Kattenburg said this wouldnt work, the French had poured everything they had but they couldn't beat the nationalism of the Vietnamese, the people loved Ho Chi Minh and the Americans could never win, it was pointless. Kattenburg was dismissed, in fact he was sent to a different department all together, and after bombing begun in 1965 he resigned completely. I was really touched by Kattenburgs actions albeit they were a failure I respect anyone who has the courage to go against the fray, to tell it like it is and do whats right. He knew it was a losing war but yet he still tried to save countless lives and not send multiple countries into all out war.

Phan Xuan Sinh. His story really spoke to me. He talked about how many innocent people were killed because they thought they were the enemy. I feel in this story his memories seem to be pretty clear, especially when he talked about the old couple the removed and burned down their home and then to find a few weeks later they came back and rebuilt it. This war was not only about the enemy, but about the innocent people who lost their lives and their homes because of it. He told the old man that it was a dangerous place to live, why did he come back. The old man replied, "All my ancestors are buried here and this is our land. We're not going to leave."

This account makes me wonder how many others had to give up their land and homes because of the injustices of the war.

Deirdre English. "How can my country be at war and I don't know about it?" This story seems to be a bit farfetched for me. I don't understand how a high school student didn't know about the Vietnam war. She talks about how most Americans didn't know where Vietnam was, but look at all the war protestors. I was disappointed because maybe the high school teachers didn't talk about the war going on or how about the parents during this time? Maybe it was denial in some people's minds about how brutal the war really was.

Ta Quang Thinh. This one was very disappointing. I don't understand why this account was put in the book. It seems made up and not very emotional. It was almost like this was just a story made up to fill the book. I'm not really sure this happened and maybe this person just wanted to be in the book, so they made up a story of what happened to them in the war. I also think that maybe, just maybe they don't remember and made something up because they didn't want to look like a fool. I expect more out of people who were part of the war, more emotions and better memories of what actually happened.

George Watkins, The reason this guy caught my attention was because he lost his legs and his eyes in the ugliness that was the Vietnam war, he said he didn't have much bitterness. He just wished it would have never happened. He also told a story about the old farmer that his unit kept moving out of a valley. Every time they found this farmer living there they would take him (and I think it was his daughter also) and burn down his hut. Then a few weeks later they would have already built a new hut on nearly the same spot. He could only speak on how determined the people were and how he didn't hate them. I liked that because in war time the enemy is usually dehumanized, but George didn't fall victim to that.

I find the speakers to be reliable, trustworthy and believable. The main reason being is that this is war. The stories that are accounted in the first section of this book have forever been burned into the minds of these people. With the passing of time i can see small details of their accounts being skewed (like the amount of people there, what time it was etc etc) but the overall account is not forgotten. Being that they were there, and had a firsthand account of what happened I believe them to be credible.

I was disappointed with Henry Prunier story, more specifically at the end of his account when he was talking about writing about his time he spent with Ho Chi Mihn and how everyone suspected him of being a communist because of the way he spoke about him. After he was called a communist he stopped writing, and that's a bummer because im sure he had great things to say. But I also understand where he's coming from, being accused of being a communist at the time was similar to being called a witch back in the time of the puritans.

There is some good that came from henrys story though, it doesn't sound like he fell victim of the dehumanization that happens during war time. Throughout the time of the war up to when the interview with him was done he had the same view he had always had about Ho Chi Mihn. He had a positive experience with the guy and didn't change it when the war broke out. So that's the goodness that I see, not Ho Chi Mihn, but Henry, who didn't let the ugliness of war leave a bitter taste in his mouth.