

HST 195: History of the Vietnam War F14 (Escobar Meta 21179)

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Soldier Stories



by Joe Escobar - Saturday, November 8, 2014, 2:29 PM

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

Do not attempt to answer both of these questions in a single post or reply.

Be sure to incorporate and cite any of the relevant materials you've been exposed to in this course as you address these issues.

Cite your sources in your posts and replies. Use parentheses.

Examples (PBS Episode 1), (AIM historian "Smith"), (Herring p.34), etc.

IMPORTANT: Change the subject line of your post to something more descriptive. DO NOT leave the subject line Re: Soldier Stories

Sum of ratings: -

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Middle School Drama



by Kasey Harmon - Monday, November 10, 2014, 1:57 PM

If I was the author of the "Patriots" book, I would do my best to spend a lot of time deciphering which stories deserved my book pages and which did not. In reference to the article by Michael Rooke-Ley, I was kind of confused on how it tied in with Vietnam veteran abuse. I think we can all agree that the second article (Tom Preuss) just felt like a story written for someone to vent. He did not share any personal experiences or even knowledge with the readers. I would include Bob Thompson's article for the simple fact that it is the best example of a poorly written and researched article. When people state their bold opinions as such, they should at least be able to back them up. The articles following Bob's are testimonies of the first hand treatment of Vietnam veterans. I would include all of them in my book as I feel they would provide the readers with the most accurate accounts. Robert Shaw's article was very interesting because although he was not "spit on", he endured other

challenging discriminations later on when pursuing a career. This shows that the abuse did not end with those anti-war protestors.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Middle School Drama

by Zachary Embree - Monday, November 10, 2014, 7:26 PM

I agree that the first and second article came off as not so much a informed testimony but as a method to vent emotions. The first article looked like it was copy pasted from a hardcore anti-Bush website rather than any informed study. Then the second letter seems to have taken his anti government stance and past as a protester to vent his frustration about the author and his content. Which I can understand because I see these kind of people regularly and they are usually both condescending towards what I see as veterans due a measure of respect and very uninformed. But I would advocate that neither of those articles belongs in a book about first hand experiences about the war. But as you said the articles following Bob's are much more informative and should be included.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Middle School Drama

by Marquita Lucier - Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 10:10 PM

When I read the title of your post Monday evening "Middle School Drama," It definitely caught my attention. That morning I dropped my thirteen year old off at the middle school and to my surprise the school was hosting a special assembly with some of our veterans who were dressed up in their uniforms. I was so excited as I saw an older gentlemen walk along the sidewalk in his uniform with the stripes I that he must have been a colonel or someone important. I wondered if he had served in the Korean conflict or in Vietnam. I got a big lump in my throat and thought how much more awareness this class has brought me in gaining a deeper appreciation for our veterans. If I had not been in such a hurry to get to work I would have loved to have gotten out of the car and chased this man down asking him a million questions about his life and his experience being a soldier. I think that would have been middle school drama. I agree with your assessment to include stories of those who have had firsthand experience and that the abuse did not end with the ant-war protestors.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Middle School Drama

by Timothy Hammett - Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 11:34 PM



I agree with a lot of what you have said and the reasoning behind which stories you believe should be added. One story I definitely think should be in the patriots book would be the one by Rodney Gordon. I think before taking this class it is easy to overlook what happened and now we have read so many stories it is almost the opposite in that it seems easier to almost look at these stories as the norm. Rodney Gordon said " most vet's did not have to go through the abuse, but it did happen to a few" this is a very short part of his story but it helps set the context for the personal stories we receive from him and others about there abuse. I believe once we have that context it can help both side cut down a little bit on the "middle school drama".

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Middle School Drama

by Bryan Lewis - Sunday, November 16, 2014, 9:47 PM

I strongly agree with your point about Robert Shaw's article being telling of other discrimination he faced. This I felt would be a strong article to be placed in a book such as "Patriots" to show that while there might have been discrimination it may also have differed from what people know. I also believe that he keeps a very level head while writing his article unlike Tom Preuss which makes it seem more reliable.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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American POW's

by Savana Cochrane - Monday, November 10, 2014, 4:59 PM

If I were writing a book that compiled Vietnam War experiences of soldiers, I would definitely include some from prison camps. Although it's very hard to listen to and watch the torture that became the norm for imprisoned soldier, it's a part of the war that must be looked square in the face. Whether for justifiable reasons or not, this was a result of America's involvement in Vietnam. I would include the story about communicating through the walls by tapping and how important that was to surviving. Perhaps in a "note to the reader" I would write about the tap code and how words were spelled out. Then I would also make a "note to the reader" which included the timing of Ho Chi Minh's death in conjunction with the treatment of American POW's. This would be a sort of timeline which included the approximate months the first soldiers were taken hostage, the date of Ho's death, the approximate dates POW's began getting released, and perhaps some other important dates as well (like landing on the moon for instance). This way the reader could connect the experiences of the veteran who was a prisoner of war with a few other significant events that may have happened in a similar timeframe.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: American POW's

by Rachelle Wells - Tuesday, November 11, 2014, 4:02 PM

I like your idea of a timeline. In "American POWs," I recall Dave Burroughs saying that during his imprisonment, "They wanted us to praise communism and Ho Chi Minh." Of course, he was one of the soldiers that would not "crack" and endured unthinkable torture. The timeline showing the correlation between Ho Chi Minh's death in 1969 and the de-escalation of torture would be an informative "note to reader."

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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POWs as Propaganda

by Jessica Ballestrazze - Tuesday, November 11, 2014, 8:40 PM

I agree that the stories from prison camps in North Vietnam provide a really essential part of the whole timeline of the war, and that they would be valuable additions to a book if I were compiling stories. Of course, they are important for the obvious reason that they are an indicator of the culture and tenacity of the North Vietnamese. But also, I have been really surprised by the extent to which they were used for propaganda purposes. Despite huge cultural and language barriers, the North Vietnamese were successful in plotting propaganda strategy to stir the pot in North America. In my opinion, the Vietnam War did much to shatter the psyche of the American people and government. In Herring's words, we entered the war as a "nation with an unbroken record of success" (Herring, pg. 173). With the systematic use of propaganda, North Vietnam appealed to the doves in our country, and virtually enlisted their help. This attitude is a little more dogmatic than a stance I am normally inclined to take, but I think that despite possibly good intentions from anti-war protestors, they were either willingly or unwittingly sabotaging our success and morale from within, which ultimately had to play some role in the outcome of the war. Regarding the doves, Herring wrote, "In time, their movement became inextricably linked with the cultural revolution that swept the United States in the late 1960's and challenged the most basic of American values and institutions, leaving divisions that would last into the next century" (Herring, pg. 215). I wonder how much of that movement sprung up organically from the ingrained morals of those protesting the war, and how much of it was unknowingly fed to them through the media, which the North Vietnamese used fully to their advantage. The impact of the anti-war movement was so deep, and the American POWs were used virtually exclusively for propaganda purposes. Therefore it seems logical to argue that the experiences of mistreatment, torture and manipulation of those prisoners in order to create North Vietnamese propaganda, which was subsequently served up to the American people, helped to fuel anti-war

sentiment in the US. I know there are many reasons that these stories would need to be included in a compilation, but I think that the use of POWs in propaganda has provided some of the most long-lasting repercussions for the attitude of our country towards war.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: POWs as Propaganda

by Savana Cochrane - Friday, November 14, 2014, 4:23 PM

This is a very good point. The North Vietnamese skillfully used American POW propaganda and the support of the doves to their advantage. I would say that the dove movement was first taking form because of the people's 'morals' and desire for peace. However, nothing fueled the fire of the movement more than seeing their family, friends, and fellow Americans, imprisoned and tortured. Do you think also that the anti-war protests also encouraged the capture and torture of the American soldiers? As Herring wrote, "The obvious manifestations of dissent in the United States undoubtedly encouraged Hanoi to hold out for victory, although there is nothing to suggest that the North Vietnamese would have been more compromising in the absence of the protests" (Herring pg 218-219).

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: POWs as Propaganda

by Marquita Lucier - Saturday, November 15, 2014, 1:54 PM

One of the main goals of the North Vietnamese was to create a division among the American people back in the states to ensure their victory in the war. I found interesting in the Herring Book (p. 218) that the March on the Pentagon, October 21, 1967, among a diverse group (about 100, 000,) ended in violence and the arrest of nearly 700 demonstrators. It seems strange that anti-war demonstrators would be among those who would demonstrate violence in pursuit of their objectives. The American POW propaganda certainly outraged the American people. I lived during this time and while I remember the impeachment of Richard Nixon, I do not recall watching all the anti-war protests and the Vietnam War being televised. I pretty much stuck to the family shows i.e. Gilligan's Island, Brady Bunch and the Partridge Family =)

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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To Inform not Inflamm



by Zachary Embree - Monday, November 10, 2014, 7:16 PM

If I had to select the material that was going into the Patriots book I would definitely not use anything from Rooke-Ley, not because I disagree with his attitude, opinions, or bias, but simply because he was in fact not actually their. That would be one of the main criteria for what to allow into the book. This book is suppose to, in my view, give a first hand account of both sides of the war from relevant perspectives. Would I include a letter that had the personal experiences of veterans that were discriminated? Yes, because that is part of the conflict and helps the reader imagine the entire experience from recruitment to returning home was like for those who fought. I would want forst hadn accounts of that kind of reception and other stories across the spectrum of hated to a hero's welcome. But some comment by a random senator who was politically pressured to appear "hard on communism", probably not I would want people to read the book and think "what if that was me?". If I was going to include a note for the reader it would be only to either provide some helpful facts to give the proper context or highlight proven untruths, such as the US using biological weapons on Hanoi civilians, but other than that it would just seem like adding my own opinion. I would not want this book to contain what I think as that would be against what I view as its primary purpose, putting you in the shoes of those directly involved and letting you make your own opinions.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: To Inform not Inflamm



by Sierra Smith - Tuesday, November 11, 2014, 1:15 PM

I feel the same way about Rooke-Ley. I don't disagree with his view either to be honest, but it was really random and had no merit for the given topic. He made himself look a little crazy I thought! A rant will never hold as much validity as a calm informative approach does. I like what you said about "putting you in the shoes of those directly involved and letting you make your own opinions." That really is the best way to spread educated truth.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: To Inform not Inflamm



by Timothy Hammett - Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 11:22 PM

I would mention that I don't think we are really meant to consider Rooke-Ley as one of the sources for this though. If i remember correctly his "story" was simply what started the discussion we read and the stories we get are in response to him writing in the first place. I think the only reason we get his story at all is to add context to why people are writing but hey that's just my take on it and i could be wrong but there is a little note before his story

saying that everything we read in the letters is in response to him so i think theirs some evidence for this also his story just seems so out of place with the others.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: To Inform not Inflamm



by Zachary Embree - Thursday, November 13, 2014, 1:36 PM

Giving the article another read through I think you have a point. If I was going to include something like this your suggestion makes a lot of sense. To be honest I would try to find some other way to bring up the treatment of veterans of the Vietnam War, probably a personal interview or three with actual veterans with a range of experiences.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: To Inform not Inflamm



by Sierra Smith - Friday, November 14, 2014, 4:59 PM

That actually makes a lot more sense now that you mention it! It was really odd. All of the other letters made sense and fit together. If that in fact is not the reason you mention, then It is very partial and contains gaps I can't figure out!

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Experiences firsthand



by Sierra Smith - Tuesday, November 11, 2014, 11:44 AM

The letter written by Michael Rooke-Ley is one I probably would choose not to publish in a book if I were Appy. It didn't quite make sense- and went off on a tangent about hating George Bush. I think it is everyone's right to dislike George Bush, but with what he sent in it really had nothing to bring to the table in regards to the topic. This person in my opinion sounds a little too extremist to show credibility worth publishing in a book where I would want to show more truthful material. Maybe if he displayed a calmer, reasonable approach along with a relevant argument maybe it wouldn't seem so off putting.

What I would publish to start off would be Bob Thompson's letter arguing that no one spat on Vietnam vets. The reason being: he provided references for why he holds his opinion and did not let emotion get in the way of his argument. He even says "unless Pruess can provide references to proven instances of such behavior...." Because of that, I think the perfect counterpart to this would be the response from Thomas

Postelle who has some merit because he was actually a vet. Thomas experienced poor treatment firsthand, and even states that he was spit at on more than one occasion. There ya go Bob- a reference right there that it actually happened! I don't think a note to the reader would be necessary, as these letters stand pretty well on their own.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Experiences firsthand

by Dennis Calciano - Sunday, November 16, 2014, 11:43 PM

I agree with your argument that the interviewee Micheal Rooke-Ley goes off on a misleading tangent. A lot of what he says is bias to his experiences. Appy should of wrote a reason why he chose to include this story into his book, its not relevant to what we've been learning in this class. Like you said if he connected President Bush, to an example of our text, it would of made more sense. I would of enjoyed to see a different point of view with Thompson's letter so that you can see both points of view.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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A note to the reader...

by Desria Hansen - Tuesday, November 11, 2014, 12:23 PM

If I were the author of Patriots I would most definitely use all the stories from the soldiers who were captured and tortured in the war. I think by sharing these stories it can enlighten those who may or may not have spit or discriminate veterans and help them understand that these brave men have a significant amount of patriotism and deserve to be admired and respected. It was not easy for me to listen to these stories, but it gave me a greater appreciation for those men and I think others feel the same way.

I feel like a "note to the reader" always clarifies those little facts that may not be common knowledge to some. This could happen quite frequently when interviewing those that were directly involved with the war, the political and other aspects may be obvious to them but they may not directly communicate what they exactly mean. This is where the note to the reader comes in very handy. Appy also uses a note to the reader to describe those he interviews backgrounds and sometimes even what they look like or doing. For example, Jo Collins interview wouldn't make much sense if he did not add in that she was Playboy's "Playmate of the year" and why she was going to Vietnam (Appy pg. 28). It helps paint a better picture, and help you feel like you are actually sitting in the interview yourself.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: A note to the reader...

by Rachel Wells - Saturday, November 15, 2014, 11:04 AM

I like the POW stories also and feel like they leave a lasting impact for the viewer and/or reader. To use them in a book like Appy's will not only (likely) leave a lasting impression for the reader, but also be an important part of this war to include. I also agree that a "note to reader" helps clarify facts. A "note to reader" should give some historical background in preparation for what they will read as well as possibly some preparation emotionally.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Welcome Home

by Rachel Wells - Tuesday, November 11, 2014, 3:47 PM

If I were to write a book like *Patriots*, I would certainly use stories from the POWs. Including Mike McGrath (Vietnamese rope trick, other tortures, tap code), Tom McNish (determination, felt his country would never forget him), Fred Cherry (was determined to return with honor), George McKnight (the impact the tap code had on him). These stories are emotionally engaging and certainly put a different 'face' on the war. A "note to the reader" might be "The stories you are about to read are from the American POWs. They are filled with emotion—anger, devastation, sadness, trauma. The following accounts from the POWs are their experiences, each individually."

I would also include stories about the soldiers return to America after Vietnam. In this case, this would be soldier-based accounts as well. So including a "note to reader" that acknowledges that they are individual accounts/experiences and specifically Letters to the Editor so the writing and references (to other writers) are based on that. I would encourage the reader to consider all sources before making strong opinions about anything in regards to the Vietnam War. Using some of the Letters to the Editor, I would include Bob Thompson's letter because he refutes the ill treatment of the Vets and references a book that the reader could further research. From there I would include Thomas Postelle and Rodney Gordon's letter. Mr. Robert Shaw's letter was interesting because although he claimed his return from Vietnam was "a simple event" he really contradicts himself because his treatment into "polite society" was much worse. I would certainly include his letter. H. Hilliard Gastfriend's letter would be included because there are more references for a reader to further research should they so desire.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Welcome Home

by Savana Cochrane - Tuesday, November 11, 2014, 5:16 PM

The interview with Tom McNish when he talks about feeling that his country wouldn't forget him was one of the hardest for me to watch just because of the idea I get from the Herring book that more and more soldiers were being sent (at least for a few years) without hardly a second thought. Do you think the country would actually remember him or would only his family and friends?

I like that you included letters for the additional reason of giving the reader other references to look up. I hadn't thought about that aspect of including the letters to the editor, but I really appreciate it.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Welcome Home

by Rachel Wells - Thursday, November 13, 2014, 7:33 AM

I wonder what it was like during that time with the media and if/when, they showed the POWs? I know I find myself present day frequently thinking of our service men and women, but sometimes what sparks it is when I hear a tragic story. Sometimes I get the feeling that our soldiers were underappreciated not only by our country, but also by our politicians. The torture we read and watch is unfathomable. As Mike McGrath said, "Words could never adequately describe the pain." (American POWs). As a medical professional that deals with some profound stories of PTSD and other mental health issues, I always wonder about some of the military men and women and their trauma (each their own) and its effect on them. Different noises, smells, other tactile experiences day-to-day that likely remind them of their experiences and how terrifying that must be at times. One soldier that returned to Vietnam, went back to the Army Museum, and looked inside a Plexiglas display case at some boots. As he looked closer, he could see HIS name on the boots that were removed from his feet when he was captured in 1965 (Porter Halyburton, APPY pg. 223). I cannot even imagine the emotions he had to have felt at that moment. While Porter Halyburton was imprisoned, he was eventually moved in with Fred Cherry (American POWs). Porter describes Fred's condition as "Horrible." He was full of infection, pus dripping out of his cast and Porter helped take care of him. Fred credits Porter to saving his life (Appy pg. 224). Fred Cherry was a soldier in "American POWs" that specifically said, "I was determined to return with honor." Our soldiers were so dedicated! I do not know how they did it. I just do not know.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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by Savana Cochrane - Tuesday, November 11, 2014, 4:04 PM

When finding the truth about historical events it's important to identify generalizations and universal statements, for example "No one spat on Vietnam vets" (Bob Thompson letter). Even if it were only a few veterans that had to endure being spat at and verbally harassed, it's still a part of history that cannot be ignored. In order to find information about the past you need to be aware of the time span your looking at and who/what is most likely going to portray that information accurately. In the case of whether or not Vietnam vets were spat on after the war, listening to a few veterans' actual story would be the best way to find the truth. I don't think that anyone would lie or even slightly twist the truth in saying that they were in fact verbally abused or treated differently (ie. what would they gain from saying they were spat at if they weren't). The media however, may have alternative motives in what it publicizes and what it wants the general public to know about. The time span is vital as well because, as Gastfriend writes, "Most digitization of newspaper articles did not truly get under way until the 1980's", so looking at digital newspapers to find information about an event that occurred in the late 60's wouldn't be very accurate.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Finding Historical Accuracy

by Zachary Embree - Tuesday, November 11, 2014, 9:21 PM

I definitely agree that generalizations re the bane of accurate historical record keeping. The only thing I would be concerned about when adding stories of veterans returning home is that not indicating that the general public did not engage in behaviors like verbal abuse and spitting.the more extreme examples could lead to the reader to make assumptions about the attitude of the general populace that might not be correct. In the US any kind of disrespect to military personnel is looked down on, making this a subject that requires balancing showing what happened without unfairly judging the populace. Also I do agree with your skepticism of the general media show to public at the time, that era is famous for padding the true about the conflict.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Finding Historical Accuracy

by Timothy Hammett - Sunday, November 16, 2014, 8:46 PM

I totally agree that making those general sweeping statements will almost always dilute the truth and that if it this happened to even a few people then it is important to history. I really like what Zachary made is that using really extreme examples could give people a false view of the general public. listening to POW stories and then going on to read how returning soldiers were spit on can certainly be infuriating and make you mad at the

general populace but if we take a step back and look at both sides to the attitudes towards returning veterans then we can gain a much more balanced view of what it was actually like for the average returning soldier.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Finding Historical Accuracy

by Sierra Smith - Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 9:52 AM

Exactly, just because it isn't as prevalent as other incidents and maybe wasn't documented enough, it does not mean the spitting never happened! I was surprised that someone would even go out of their way to write in and say that because I find it pretty realistic that some anti war protesters would do such a thing. And then to have people actually respond with personal experience of it actually happening sounds pretty rational and real to me. I agree, I do not think anyone would make that up. Wouldn't it be neat if news stories and other informative sources from back then was just as easily accessible as things are today?!

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Being Aware

by Rachelle Wells - Tuesday, November 11, 2014, 4:24 PM

The compilation of stories of Letters to the Editor are just another source of information about the Vietnam War. The writers are all coming from an emotional perspective in response to other emotional perspectives. As far as the Letters being resources and used as truth I think I, as a student, need to recognize the bias in the letter writing. I can acknowledge that there may be truth in some of the information, but recognize that I cannot take the Letters to the Editor (in this case) as my only source for information. For me personally, it has become increasingly important to take a step back, release my own emotion in regards to soldiers' accounts, and try to look at the facts or truth based on evidence, if possible. It continues to be difficult not forming an opinion or conclusion after a soldier's perspective or emotional story.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Historical Accuracy

by Kasey Harmon - Tuesday, November 11, 2014, 7:31 PM

I think the number one thing to take into account when reading someone's story is if they "lived it or not". Personal experiences are a lot easier to rely on than someone simply stating their "factual" opinion. A lot of people in class I have seen post about how they find the "Patriots" book to be the most enjoyable, and it is filled with

soldier's personal stories. I think it is important for us as students to read multiple stories (letters to the editors) because then we have a more well rounded perspective of how differently each soldier's experience was. For example, Robert Shaw had a much different experience then the other veterans but it does not mean that he was treated fairly. This helps us to see that no one person's story is more "correct" then the others, they just are experiences and we need to take from them what we choose. This is the closest thing we will get to historical accuracy, because we didn't live it.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Historical Accuracy

by Zachary Embree - Tuesday, November 11, 2014, 9:31 PM

Hands on personal experience was my main criteria as well. Nothing quite has the impact of hearing first hand about just what the situation was in Vietnam. A well rounded and multifaceted view of the conflict is one of the things I most enjoy about the patriots book as well. Building a complete picture of how the war was really going on, not just picturing standard film footage of planes pulverizing for all we know a random hillside, gives a much better understanding of the conflict and motivations. No one person is more correct for sure, each fills in some way a piece of the overall picture.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Historical Accuracy

by Kasey Harmon - Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 4:57 PM

That is a good way to look at it Zachary. These men and women's stories paint a much more vivid and real imagine in our heads then what the pbs series might be able to do. We are feeling their feelings and their pain through their stories.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Historical Accuracy

by Dylan Millsaps - Sunday, November 16, 2014, 8:49 PM

I agree that personal experiences are the best and most accurate recall of events but you have to be careful to not solely base your opinion on stories from soldiers who lived it because there is the human element. Without knowing the person could leave out key events or explain things in a way that shows bias to one side or another. I feel the best strategy is to have a mix of "lived it" stories along with historians views on the "facts" because there is a lot to be said about

an unbiased opinion. I think a mix of these two gives you the best academic view on what happened.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Happy Veteran's Day



by Desria Hansen - Tuesday, November 11, 2014, 8:42 PM

From the compilation of the stories, it teaches us that even though it was a small historical occurrence it doesn't mean that it never happened. I think that from the perspective of our own soldiers we are learning what their story was and to me, that is what history is all about. These stories help build our knowledge of the war and even though they are tough to acknowledge, they show the true side of war that gets covered up frequently. That being said, there can still be some inaccuracy given by these soldiers understandably due to being bias. As Dr. Phil once said, "no matter how flat you make a pancake there is still two sides of it." The Vietnam War did have two sides and those sides are best told by those who lived it and were directly involved. I think as a student it is best to keep that in mind, that in war there are two sides and just because a soldier shares his personal experiences that does not necessarily make the historical side inaccurate, but I think it is wise to study both sides to be completely historically accurate.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Happy Veteran's Day



by Rachelle Wells - Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 9:00 PM

I agree that there are two sides to every story, especially as we talk about the Vietnam War. Sometimes it is difficult to make any kind of conclusion—positive or negative—after some of the emotional stories. George Herring taught his first class on the war in 1973 when some of the last U.S. troops were returning from the war (Herring, pg. viii). He has devoted so much of his career to researching the War and this latest edition of the book is from 2014. I feel like it speaks volumes to the information contained in the book as far as historical information and probable accuracy. Sometimes there are two sides to soldier's stories, but often the emotional stories that we are hearing are simply individual encounters/memories. Those stories always catch my attention one way or another. Even just listening to the "*American Soldiers Speak*" and not being able to see the individual was still impactful. One quote I personally liked was, "You can protest the war, but don't protest the soldier."

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Happy Veteran's Day





by Desria Hansen - Friday, November 14, 2014, 8:54 PM

I am glad you brought that up, it is hard to make a conclusion based on stories and the emotional impact they may have. Even in the stories of those involved in the other side of war from the Appy book are emotional. It really shows how the war has negative impacts on all those involved. I suppose that is why we have historians like George Herring to give us the most accurate information of the war.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Acknowledging the past



by Timothy Hammett - Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 12:11 AM

This is a very tough subject to tackle because of all the incredibly strong emotions from both sides which inevitably going to lead to a lot of bias in just what information we get from any given source. When choosing which stories we would use or not use I believe that we should choose those that offer up either compelling evidence for their point of view or a strong personal story. For this reason I would not involve Rooke-Ley as it comes off as mostly just a rant although one that does spark discussion. The second article by Preuss also offered up no compelling evidence through sources or personal stories and so it is something I also would not include. I would however use Thompson's article not because I agree with it's point but it brings up an argument that it backs up with evidence (however flimsy) when it sites the book Spitting image. I think that this viewpoint represented is false but it is held by a great many people so before representing other sources that say otherwise I believe it is important to get both sides out there. I would include Gastfriends article for the reason that it represents a clear counter argument back up by sources and while clearly disagreeing doesn't feel the need to be incredibly inflammatory in the writing style the author uses to make his point. As far as personal accounts go and I who I would involve from each side. I would involve Shaw because while disagreeing with the idea veterans were spat on he still shows us very real problems that they faced (being last hired first fired). Then lastly i would choose Gordon's story as he was a veteran who experienced abuse first hand and writes about in a very clear manner that adds perspective to what our veterans faced when returning home. Gordon says " most vet's did not have to go through this abuse, but it did happen to a few" which is a good distinction to make as I don't believe either side would argue that this situation is the norm. Although I think that every story has two sides and we should try to represent those sides to others it is important we come to terms with the shameful way some of our veterans have been treated so we can come to terms with that part of our history and learn from the shameful display that some of our serviceman were subjected to when returning home so we as a people do not allow it to happen again in the future.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Acknowledging the past

by Kasey Harmon - Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 4:54 PM

I agree with you on Thompson's article being of importance. His article shows the readers that they need to be wary of what they read. Not everyone's source of evidence is reliable, as his "spitting book" was false. It is definitely important as an author to make sure both sides of the stories are published. This lets the reader know that the author is not acting in a biased manor. It was very clear in these articles that some people let their feelings take ahold.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Re: Acknowledging the past

by Zachary Embree - Friday, November 14, 2014, 8:59 PM

With any subject as controversial as this some degree of emotions blurring the facts is certainly something to watch out for. Sticking to personal accounts that seem level headed and are backed up with some hard proof appears to be the best way to get a handle on what actually happened. It is necessary to represent both sides of the issue of veteran discrimination definitely, though it is very important when doing so to consider the actual extent of that discrimination instead of focusing on the worst cases. I like to think that we have in fact learned something about the treatment of our men and women in uniform, of the several veterans I know none of have heard of any discrimination because of their actions in the Middle East.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Opinion on what is truth

by Sierra Smith - Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 10:10 AM

The compilation of letters to the editor tells us that there are people declaring things that did or did not happen when they weren't even there to know firsthand the truth. A person can go on for days about what they have researched, but if they were not there I think that they should humble themselves a bit. Although I know to take everything with a grain of salt, I am thinking that people who actually witnessed and lived through these war stories are more credible than researchers and historians to an extent. The letters of people claiming truth about any instances were more credible coming from people who actually experienced the things argued about. Bob Thompson made a lot of claims regarding the spitting on vets. I was definitely siding with the vets who wrote in response to Bob's letter because they outnumbered him and had the same, if not similar experiences proving Bob's opinion invalid. Another thing the compilation tells me is that there will always be a side to things that is more invalid than anything else. Just because someone has written material and sounds

smart with references /strong opinion, it does not necessarily mean it is completely accurate. I am concerned with mistruths and uneducated writings going around that could waver someone's view on the war and give people the wrong version of things. I don't like the idea of misinformation spiraling out of control- especially regarding something important such as this war and what it means to those it effected.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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For Your Consideration...



by Jimmie Berguin - Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 11:39 AM

If I were Christian Appy writing on these interviews, I would do like Appy has done in *Patriots*, and keep it diverse. The first being Bob Thompson's letter to the editor (Register Guard February 16, 2007) about how the spitting on Vietnam veterans were a myth. Let him make his case, lay out examples, and cite his sources, to gain his perspective. Then Thompson's story, I would immediately follow up with Rodney Gordon's letter to the editor (Register Guard February 25, 2007) which cites Thompson's article and then Gordon's own interpretation of what had happen.

Appy's strongest points of *Patriots* has been laying out interviews from various peoples involved in the War in Vietnam and the varying sides and sources for these interviews. Rather than giving us just the one half of the war (The U.S. and Allies) we are given the side of the enemies (NLF, Vietcong). By doing this we feel more comfortable with the book in it's entirety, feeling as if there is no bias' just retelling of what had happened.

When including the "Note To The Reader" I would give a straightforward telling of what was happening historically during this period in time. Without giving too much away, but enough so when the reader hears the interviews they already have an inclination of what was occurring during this period. Much like Appy already had done in his book. For example, in the two interviews I pointed out I would say something to the effect of:

In 2007, a Michael Rooke-Ley had written a commentary to the Register Guard about the U.S. War In Iraq. Rooke-Ley's article had a controversial for it's implications toward the U.S. Government. It later came to light that Rooke-Ley had admitted to being a protestor of the Vietnam War, which led to a string of responses and letters to the editors from those in the community. These were written by veterans who had experienced first hand the Vietnam War.

Although if I were Appy, I wouldn't include Bob Thompson's response. Thompson's response cited no sources and seemed more than a little bias. This wouldn't be anything worth while knowing, since it seemed more like a matter of opinion than an account of what they had experienced in the subject matter that they were speaking of.

When it comes to any sort discussion of the war, you need both sides of the argument to make sense of the human side of what had happened.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: For Your Consideration...

by Sierra Smith - Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 1:04 PM

For how opinionated Bob Thompson was, you would think he would have a better reason/stance for why he thinks spitting never happened. Unlike your decision not to include him- I would definitely include his letter but only because of the responses from people who actually knew what they were talking about. They had worthy things to say in their responses. Bob's letter alone does not seem fit for any sort publishing whatsoever though in my opinion.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Questoin 1

by Racheal Bryant - Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 4:12 PM

If I were the author of Patriots I would have included more protest stories like the spitting incidents that we read in the Register Guard letters. There is the one story of a man who burned himself up in his car (Pg. 150) but this single story doesn't complete the protest story. I imagine the protesters were not as important to the author because the focus of the book was the Patriots not the Civilians and their stories. The stories that could have been included were ones that showed how protesters treated our troops once they came back to America. I would have added the stories of Rodney Gordon, Herman Isaacs and Robert Shaw. Two of these men came home through San Francisco and both described being spit on. Shaw did not witness or experience the spitting, but he was victim to other abuses due to his Veteran status. I would not have added the letters themselves but interviewed them for their experiences coming back to the states. I don't feel it would have added value to publish Bob Thompsons letter stating "no one spat on Vietnam vets". As a "note to the reader" I would have addressed the concern for the lack of media reporting on this topic. To support the historical accuracy of the incidents I think I would have interviewed several other Vietnam Vets who traveled through San Francisco home and added in addition to these stories a number of others reported similar situations.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Questoin 1

by Jessica Ballestrazze - Thursday, November 13, 2014, 12:10 AM

I agree with you on which stories from the Register Guard I would include, and

which I would leave out. I think it is a safe rule of thumb that whenever anybody says, "This never happened to anybody," or, "This happened to everybody," it's not true. Blanket statements like that totally diminish your credibility and immediately make people question how you're going to back up those claims, and that is literally impossible. As soon as I read the section of Bob Thompson's letter that said his research of the topic had "shown no examples of such behavior, period", I immediately concluded that his research was not sufficient, or that he was lying. When he went on to say that as far as spitting on vets, "there was not a single media report to support such claims of hostility toward returned veterans," I began to attribute his gross generalizations to ignorance, which is the worst possible interpretation if you want someone to believe in what you're saying. So in my mind, Thompson completely discredited himself. Had he approached the topic in a more neutral and humble sense, as a reader, I probably wouldn't have dismissed his thoughts so promptly.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Questoin 1

by Jimmie Berguin - Thursday, November 13, 2014, 1:45 PM

I agree! And since we have only read one protest story, the story of Norman Morrison it almost begs the question if Appy didn't include more for controversial reasons. As we all know there's a lot of heavy emotions that go around topics on Vietnam, and every time one side begins to get a little more spotlight than the other it begins to cause a storm. Such as here with the register guard stories. We see the reactions, some very emotional, of these men who had been spat on and abused. Which came to light when the other side wanted to side soldiers never received such treatment in the U.S. If I were Appy, my biggest worry would be making sure that people wouldn't think I'm bias for printing too much on one side of the topic; and not enough of the other. The matter of the fact is, there's no easy story to share when it comes to Vietnam. But the best thing to do is include a note to the reader and emphasis the lack of resources or reporting done by the media on the topic of Vietnam Veterans being abused.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Question 1

by Rachelle Wells - Sunday, November 16, 2014, 4:56 PM

I think it is an interesting aspect of the war—the protesting—I would not protest a war per se because it would feel like I was protesting the soldiers. Anne Morrison-Welsh States, “A lot of people felt that anything done in opposition of the war was unpatriotic and worked against our men-in-arms.” Many people may feel that way. Norman Morrison’s “ultimate protest,

ultimate sacrifice" (Anne Morrison-Welsh, Appy page 154) was reportedly one of the most significant self-immolation's during the war. His sacrifice extended far beyond himself and even far beyond his family. For example, Truong My Hoa (POW imprisoned by the American-backed government of South Vietnam Appy page 228) states during her interview with Appy (page 230-231) referring to the self-immolation by Norman Morrison, "We were deeply touched, so we dedicated a minute of silence in our cells to his sacrifice." Anne reported to Appy during the interview that Norman cared "immensely about the Vietnamese, but he also wanted to stop the war for America's sake, so that no more of our soldiers would get killed." This is a story that we do not have *firsthand* (from Norman himself) information, but as a reader, I want to believe that Norman did in fact make the ultimate sacrifice. Would I make that sacrifice? Probably not. In addition, even though the information is not firsthand information, I trust what I am reading and believe that Norman just wanted peace for both countries. I do not necessarily think that Appy avoided more of these types of stories. Maybe it was just difficult to find anyone during his research that was willing to talk or that was still alive to talk about this level/type of protesting.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Different Experiences



by Andrew Schubert - Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 5:52 PM

If I were the author of *Patriots*, I honestly wouldn't use any of these letters in my book. Personally I don't think that being spat upon, although it has a very negative and rude connotation, is worthy of being a section in a book about the Vietnam War. Now if it were a paragraph say, in a *section* about soldiers returning home, how they coped with every day life, how they were received, that would make sense. I guess I just don't care that much. If I were writing this supposed book, and if I were able to make it as deep and engrossing as Appy apparently has, then I would accomplish that by sticking to topics that were relative, or interesting. In a time in history where people are dying en mass for what they believe in, or NOT what they believe in as the case may be, I just don't see saliva as being news worthy. I get that it's not the physical act so much that had these people writing in the Register-Guard, and that it was in fact, more the indignity of how veterans were (perhaps) treated at the time, but still I find myself turning an apathetic cheek.

I also am having a hard time stomaching the manner in which these letters were written as I quite often do with op-ed pieces, to me it's the equivalent of reading the comments section of YouTube videos, a waste of time. Notice how they berate each other and their sources (They even attack the publication they're writing in!), but at no point do they acknowledge that the other person COULD be right. Is it that much of a stretch of the imagination to conceive that DIFFERENT veterans coming back to DIFFERENT parts of the country might have had DIFFERENT experiences? This

type of forum, and the people that participate in them, always seem to lean toward the inflammatory.

Seeing as how I would not include any of them in my version of *Patriots*, I suppose it goes without saying that I wouldn't need to include a "note to the reader". However, had I decided to include one of these letters in my book, I would be compelled to in fact include two, one representing each experience, and yes I would amend a note to the reader, describing that the following letters describe different views as to how some Vietnam veterans were treated upon returning home from the war.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Different Experiences

by Jessica Ballestrazze - Thursday, November 13, 2014, 12:28 AM

I think you are right that pieces like this often become inflammatory. However, I can understand how veterans who had a very negative experience returning to their home after the war would be enraged by the insinuation that they are lying. Though this accusation is never stated outright, Bob Thompson does write that the whole thing is a myth, and insinuates that not a single instance of spitting on veterans ever occurred after the war. Were I a veteran returning home, having been spat upon, I would feel vindicated in setting the record straight. Obviously, I have never had this particular experience. Yet, like most of us, I have experienced someone make a generic statement about something I have personal experience with. When there is no way they can prove they are right, and when my personal experience proves they are wrong: yes, I get frustrated. I disagree with you that this topic is not interesting. In fact, I think it is one of the longest-lasting implications of the Vietnam War era, as it is an example of the anti-war sentiment that continues to persist in America today.

Your comment that the authors of the letters refuse to "acknowledge that the other person COULD be right," is a little confusing to me. I definitely agree that different veterans, returning home to different parts of the country, obviously had different experiences. But Bob Thompson pretty clearly states that he believes in a study that, "found no reports of spitting or even negative taunting", and that there was, "not a single media report to support such claims of hostility toward the returned veterans" (Thompson). This is in direct conflict with the first-hand reports of spitting and negative taunting of the returning veterans. Regardless of who you believe, how could they possibly both be right?

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Different Experiences

by Racheal Bryant - Thursday, November 13, 2014, 8:06 PM

I wanted to back up your statement that I too believe this subject to be

interesting and it does show the long lasting implications of the Vietnam war. This topic has me questioning a lot of things but mainly if this was the only war where returning troops were spat on or if this type of protest started before the Vietnam War. Does anyone know?

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Different Experiences

by Sierra Smith - Thursday, November 13, 2014, 10:26 AM

I respectfully disagree with you about it not being worthy to put in a book such as Patriots. It is about raw details of Vietnam war. I think in addition to the war, any post war abuse incidents are worthy because it shows the aftermath and the behavior/feelings behind it. I feel it wouldn't be too out of sorts to add to a book such as Appy's, but perhaps at the end of the book? Either way I definitely will agree with you regarding the nature of the letters. I didn't even realize until you pointed it out that it is like reading comments from Youtube videos! So for that reason, I do agree with you to an extent on not choosing the letters. Maybe if they were less emotionally written it wouldn't seem so immature such as online video comments can be.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Different Experiences

by Racheal Bryant - Thursday, November 13, 2014, 7:54 PM

Sorry Andrew, I am going to have to disagree with you on this one.

You wrote: "at no point do they acknowledge that the other person COULD be right. Is it that much of a stretch of the imagination to conceive that DIFFERENT veterans coming back to DIFFERENT parts of the country might have had DIFFERENT experiences?"

Rodney Gordon does speak to this writing, "I don't believe that it happened throughout the country and most vets did not have to go through this abuse, but it did happen to a few." He clearly explains that different parts had different experiences. If Rodney was spat at then he also could not or would not have acknowledged that Bob Thompson was right.

I do agree with you about the letters to the Register Guard and their resemblance to the comments section of online forums. Some of the letters reminded me of the rants and raves section of craigslist. I find myself a bit overwhelmed with this type of forum as well, where there is just so much to reply to.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Different Experiences

by Timothy Hammett - Sunday, November 16, 2014, 11:48 PM

I agree with the basis for a lot of what you said for your reasons to not include any of the letters but I just have to disagree with you on this one. while I agree most of the stories were inflammatory and not the most professionally written they tell about a very important part of the aftermath of this conflict. In one sentence you state how with people are dying for what they believe so saliva not a big issue but this ignores the fact that those same people who were out their fighting and watching their friends die were the ones that saliva was directed at. At least one or two stories would be included in my version of the book because it shows the aftermath of the conflict on a personal level for people. we also had stories mentioning job discrimination when they returned and while I will admit that this is not as serious a problem a mass killing (obviously) it is important for us to remember as part our history. History isn't about only including the best or worst about what humans have done. one definition of history is " the study of past events, particularly in human affairs". I believe things like the appy book are a way through which we view a section of our history and I would say those events that happened to soldiers returning home fit the definition of historical incidents and deserve to be told.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Patriot Discussions

by Arvind Raman - Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 8:20 PM

If i were to have written Patriots, i would incorporate majority of the sections already provided in the book. From part one: Commanders: I would have added another American pov, i think Dang Vu Hiep (pg. 9) did a great job recalling his story. War Heroes: The most influential story was Phan Xuan Sinh, and his job of trying to get locals to leave, when all they have is their land. Its powerful story, i would add more personal accounts from the Vietnamese soldiers. Where is Vietnam?: I didn't care for Jo Collins interview (pg. 28), maybe a story relating to average Americans if they knew where American troops were going to war, a Q & A. For part two: History is not Made with Ifs: I enjoyed both Prunier's recollection of how the Vietnamese were happy to see him, and Nguyen Giap account about how Vietnamese did not want to fight, but they felt the need to stand up for themselves. Deliver us from Evil: In Rufus Phillips, he recalls being thrown into the mix, because of a minor background in French, and high scholastic regards, therefore he was given a tactics on warfare book, and hes saving South Vietnam! Ngo Vinh Long interview is important because he is a very early Vietnamese American, and Vietnamese could not trust him easily at first. Kick the tires and Light the Fires: This got interesting because of their advanced warfare with napalm and Agent Orange biochemical.

I would definitely add a note to the reader, like what Appy does because it helps separate parts of the stories and this could be inserted before each Part. You have readers of all ages groups, and it will help clarify things to the average reader.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL



Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Dear Abby,  

by Arvind Raman - Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 8:19 PM

You can view this book as a source to help investigate truths of War in Vietnam. Getting personal accounts from both sides, as well as personal views can help shape your overall assertion of what happened and if it was good or bad. Remember: Just cause someone is fighting a war and carrying out orders sent from higher authority, it doesn't necessarily mean that those people enjoy what they are doing or approve of the orders. As a lawyer if they were to present a case of either sides, you want to get all the facts from as many individuals that are related to the subject. Then you use the valid accounts that will help support your case, but until you interview soo many people, you wont get to the next step of forming your own opinion.

For historical accuracy, using Vietnam War as an example i want to evaluate to the time of events and its relationship to the war. Does it chronologically fit in my pattern? Next after hundreds of interviews from both Americans, South Vietnamese and North Vietnamese if allowed, i want to ask a series of questions and get their point of view. Granted, time may have passed so long that the accuracy of the story is a little off, or some specifics are forgotten, but you try to gather as much as you can. With all the material, you form your own conclusion and it develop a historical accurate perception/ theory.



Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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both sides of the story  

by Dylan Millsaps - Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 8:26 PM

If I were to attempt a book like *Patriots* by Christian Appy I would use soldiers stories from both sides like Appy does. What I would different than Appy is to try and find

firsthand accounts from both sides of the same battles. This would ensure the reader understands how both sides were thinking and feeling at the same time and place. Also in doing this, the reader would have a better understanding of what happened at that particular battle because you have both sides to pick out overlapping events instead of having to go off just one side. I would apply the same method when discussing prison camps. You could find a prisoner and a guard from the same camp. You would see how the guard justified his actions and what the prisoner had to endure. I would us a not to the reader section just to set up the setting of a certain battle or introduce a certain camp. I would try to keep this section as factual as possible. This method might be unrealistic due to the difficulty of finding Vietnamese and American soldiers from the same specific conflicts but I feel this method would give the reader the best non-bias outlook. Sometimes when reading *Patriots* I find myself sympathizing with a certain side and I feel if there was an opposing view of the same story it would eliminate this.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: both sides of the story

by Kasey Harmon - Friday, November 14, 2014, 7:49 PM

I wasn't sure where you specified which "notes to the editor" articles you would use in your book. I did however like your idea with adding the notes to the reader part but keeping it simple and factual. Also your idea to include different people's sides to the story on the same battle was smart. This lets the reader know that the author is remaining biased and just trying to relay soldier's stories fairly.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Appreciate your Vets!

by Marquita Lucier - Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 9:57 PM

It's hard for me to choose from the men being interviewed which stories I would include since I appreciated each one's perspective about their experience in the Vietnam War. If I was only able to share a few stories these are the ones that I would include:

I would include the story I heard in the eight minute video about the Black Lions and their ambush in the jungle. Out of 142 soldiers 64 died and the rest wounded. When he and two guys got back home and flew into San Francisco Travis Air Force Base in Oakland the taxi driver talked about the price of tires, the traffic but didn't even asked them how was it. The abuse from the antiwar protesters, hitting them with rotten tomatoes and eggs. He thought that it was hard to understand why they did this until years later he realized that that is what this country is all about. I agree with him

when he said "You can protest the war but don't protest the soldier. I did what I had to do you would have done it too or died. Some were never in Vietnam some didn't see death. "When you see death you have a whole different perspective on life!"

I would include some of the interviews from the Video of the American POW's. I loved what the first man being interviewed said, "This thing of your entire life passing before your eyes in a matter of seconds really does happen. You think about your wife your kids what are they going to do without me and there you are floating down in a parachute. The United States Air Force seemed fit to send me to survival school, to water survival school, to Jungle survival school all the training I needed for escape and evasion and I came through the trees and landed right in the middle of a small village and I escape and evaded for about five seconds." I am sure this was the thoughts of many soldiers.

The interview with Mike McGrath being punished with what they called the Vietnamese rope trick and how the pain was so great and without food, water or sleep it slowly broke him. Hearing him describe how he would draw pictures with his blood and puss from his wounds in prison knowing that he would draw it when he got out. I would include the story of Lt. Paul Galanti describing the Alpha Box and how the POW's used tapping on the walls to communicate. George McKnight's interview about the man he tapped with for three years tapping into each other's minds without ever seeing each other and knowing when they were mad or sad as well as knowing what each other were going to say and never has had that kind of communication in his life. Also, I would add the POW being interviewed when he said that they wanted to split the POW's up so that they couldn't communicate knowing that that was how they gained strength but they were never able to do that and it was one of their major victories. Another story to include was the story of the Hanoi March in July of 1966. The POW's thought that they were going home but instead were marched down through the villages amongst violent crowds chanting with mega phones calling them by names and using profanity. This event being aired on national T.V. and working the crowds so that they could use it for propaganda. The man being interviewed said that they wanted to look like proud Americans and at some points the guards turned their baronets towards the crowds. He said "I came closer to dying that day then the day he was shot down.

These stories demonstrate some of the hardships that our American soldiers and POW's endured and how they showed so much courage I have nothing but gratitude and respect for them. Patriot: A person who vigorously supports their country and is prepared to defend it against enemies or detractors.



Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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"Letters to Reader" Lend Credibility

by Jessica Ballestrazze - Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 11:54 PM

I think my first goal if I were Christian Appy would be to assemble a wide variety of stories, which showed many different aspects of the war. One of the things I have enjoyed most while reading "Patriots" is the wide variety of sources and experiences Appy has drawn from, and the varying perceptions and beliefs about the war: before, during and after.

Personally, I have felt that the notes to the readers following the stories have often times added a haunting significance to their words. I think the secret to this, is that Appy shares details that the soldier wasn't necessarily inclined to share with the public. For instance, the first time this jumped off the page at me was George Watkins interview. In the note to the reader, Appy shares that Watkins requested that Appy "fancy it up", because of his insecurity that, "I say things that don't look good in print" (Appy, pg. 25.) This gives a whole new dimension to his character, and reveals the insecurity that Watkins feels in his ability to give his story credibility.

In another instance, after Vo Nguyen Giap's testament, the footnote provides one of the quotes that has stuck with me the most throughout this class. Upon talking with Robert McNamara about the tragedy of the Vietnam War, Giap says, "...you are wrong to call the war a tragedy. Maybe it was a tragedy for you, but for us the war was a noble sacrifice. We did not want to fight the United States, but you gave us no choice" (Appy, pg. 43).

Many times, the footnotes show emotion that is invisibly throughout their testimony. I think this adds a powerful element to their stories. Sometimes, they also show details that would otherwise have led you to a different conclusion about the storyteller. For

instance, Ward Just was a reporter for the Washington Post. You could easily read his story with the perception that he was just there doing a job. However, the note before his testament talks about a battle in Dak To, in which 31 of the forty-person platoon were either killed or wounded. "Though civilians had priority in medical evacuations, Just insisted on being the last of the wounded to be rescued, a fact he never reported" (Appy pg. 136).

I think the best way to describe the impact that the extra notes make on the story is with the quote, "Character is what you do when nobody is watching." (I can't find who to attribute this to.) There are many things included in the notes, that were the author to tell them in the story, would either seem like embellishment or self-promotion. When they are introduced in the notes, from Christian Appy, they instead take on a sense of humility and credibility.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Soldier Stories

by Dennis Calciano - Thursday, November 13, 2014, 6:21 PM

I'd first like to say that the idea of American Vets being spat on by protestors is a terrible thing in itself. It's not like a lot of the people who fought in the Vietnam War wanted to, they were drafted. If I was the author of *Patriots*, I would include every letter/ story to expand on the idea of spiting on Vets. Especially the accounts of American soldiers from "[American Soldiers Speak](#)", the eight minute audio that describes soldiers accounts of being spit on coming back to the states. One of the speakers talks about returning to the base in Travis Oakland and how he was bombarded by protestors throwing rotten vegetables at the bus he was being escorted on. I would note the lack of research Thompson did in the article "Spitting on Returning Vietnam Vets". I'd also quote the strong words coming from soldiers, "You can protest the war, but don't protest the soldier. I did what I had to do and by god you'd of done it to or die." ([American Soldiers Speak](#) 7:30)

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Soldier Stories

by Zachary Embree - Friday, November 14, 2014, 7:54 PM

I definitely agree that what the soldier faced when coming home is a very important part of the whole experience history wise. However despite my own feelings, I to think that disrespecting veterans is contemptible, filling the book with just the worst receptions returning solders faced could give the wrong impression. What I mean by that is after reading several stories of civilians spitting and cussing at veterans the reader could make a general assumption that that kind of behavior was much more widespread than it actually was. None the less, your last quote sums up my personal feeling on the matter quite well, blaming the soldier for Vietnam is like blaming the nuclear clean up crew

for Chernobyl.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Soldier Stories

by Sierra Smith - Sunday, November 16, 2014, 8:24 PM

Very well said, Dennis! I find it so sad that those sort of things happened to vets- especially because of the drafted men who didn't even have a choice in the matter whether or not they even agreed with the war! Not that I find it any more ok for a person to be spat on who enlisted themselves. It's just the idea that these protesters were doing cruel things to people without even caring that a lot of the people they are casting negative feelings actually may have had no control over their situation.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Soldier Stories

by Bryan Lewis - Sunday, November 16, 2014, 9:57 PM

I agree with how any poor treatment of American Vets is simply bad manner, but I also while reviewing your comment about Travis Oakland made me think slightly more critically about their treatment. I feel that there had to be people who protested the protestors, people like me and you would think such poor treatment of American Vets should be better than it often is. That then puts the social responsibility on the people as whole, yes there will always be people who protest against something but if the majority supports it I feel that people should stand up against them.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Soldier Interviews

by Zachary Embree - Friday, November 14, 2014, 8:47 PM

I think that one thing that these letters have told me is that every small details helps to build up a context and that this happened to a culture much more different than I first thought. At first the broad strokes of the conflict, the United States trying to pacify one of their overseas interests, led me to frame this in a context I was familiar with, the war in the Middle East. But it was the small details that brought home just how different the country was reacting at the time. What really hit me when I was reading some of the stories in the Patriots book is that this was a time when backing your leader to the hilt and investing, in amounts that seem impossible to me, trust of the government was the norm. It never really sunk in until that realization the kinds of effects this conflict had on the fabric of the country. In terms of context its the small

things that have really enabled me to put myself in the shoes of people involved. Whether it is a passing comment in the videos on how entire swaths of the country had been reduced to a moonscape, or the tone of a soldier when he describes how easy it became to see everyone as the enemy, that is what really makes it "real" to me beyond facts and figures. I mean I looked at this photo, realized those could be burn wounds and was unable to hear the words "napalm strike" afterward without picturing it.



However much these snapshots from the perspective of the men on the ground is engaging, they do have a problem of painting the conflict in a very biased light. Someone who had their leg crippled by a mine while guarding a aid shipment is not going to be the best source on how effective they were at winning over the populace for example. Any interview must be mentally weighed against the background of the interviewee and interviewer. Not only that but some of these interviews where conducted years after the fact, so some details lost or actions warped to justify actions to someone who lacks the same frame of reference is expected. I prefer using the interviews to grasp the tone and feelings of those on the front lines actual facts I leave to the books, and the question of if the whole thing was worth the cost to myself to decide.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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A Human Element  

by Jimmie Berguin - Saturday, November 15, 2014, 10:12 AM

When it came to our soldiers and their return home from Vietnam, Robert Shaw's experience wasn't as prejudicial as most. But it was in a entirely different form, rather than being disrespected for his part in the war, he was disrespected by employers for being a soldier. Not being able to attain a job or even be considered

for employment because he had served in the army, even being let go from multiple jobs after discovering he was a veteran.

The compilation of stories shows all different perspectives and experiences with soldiers treatment back in the United States. There are no historical writings about each their individual homecomings, just about similar events. That's what the most common problem is with the stories, the human element. Whether something had or hadn't happen, we can base our knowing of history with stories, documentation, or what has been stated as actual fact in textbooks. Biases are layered and incredibly varied though, thanks to PBS's documentation of Vietnam, the mass public knew a skewed series of "facts".

As a student, there is so much level of collaborating of facts to do before we can be sure of anything we learn. We've got the human accounts/experiences to mix in with wars and skirmishes fought and added in with the cause and effects of events happening in the world. Historically nobody wants to be painted as the bad guy, especially a country like the USA that is deemed "world police". What's to stop them from, influencing at the very least, situations that had occurred? Situations that I personally, as a student in the year 2014 with no history of military service; could even empathize with.

When soldiers go to Vietnam and they were on seek and destroy missions. The collateral of those missions could more than likely result in a civilian death. You're out in the country in you don't know with a language you don't speak fighting a war with a cause you don't understand. They come back home with stories we can't find to even possibly be true because they weren't openly shared or expressed by our government. Or even what's asked of them to make sure they can return back home. "You don't know man, you weren't there" is usually what's said about civilians not having served in the war in Vietnam. So when it comes the service served by our men, it's important to read up on what led up to these events and battles and what our men had to say about it. I would rather and sit and listen to what a soldier did and sacrificed for my country, than my country tell me what they were sacrificing for.



Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: A Human Element

by Racheal Bryant - Saturday, November 15, 2014, 3:07 PM

I am not so sure Shaw wasn't being disrespected for his part in the war. He did state it was 3 years he wanted to cut out of his resume. At the time those 3 years would have pointed to the Vietnam war years not just 3 random years of service. I have no doubt he was being disrespected for being a soldier, but also for his part in the war. It didn't matter if he was drafted or not.

When my husband got out of the Navy in December of 2001, we drove back to Oregon(no way was I flying). After living on the East Coast we were shocked by the lack of support here in Oregon. The closest VA hospital was in Roseburg. Sure there was the VA clinic in Eugene but that took a weeks to get assigned a doctor and wait for an appointment. We were living on a Navy base 45 minutes from Washington DC when the Pentagon got hit during 9/11. Most people forget about the Pentagon. We lived through the lockdowns, extra patrols, 12 hours on 12 hours off 7 days a week. It was upsetting to come to Oregon where people were not affected and to see them take for granted the fight that was going on for them. Even the little things like military discounts were unheard of in most places in Oregon. You couldn't escape the generosity on the East Coast, they celebrated your service over there. It was very much out of sight out of mind coming home to Oregon.

My point is that if Shaw came back to Oregon and I am guessing he did since he graduated from here and wrote the Register Guard years later, that he did experience some of Oregon's disconnect with what the Military is all about. Think about it how many Military bases in Oregon?

"You don't know man, you weren't there" is a frustrating thing to hear. I think you are absolutely right you need to read up on the history and events that lead up to them. The truth is always layered. I would also rather sit and listen to Veteran tell his story than be told by our country what they were sacrificing for. It is always more sincere. It also can be hard for them to tell if we have not made an effort to educate ourselves a little.

I read an article today about the Iraq war <http://www.msn.com/en-us/news/national/how-three-veterans-uncovered-the-iraq-wars-biggest-untold-story/ar-AA7t1XT?ocid=iehp> . It gives good reason for why a veteran would not want to open up to us about the war, especially if we have not read up on the details and talk as if we know nothing about it.

C.J Chivers is a journalist, he wrote: "Being a veteran helped to get people to speak with us candidly [about the story], and ask people to come forward, where there is a lot of disincentive for them to trust us with their stories," Chivers says. "I have found time again that veterans talk to me because I was a Marine."

John Ismay was a soldier in Iraq and is helping Chivers with this story. "There was a level of comfort because you don't ask stupid questions," Ismay says. "You don't pity them, and you're not condescending."

My last comment is to historical accuracy. I have noticed even the smallest details can dilute the facts in our history. In the PBS series when captions are on, they give credit to General Luan for the assassination of a Vietcong in the streets of Saigon.

PBS transcript from Tet 1968 4:00 minutes:

HARRY MCPHERSON (Counsel to the President): And American television was showing a different sight. That sense of the awfulness, the endlessness of the war. The unethical quality that did not recognize that when a man was taken prisoner, he was not to be shot at point blank range. The terrible sight of **General Luan** raising his revolver to the head of a captured Vietcong and killing him.

I only noticed this discrepancy in spelling when I was reading in my LCC Humanities textbook that they give credit to General Loan. I think as students we need to check our sources. Herring displays the photo as well but does not mention who is in the photo, just credits the photographer. I believe PBS got the name wrong spelling it how Mcpherson pronounced it. Small detail yes, but this is how inaccuracies happen.



Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: A Human Element

by Marquita Lucier - Saturday, November 15, 2014, 3:39 PM

I saw this photo for the first time in my Humanities through the Arts class a year ago at LCC. While this photo can be misleading just by reading the caption and not knowing the events surrounding this photo, it's only after reading chapter 6 in George C. Herring's book on the Tet Offensive does this photo really take on a new and different meaning. I am not sure how healthy it was to have such graphic photos or televised war scenes. This leaves me wondering what the media's agenda was, their bias regarding the censorship of what was being aired, and fueling more division of our nation. The impact of the Vietnam War being the first televised war drastically influenced public opinion, which was fueled by a hostile and powerful media especially the television networks, as stated in Herring's book p. 251.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: A Human Element

by Racheal Bryant - Sunday, November 16, 2014, 2:39 PM

I believe the media's agenda is to produce a story that makes the most money. Its a business and if the story will sell, they will use it. That's not to say that this business doesn't have honest people, but the bottom line is money and the consumers drive the business. If we purchase a paper with that image on it, graphic or not, we are fueling the company to continue to bring us more "news" like it. I do not think the media is without fault, but it complicates for me who is to blame. I don't know how healthy it was to show these types of photos or war scenes either. For me it feels as if these images were taken out of context where it was easier to pass judgment in the safety of our own home instead of surrounded by the chaos these images came from.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: A Human Element

by Marquita Lucier - Sunday, November 16, 2014, 5:13 PM

I agree with you on the point about the media's agenda is to produce a story that makes the most money and if it sells they will use it. The images do leave a lot to one's imagination and interpretation as well as all of the materials presented in this class. I know that repetition is how I learn best and with all of the class material if there is a common story or event that is reinforced with the Herring book, Appy book, PBS and the Aim video it seems to stick because it is familiar. If it is something that is random and I have not heard the other sources refer to it, it is less likely to stick in my mind and further more must not be important or factual.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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POW's

by Racheal Bryant - Saturday, November 15, 2014, 12:13 PM

 Return With Honor Transcript.docx

We only watched a small section of video from the Return to Honor episode. I am adding the transcripts from this video in case others wanted to read them. I highlighted the sections that were on our video. They can be found on the American Experience website: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/honor/filmmore/pt.html>

Of the men interviewed on the American Experience POW's video, I would choose to use James Stockdale, Bob Shumaker, Jeremiah Denton and George McKnight.

The reason I would choose these men is because they ended up being called the Alcatraz Eleven. "The group included **James Stockdale**, **Bob Shumaker**, **Jeremiah Denton**, George Coker, Sam Johnson, James Mulligan, Howard Rutledge, Harry Jenkins, **George McKnight**, Nels Tanner and Ronald Storz. Stockdale later received the Medal of Honor and ran for vice president. Johnson serves as a congressman from Texas, and Denon served as a senator from Alabama. Storz died in the Vietnamese prison known as Alcatraz."

- See more at: <http://www.legiontown.org/honors/1441/remembering-alcatraz-11-and-vietnams-powmia-movement#sthash.YqzeJYff.dpuf>

This group of men were called the Alcatraz eleven for their defiant attitude, isolation and torture that they endured.

Alvin Townley wrote: " Hundreds of brave Americans were held captive during the Vietnam War. From those, the North Vietnamese singled out the eleven most uncooperative, influential, and subversive prisoners and exiled them to an isolated prison the POWs named Alcatraz for the loneliness, suffering, and torture they endured there. As these men valiantly waged war from their tomblike cells, the defiance, resilience, and unity of THE ALCATRAZ ELEVEN became legend. "

http://www.alvintownley.com/uploaded_files/the_alcatraz_eleven_-_by_alvin_townley_-_2014_eqmCzP.pdf

Jeremiah Denton died March 28th of this year. James Stockdale dies July 5th 2005. George McKnight and Bob Shumaker are still alive. George McKnight is from Albany Oregon and to the best of my research is still living in Oregon.



Jerry Denton blinks "Torture" in Morse Code in a TV interview.



Bob Shumaker becomes the second POW in North Vietnam (1965).

I would also include Paul Galanti, besides having my birthday which I will always remember him for, he was the POW that posed for a picture that made it onto the cover of life magazine with his middle fingers out or rather airbrushed off. His story adds to the spirit of the men that were captured and the lengths they would go to send messages even at the cost of torture.



An excerpt from the online forums posted by American Experience in November of 2000:

What were your greatest challenges and greatest joys in returning to your families? Many who went to war were never able to discuss it with those who they loved the most. Are you able to share even the painful memories and has it helped you heal? I recently found my POW bracelet. Where should it be sent? Again, thank you.

Bob Grzesiak

Answered by Commander Paul Galanti

My greatest challenge was absorbing everything - there was suddenly so much to do, so many choices. My wife, heretofore very shy, had become a pillar in the community, communities that is, up to the national level. Now that took a lot of getting used to! I'm not sure how much healing was necessary. It doesn't bother me to talk about my experiences at all. I was with a tremendous group of individuals and we keep closely in touch. Despite the nastiness of the incarceration I netted positive overall. It could have been much worse. Many didn't come home and many who did were treated terribly by their own countrymen on their return.

When I read the online forum answers posted by these men, this one stood out to me. POW's came back hero's while protesters treated our troops with disgust. Galanti recognizes that not everyone was treated well upon their arrival back into the States.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: POW's



by Jessica Ballestrazze - Saturday, November 15, 2014, 2:32 PM

As I was reading the last part of your post, I was reminded of episode 4 of "Vietnam: A Television History". This was one of the episodes that was highly disputed by the AIM videos, because it portrayed our American soldiers in a fairly negative light. (As a reminder, Charlie Sabatier claiming that frequent accidents like tripping and shooting fellow soldiers occurred, and that he saw half a dozen dead Americans before he even shot at a Viet Cong, strictly because of ineptitude on the part of American soldiers.) One of the main points of contention for Accuracy in Media was that the television series portrayed the quality of servicemen and service from the Americans as very low, and that the stereotyped image of a Vietnam vet is of a drug addict "haunted" by their Vietnam experience. AIM argued that often, veterans often lived very successful lives post-war, not in spite of their experiences, but as a product of their experiences.

I think Paul Galanti's response really helps to illustrate AIM's point. His statement that, "Despite the nastiness of the incarceration I netted positive overall," is pretty unfathomable, but it seems that many of the POW's held the same view. It's interesting to me that in many cases, it seems that the POW's who had arguably some of the worst wartime experiences, and who received the worst treatment, came out to be the most positive and successful. I wonder if this really can be attributed to Galanti's description of, "a tremendous group of individuals" he was imprisoned with. Or does it have anything to do with the fact that most (if not all?) northern POW's were pilots, who had largely avoided direct jungle combat with the Viet Cong? Either way, it is pretty amazing that a human can emerge from such a terrible experience and re-assimilate successfully in society.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: POW's

by Marquita Lucier - Saturday, November 15, 2014, 3:13 PM

I really enjoyed reading your response to POW's, I marvel as well with the fact that a person can experience such inhumane treatment, and remain positive and successful as well as functional in society. It is sad to think that some of our losses of American soldiers came from friendly fire, such a tragic event. I remember a comment that Charlie Sabatier, in episode 4 of "Vietnam: A Television History," makes about Vietnam, it was "like guys going camping who never camped in their lives."

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: POW's

by Racheal Bryant - Saturday, November 15, 2014, 3:14 PM

As I was reading through the transcripts of the Question and Answers forum from Return with Honor I was noticing the same things. A lot had positive attitudes and did not have hatred towards the guards that tortured them. They claimed it was just the guards jobs. Other statements were "nothing to forgive." I wondered how they could come out with such positive attitudes myself. Part of my reasoning is they themselves remained ethical and honorable. Those fighting in the jungles had to defend their lives by taking lives. This moral struggle could contribute to the PTSD that we hear about.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Varying Perspectives are Necessary

by Jessica Ballestrazze - Saturday, November 15, 2014, 2:14 PM

This particular collection of Letters to the Editor show exactly how polarized views can be on individual issues. They are an excellent example of how personal experience, or personal bias, can be portrayed as absolute truth. With so much contradiction over a relatively small issue of post-war treatment, it is easy to imagine how much larger issues are manipulated to suit the agenda of each individual person or political party.

As a student, I am concerned with the effect of emotional bias on the historical sources that I read. Obviously, studying the war strictly from the view of first-hand accounts of our soldiers widens the risk of accepting emotionally-fueled stories. I find it necessarily to read first-hand accounts of soldiers, as well as deeply-researched accounts, such as the Herring book. Herring offers a rather emotionless and

reasonably unbiased recounting of events. However, I do find that the emotions in personal accounts serve a great purpose. If we were only reading stories from hawks, or only from doves, and only taking in their emotions and the causes for those beliefs, then we would obviously get only one side. Yet in my experience, people who have deeply-rooted beliefs usually pose the best arguments for those ideals. So if we are listening to both sides, and hearing the best arguments for each, I think it is a healthy way to learn. Ultimately, we as students will not remain neutral. It's acceptable and expected to form opinions, and I think that reading other opinions, even those we will find we don't agree with, is an integral part of that process. It reminds me of the saying that I believe is attributed to Aristotle, "It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it."

I am inclined to believe that George Herring's book is written from a neutral position, but I can't say the same for most media. I question how much subjective journalism there actually is, especially in wartime, and feel more suspicious towards biased journalism than I do towards biased personal accounts.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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What & Who should you believe?

by Marquita Lucier - Saturday, November 15, 2014, 2:54 PM

One of the things that the letters to the editor in Michael Rooke-Ley's article published in the Register Guard can provide in learning the truth with any historical events is to be sure to check the creditability of the author, verify the sources they used and where they got their information to support their claims. In addition, believing anything in print or in the media should be further investigated by reliable sources before believing in its validity. Often authors have some sort of bias or point they are trying to make and will try to use persuasive measures to achieve their agenda. Having firsthand experience with any historical event, such as the soldiers and POW's, can have more impact and authenticity but will also have a bias in their opinions of the event and you may have a hard time finding any objectivity of the event. This is with many things in life I find if I am too close to the situation; it is hard to be objective. Another point to bring up regarding the letters to the editors illustrates that one better have the facts straight before putting themselves out there in the media and making such bold statements that do not hold any factual truth. This is sure to get a backlash and negative response from people who have firsthand experience with the situation.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Aggressive personal attacks.

by Bryan Lewis - Saturday, November 15, 2014, 10:10 PM

I would most likely use Robert L. Shaw and Herman Isaacs's letters to the editor as my stories. The reason for this is primarily because both of them tend to tell stories of

their own personal experience rather than focused on the argument of spitting. I would include a "note to the reader" to make the reader aware of what the letters were primarily written about. This note would include the topic of the conversation being had along with the dates. I would avoid using the letters from Tom Preuss and Rodney Gordon, the primary because they seem overall less creditable when they try to form personal attacks towards previous writers. For Tom you can see this in his title "Traitors prolonging Iraq War" and his first sentence being a personal attack on Michael Rooke-Ley. Rodney on the other hands using his ending sentence, the last thought to leave you as a negative comment about Thompson.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Aggressive personal attacks.

by Andrew Schubert - Sunday, November 16, 2014, 5:21 PM

Despite my response to this post claiming that I would use none of the letters in my book, I wanted to take a moment and concur with your assessment that both Shaw and Isaac's letters would be good additions to a book, or at least, the best out of the several that we read.

Mostly however I wanted to concur with your observation that many of the sentiments portrayed in these letters were very negative. I wish that people could take some time when formulating these responses that they submit to the Register-Guard and perhaps remove the more personal/inflammatory/derogatory remarks. In both examples that you cited at the end of your post, the personal attacks written by both Tom Pruess and Rodney Gordon, their position and remarks are belittled in my mind by their inability to not make things personal. I get that this is a touchy subject, especially for veterans for obvious reasons, but I find myself disregarding their position when their letters start to read like hate-mail. As I've stated in other posts, I think that objectivity and keeping a cool head is crucial when participating in an open forum in order to achieve a fruitful discussion.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Hundreds of stores for one event

by Bryan Lewis - Saturday, November 15, 2014, 10:11 PM

I feel this compilation gives shining examples of what we need to be weary from in learning about history. There are hundreds and hundreds stories about any major event in history, and each of these stories are going to tell you things others might leave out. This is something that is a major problem concerning students, often we see the material presented to us as a complete encyclopedia of our class' subject. The problem with knowledge though is that it is ever expanding, even in regards to history new information is discovered that can change how we previously thought an event played out. The idea of an soldier's individual anger has to be taken into

account, someone who had a friend of theirs shot next to them is more likely to assume aggressive behavior from the Vietnamese

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Hundreds of stores for one event

by Racheal Bryant - Sunday, November 16, 2014, 2:50 PM

I thought about the issue with knowledge and expanding information too. It is ok for us to believe one thing until we learn more about the subject. It could have been wrong, but the important part is that we keep adding to our information. I think you are right we sometimes look at the class material as all there is to offer on a subject and consider the matter finished. Years ago this class was only taught with the PBS series. That doesn't mean that students couldn't look for information outside their class materials, but most often we stop looking when we think we have all the data. This was a great point! It reminds me of the old saying "learn something new everyday".

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Hundreds of stores for one event

by Marquita Lucier - Sunday, November 16, 2014, 5:37 PM

When my two older children, who are now 28 and 26, were in middle school and started bringing home their history books I was slightly humored when glancing through the textbook viewing the material and photos. The information that was being taught was many of the events from my childhood in the early seventies, such as the Nixon-Watergate Scandal, that happened while I was growing up and I remembered them all too well. Every event that happened a minute ago is history. With our growing technology, I am amazed at how assessable information is to us. Perhaps that is why there are more chances for erroneous information to leak out making it confusing to decipher what is true or not. I try to keep in mind that there are always two sides to every story and that everyone will have their own different points of view, opinions and perspectives to present.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Hundreds of stores for one event

by Dylan Millsaps - Sunday, November 16, 2014, 8:41 PM

I agree completely with this. Nobody remembers an event exactly the same as the next person. For this reason I feel you should always research as many different sources as possible for a specific historical event because it helps you

pick out what is fact and what is not. You should not believe the first story you are told because it is not always fact. The idea that you should take each individuals anger into account is something I never thought about but it makes a lot of sense. I think when talking to any soldier you should not expect to get an interview without bias. The letters to the editor by Michael Rooke-Ley are a perfect example of this. All the authors had a strong opinion and bias and that should be expected.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Open Forum Coins

by Andrew Schubert - Sunday, November 16, 2014, 6:02 PM

The compilation of stories tells us one very important thing about learning the truth, that there are two sides to every coin. This is not only applicable to small historical occurrences of the Vietnam War era, but to much of life. This is highly evident in these particular stories, the most obvious poignant example is obviously the discrepancy displayed between letterers Bob Thompson and others (Thomas W. Postelle, Rodney Gordon, Herman Isaacs, etc.). This rift regarding whether or not Vietnam War veterans were spat on or not clearly embodies opposing sides to the same topic.

Major issues concerning historical accuracy from a student standpoint does raise concern, especially with regards to the perspectives of our own soldiers. The people involved in this turbulent time in history are obviously highly opinionated and feel very strongly about their position and experiences, and as well they should. But of the two opposing standpoints in this particular argument, which are we to take into higher consideration? I think the obvious answer is both. In this forum I see many posts upholding the side of the veterans, and I think they do make a strong argument, but is it so far-fetched to walk away from this debate with the conclusion that yes, most likely Vietnam Veterans were spat on upon coming home, but no, perhaps it wasn't as common an occurrence as we are led to believe? I see nothing wrong in keeping an open mind to both arguments, especially considering our lack of omnipotence in knowing all things.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Soldier Stories

by Dennis Calciano - Sunday, November 16, 2014, 7:33 PM

This can tell us that a lot of the information that we come across is up to interpretation. To quote Winston S. Churchill, "History is written by the victors." (Churchill) Whoever wins the war determines the course of history. First off, their point of view is the one written in the history books. This tells us that even that smallest occurrences can be embellished for whatever reason. It's hard to know

between fact or fiction when learning about history or relatively The Vietnam War. That's why all the details I read about are taken lightly because there is always two sides to a story. We probably have at one point in our adolescence recited the words, "In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue..." We were taught that Christopher Columbus was a diligent and honorable explorer who discovered America. In fact, he didn't even land in North America. He discovered modern-day Bahamas, enslaved many of the Lucayan people and raped them. My point is when I was growing up this one man was shown as such a stoic American icon when he was really a martyr. I don't know why this story from my childhood was corrupted and what it sought to prove. From then I've decided to take everything that I read with a grain of salt.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

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Treatment of our soldiers home and overseas



by Timothy Hammett - Sunday, November 16, 2014, 8:32 PM

I believe that the treatment of our soldiers both in the hands of the north Vietnamese and the ones who returned home make up important parts of the history in this era. When determining the exact truth of what happens it is important that we focus on ascertaining historical accuracy. I have mentioned in a lot of other posts throughout the class how we need to remember that both sides have their own side to the story and it is important to hear both and look for hard evidence so I don't really feel the need to say much more to that effect in this post. When listening to the stories from our American prisoners of war in the video clip though it becomes hard to keep a distanced and purely academic view of what went on in those POW camps. Although we don't get really any story from the other side on this subject (treatment of POW's) I find it very hard to believe there is anything they could say that would change my opinion on the horrible treatment they were subjected to. Then we hear about ways how they still fought back even in captivity through things like coded messages and turning propaganda videos to their American advantage. This pairing of letters to the editor and the video on the treatment of our POW shows the shameful acts each side committed against our soldiers (not saying spitting is as bad as torture). It helps add a lot of sympathy for our soldiers in a war that it seems most Americans view much differently than most other conflicts we have been involved in. In short I think that it gives us an important detailed look into the lives of servicemen who were captured and shows us why that is important to us as a country.

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