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## Week 7 Forum

### Register Guard Letters

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#### Register Guard Letters

by [Joe Escobar](#) – Saturday, May 7, 2016, 7:28 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Register Guard Letters topic.  
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.

IMPORTANT – SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, something that describes which question(s) you are addressing . Do NOT simply leave it RE: Register Guard Letters

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#### Soldiers were Mistreated

by [Mathew Bohman](#) – Monday, May 9, 2016, 10:36 PM

Let’s start out by saying I would not use the stories by Michael Rooke–Ley, Tom Preuss, H. Hilliard Gastfriend and Robert Shaw. I don’t really find the content of any real value. If we are going for personal accounts by soldiers of their experiences then these stories really supplied none. As far as Bob Thompson He’s the reason the stories from the soldiers are being told about the way they were treated upon returning home. I would use his information as a note to the reader to give context as to why the soldiers were telling the stories they are telling. Other than that there is nothing Bob Thompson provides that needs to be told. It appears from what he wrote he has no personal knowledge as he was never there.

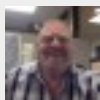
For the stories of Thomas Postelle, Rodney Gordon and Herman Isaacs I would include their stories in the book as they are relevant to how soldiers were treated upon their return. I think as a matter of trying to be historically accurate I would include as close as possible the date. I believe as the war progressed and views changed the behavior towards soldiers changed.

There is reference in the [American Soldiers Speak](#) audio clip from about 6:30 to the end where several different voices make comments. They add credibility to the stories in the paper. The comment that caught my attention the most was “protest the war not the soldier”. I believe people lost sight of that and took it out on the soldiers returning as evidenced by the stories.

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3

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#### Re: Soldiers were Mistreated

by [Philip Highwood](#) – Saturday, May 14, 2016, 8:33 AM

Mathew,

Good morning my friend, I wanted to comment on "protest the war, not the Soldier". Wow, that statement could not be more factual, when we are dealing with the Vietnam war and the Soldiers who volunteered and

the one's who were forced (drafted) to go and fight.

The "DRAFT", for instance; if you were drafted to war, sent to another nation, knowing that most likely you will die thousands of miles away, with no family other, then your brothers at Arms. Oh and by the way you are going to fight communism; dictatorship; people who also like you have been drafted (as with the women and children of Vietnam). Imagine being that Soldier who was drafted, did what was "dictated" by America; lived to come home; fully expecting a heroes welcome; coming home to spit, foul language, and violent protestors. Wow, the feelings of failure by the Soldiers who faced this type of homecoming, must have been heart-stoping, lump in the throat, and a kick to the teeth. I can't imagine Americans acting this way to our Solders. Although they did.

Philip

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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**History Personalization**

by [Mathew Bohman](#) – Monday, May 9, 2016, 11:17 PM

The compilation of stories tells us things that facts can’t. Facts tell me how much the war cost, or how many soldiers died. Facts can’t tell me the day in and day out lives of soldiers. Every soldier has a different experience. While some may tell similar accounts each soldier takes in what is happening and digests it differently. When I read these stories I am getting personal information about Vietnam from a specific point of view. I believe the stories we get from each soldier are accurate based on their experiences. Each story must be taken in then looked at. A soldiers biases will be inserted is my guess. I don’t think the bias necessarily makes the story any less true it just makes for that particular story to be specific for that soldier. That is what needs to be remembered when getting stories from soldiers.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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**Re: History Personalization**

by [Delynne Frank](#) – Saturday, May 14, 2016, 9:10 PM

Mathew–

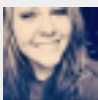
You've made a very good point in saying that without the personal stories of soldiers we would only have facts about the war. Facts that do provide us with important information, but there is so much more to learn about a war and the people involved in it. So, I definitely agree with you regarding the vets' stories providing us with unique information that can only come from someone who was actually part of the war.

I think that the validity of information that is presented through the media, online, and in documentaries such as the PBS series, should be checked. Information through these channels could have been changed or possibly from an unreliable source. However, there is no wrong or right when it comes to the personal stories of someone who experienced the war first hand. You're absolutely right in saying that the soldiers' stories are accurate based on their experience.

In reference to Bob Thompson's letter to the editor, Rodney Gordon, makes a really good point in his letter. Rodney said, "he could not find it on Google and he read a book about spitting." I love that he says this because it once again shows that we cannot always rely on Google or the media for accurate information. Also, it doesnt sound like Thompson is a veteran, therefore he has no right to discredit the testimonies of those who were there and who did experience being spat upon.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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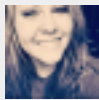
**Re: History Personalization**

by [Amelia Hansen](#) – Sunday, May 15, 2016, 1:12 AM

"History Personalization" is the perfect description! Each person is going to have a different story and recollection of any event based on their personal experience (regardless of what side they were on). I found that Robert L. Shaw's letter to the Register Guard demonstrated the contrast of experiences fairly well. The letters from veteran's Thomas W. Postelle, Rodney Gordon, and Herman Issacs described experiences where they were spat on by protesters on their return home, but Robert L. Shaw described his experience of

returning as a simple one (even agreeing with Bob Thompson's comment) which encourages to me the idea that someone's experience will navigate their views and opinions. While examining both the Register Guard letters, "American Soldier's Speak" audio, and "POW" video clip, I also noticed that many incidents involving the mistreatment of soldiers (such as spitting or throwing things) occurred in certain (largely populated) areas like California (San Francisco and Oakland were mentioned in two of the letters and the "[American Soldiers Speak](#)" video – 1:44 minutes) and it occurred to me that someone's personal experience could be greatly affected by their location. For instance, my two cousins who fought in Vietnam grew up in a small, rural, and patriotic town here in western Oregon where their return was positive and much celebrated. But for some other Vietnam veterans in other places, that unfortunately was not the case.

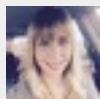
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**Re: History Personalization**  
by [Amelia Hansen](#) – Sunday, May 15, 2016, 9:36 AM

Follow-up: My apologies, I just discovered a typo I made in Herman Isaacs name.

Sum of ratings: (1)  [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



**If I was the author**  
by [Delynne Frank](#) – Tuesday, May 10, 2016, 7:55 PM

If I was an author looking for stories to put in a book like "Patriots", I certainly would not have chosen the Register Guard letter from Bob Thompson of Eugene. His letter, "No one spat on Vietnam vets" did not appear to be a first hand account of what did/did not happen to Vets upon their return. Rather, a criticism of Tom Preuss' letter and the lack of media reports on the subject of Vietnam vets being spat upon.

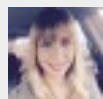
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**Spitting Letters**  
by [Titus Young](#) – Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 7:02 AM

Before this class, I was unaware that some U.S. veterans in the Vietnam war were spat on when they returned to the states. I knew about the protest but I wouldn't have guessed that people would spit on veterans. It is apparently a big topic too when one man (Bob Thompson) claimed that, through his research of online resources, there were no cases of vets getting spat on. This resulted in multiple responses of personal experiences saying that it did happen. Herman Issacs' story I found the most compelling If I were Christian Appy I would probably add a footnote about what prompted him to write his experience. Issacs states that he was called a "baby killer" and was spat on twice. This story alone completely refutes Bob Thompsons' claims. One other letter pointed out that the digitation of newspapers did not happen until well after the war, so a lot of the "resources" that Thompson had used were not historically accurate.

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**Re: Spitting Letters**  
by [Delynne Frank](#) – Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 5:52 PM

Titus–

I also found Herman Isaacs' letter to be quite compelling. I believe it would definitely be worthy of being put in a book such as "Patriots". Stories like Isaacs' need to be shared because they do in fact give a first hand account of real events/situations that took place during the war and when U.S. soldiers came home. It was completely valid for Isaac to call out Bob Thompson on his claims that Vietnam vets were not spat on after returning to the U.S.

Along with Herman Isaacs, Thomas W. Postelle also wrote a letter from his first hand experiences of being spat upon. I found it especially sad to hear that he would rather pay full price for airfare to avoid being recognized as a Vietnam vet. In his letter, Postelle said "If I flew in uniform, I would only have to pay the taxes and a small amount to Delta to fly standby."

If I was an author sharing both Isaacs' and Potelle's letters in a book like "Patriots" I would want to include a note to the reader pointing out the difference between their letters and the one submitted by Bob Thompson. I would want to show the importance of first hand experiences and to reinforce that not all resources will provide accurate historical information.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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**Re: Spitting Letters**

by [Philip Highwood](#) – Saturday, May 14, 2016, 12:44 PM

Titus,

Hello my friend, hope this response finds you healthy and happy. I have many relatives and friends who fought in Vietnam; my father for one. He served three tours as a Navy Corpsman (medic). He would share a few stories with me but only when he was relaxed (drunk). He recalled the first time he came home, he stated that he was made to feel like a criminal who was walking the death march. My father wanted to execute an "about..face" marching his happy hind parts back to Vietnam. As he stated "at least the wounded Marines, acted as if they were happy to see him". Imagine being that young Soldier/Marine who sacrificed everything, and the vary people who you sacrificed your life for acted as if you just killed the family pet. Spitting on my uniform would be a deliberate act of war; punishable by the Vietnamese rope trick. My thoughts of course.

Philip

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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**Re: Spitting Letters**

by [Amelia Hansen](#) – Sunday, May 15, 2016, 3:27 AM

I agree, I have a difficult time holding Bob Thompson's opinion in too high regard considering that he had no noted experience in Vietnam while the other men (Thomas W. Postelle, Rodney Gordon, and Herman Isaacs) did. I also experienced a difficult time having much trust in the source that Mr. Thompson quoted in his letter to the Register–Guard:

*"In 1995, a study by Thomas Beamism and others analyzed some 495 media stories and found no reports of spitting or even negative taunting."*

One of the issues I had with this source was that the study was conducted by Thomas Beamism and "others" (who is "others"?). The second issue I had was that the stories that were analyzed were "media" stories (which as we learned in the first part of the class, media has the power and the ability to "pick and choose" all material). The third issue I had was in the quote *"...found no reports of spitting or even negative taunting"*. After reading the letters from veterans who claimed to have been spit on, listened to interviews from veterans in "[American Soldiers Speak](#)" (1:44 minutes) who were degraded, and watched veterans in the video titled "Vietnam Vets Never Expected This..." (0:44 seconds) discuss how protesters made them feel ashamed to wear their uniform, I find it very hard to believe that "negative taunting" was never reported at some point during the Vietnam war.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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**Not everyone hated the Vets**

by [Mikayla Cervantes](#) – Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 5:02 PM

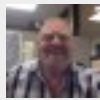
Question 1 of Register Guard Letters:

If I was the author of Patriots, I would most likely include Tom Preuss letter because it elaborates on the issues

that is, many people were against the Vietnam war and therefore would believe that nothing bad happened to the veterans that return, as Preuss talked about Rooke–Ley being a coward because he was a Vietnam protestor. Rooke–Ley was a protestor of the war, and Preuss responded by asking an important question, “He admits he was a Vietnam protester. Was he one of those who spit on our troops?” because the majority of the people who spat on the veterans were against the war. Another story I would include would be Rodney Gordon’s letter, talking about how the San Francisco flight was the place for the protestors to be. Gordon believes that “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.” Which is probably the truth because not everyone took their anger out on the veterans during that time. I probably would include a letter to the readers that would talk about how many people did not believe that the veterans were spat upon or hated, but if they took the time to speak veterans they would tell the reader how their experience was when they returned home. The POW video showed a gentleman name Tom Mcnish who was a prisoner, and he believed wholeheartedly that “I had an undying faith that my country would never forget me” (24 Min POW) and this statement caught my personal attention because I believe that his story of the war and his experience should had been entered into the Patriots book because Mcnish had complete belief in his country even during a hard time at war.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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**Re: Either you are FOR or AGAINST the American Soldier.**

by [Philip Highwood](#) – Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 7:34 PM

When discussing which letters I would use; first I would take a position of “FOR” or “AGAINST” the Soldiers who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Many individuals, like anti war demonstrators, draft dodgers, and all the other civilians that were simply against the war believed that Soldiers were drug addicted, criminals and most likely, might fabricate stories of being spat on, only for self gratification. Their fore, why believe such rubbish.

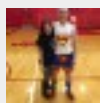
I am “FOR” the Soldiers (not necessarily the war) but I will forever back a man and a woman who is willing to pay the ultimate price, to include death, to keep war off of American soil and fight overseas in hopes that our children will never have to endure such torture and pain as the men in Hanoi Hilton. So, I would focus on two specific letters. The first would be “VIETNAM VET DATA INCOMPLETE” By H. Hilliard Gastfriend. He talks of how Thompson was wrong and how the research was all computer generated and flawed. The second letter that I would use would be for sure, would be “VETERANS GREATED WITH HOSTILITY” By Herman Isaacs. He remembers the facts that it’s better to travel in civilian clothes rather then his uniform. To put that into perspective, Soldiers are supposed to be ashamed to travel as a Soldier wearing the vary uniform that they are given to fight for our freedom.

“note to the reader” Always weigh facts, I have done so, and have have personally witnessed both negative and positive responses while traveling to and from combat in uniform.

Furthering our discussion, we understand that Soldiers may have memory issues, they may suffer from traumatic brain injury (TBI), or post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), however, the memory issues are mostly in the short term memory and not the long term. So, their recollection of combat most likely will be spot on. I personally know many Vietnam Veterans and most of them have multiple Purple Hearts. They also remember, like it was yesterday, their ‘WELCOME HOME” party. The negative words, name calling, spitting, finger and arm gestures. This is one reason why I say “WELCOME HOME” and smile, as most of the Vietnam Veterans never heard such sweet words when they came home.

The letters portray the negativity and hostility that we had on our own Soldiers who fought in a war that was widely protested; the “POW” and “SOLDIERS SPEAK” portrayed how much the Vietcong despised the American.

Philip



**The only people who truly know what happened are the ones that were there.**

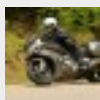
by [Aaron Ashenfelter](#) – Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 10:25 PM

If I were playing the role of Christian Appy, when writing Patriots, I can say that I would have tried to follow that same layout that he currently has in place and I would use most of the letters that the people who lived in or near that time period to help explain to people just how rough it was for the American Soldiers coming home to a nation that not only disliked what they were there for, but went all the way to attack them for what they thought those troops could have done. My Grandfather fought in the Vietnam war and for a project I had to interview him and I chose the topic of when he was returning from the war as my main topic. He told me numerous times of the people who threw rocks at him and his fellow troops. The people who spit and used very rude disrespectful language to them as they were coming home from overseas. He fought to defend this country and to do what he was told. He along with all of the other troops over there did not personally go and attack Vietnam, they went over there because that's what they were told to do and to be treated that way when they returned from those things many of them suffering more emotional stress then most people could even begin to believe is something that needs to be documented for years to come so that our future generations can understand exactly what happened during the times that the American people let their troops down.

Now, in a more direct response to what the the people claiming to have been there and never witnessed an event or heard of one where people were spit on. Just because you were one of the lucky ones does not mean that it did not happen.

"The only people who truly know what happened are the ones that were there."

–Hunter S. Thompson



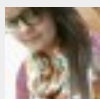
**Re: The only people who truly know what happened are the ones that were there.**

by [Mathew Bohman](#) – Friday, May 13, 2016, 9:46 PM

I enjoyed reading what wrote and agree with your comments. You are very fortunate to have a relative be able to tell you first hand their account of events. My father was in Vietnam so I too was able to get that first hand account from somewhere who was actually there.

I also agree that all these accounts we are able to get our hands on need to be documented. You are 100% correct when you say that the American people let their troops down because the absolutely did.

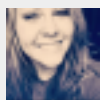
You finished your statement with a terrific quote that is spot on.



**Re: The only people who truly know what happened are the ones that were there.**

by [Mikayla Cervantes](#) – Sunday, May 15, 2016, 12:39 AM

I agree with you completely, and as I read your post all I could think about was "Why do civilians treat the veterans with such disrespect and anger?". I don't think any veteran should be treated badly, nor should they have to endure more damage and anger from the very people they are trying to protect. My grandfather was also in Vietnam, and passed away from some problems that were caused by Agent Orange and though he didn't tell me much about his Nam experience, he did inform me that he hated coming home after the war because he felt like no one could respect him anymore.



**Register–Guard Letters on Vietnam**

by [Amelia Hansen](#) – Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 10:58 PM

If I were the author of *Patriots*, I would exclude the first two letters (written by Michael Rooke–Ley and Tom Preuss) from the Register–Guard, for I felt that they were irrelevant to the topic, "Spitting on returning Vietnam

Vets" (the first letter was directed more to the war in Iraq and the second letter was in reply). As for the other letters, four of the six letters that had direct reference to the topic, contained claims from actual U.S. Vietnam veterans that soldiers were indeed spat on (three of the four claimed to have personally experienced it), while the other two (one from a U.S. Vietnam veteran) claimed that they were not (the veteran did not deny that spitting on U.S. soldiers occurred, just that he had not personally experienced it. He did, however, mention being slandered, degraded, and cursed from simply mentioning that he was a Vietnam War veteran). The remaining letter (written by H. Hilliard Gastfriend) does not address his affiliation with the Vietnam War, only offers a reference retrieved from a blog. Taking into account his lack of noted experience in the Vietnam war, I would exclude this letter from the *Patriot* book as well. As a writer, I would be prompted to include stories from both accounts. However, considering that neither "Soldiers Speak" or "POW" materials directly address that U.S. soldiers were spat on, I would mention the lack of published proof of such occurrences in a "note to the reader". The closest occurrence that either of the sources provided was in "[American Soldiers Speak](#)" (6:45 minutes), when one of the veterans recalled how anti-war protesters would throw rotten eggs and tomatoes at the bus hauling U.S. soldiers.

What caught my attention the most regarding the Register-Guard letters was the number of Vietnam veterans who claimed to have been spit on by protesters. I thought Robert L. Shaw's letter titled "Returning from Vietnam easy" was interesting as well, for it brought to my attention that the level of hostility towards soldiers would depend on their location (for instance, both the Register-Guard letters and "Soldiers Speak" refer to protesters in California, which indicated to me that certain areas in the U.S. were more anti-war than others), which would result in a different experience for each soldier and/or person.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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**Re: Register Guard Letters**

by [Bryce Tilton](#) - Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 11:31 PM

post

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**Firsthand Accounts - Fact or Fiction?**

by [Trevor Kaye](#) - Thursday, May 12, 2016, 12:13 AM

Question 1:

If I were the author of *Patriots*, I would include the horrific story described in the [American Soldiers Speak](#) audio at 5:20. "I went through I don't know how many different bodies, crawling around out there trying to find somebody that was alive." This statement does a lot to depict the absolute horrors and substantial loss of human life in the Vietnam War. The speaker continues to describe the gruesome battle, with "people with no faces, arms, and legs missing." I would also include accounts of the "Vietnamese Rope Trick," mentioned in the American POWs video clip. I would be careful as to how I included the information though, as *Patriots* for the most part humanizes the war, and the treatment of POWs in North Vietnamese camps often was strikingly inhuman.

Question 2:

The letters to the editor can be interpreted in two ways. The first is that no matter how firmly we believe something to be true, we must dismiss that belief if there is no solid evidence. This is supported by the statements from Bob Thompson, claiming that "Unless Preuss can provide references to proven instances of" spitting on Vietnam veterans, we cannot assume it to be true. The other message one can obtain from the letters is that, when something cannot be proven in video or on paper, firsthand accounts can be used as legitimate evidence. This theme is prevalent throughout several letters, many writers claiming that they were indeed "spat upon" or harassed in some way. I personally feel that although firsthand accounts should be looked at objectively, if a theme is recurring among several firsthand accounts, it can be considered factual.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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**Letters of Contrast.**  
by [Titus Young](#) – Saturday, May 14, 2016, 3:18 PM

As many of the letters that we were shown are by veterans, you would expect almost all of the letters' facts to match up. This is true for the most part and while some veterans did not experience the same kind of abuse, most veterans did receive some. While a lot of veterans were verbally abused, some were spat on. In the letters, we were shown, 3 out of 8 letters said they were spat on. However, two of those are not veterans, and one is unclear. That is 3/5 stories from confirmed veterans who were spat on. That is over 50%! Obviously, we can't take this data and apply it to all veterans because all of the responses were spurred on by someone claiming that Vietnam veterans were never spat on. One man named Robert Shaw, said that when he returned to America, he was not met with any hostility. However, when the war was over he started to feel the repercussions of being a Vietnam veteran. He said that getting a job was not easy, because whenever it came out that he was a Vietnam veteran, the interview was basically over. In my opinion, no veteran should ever be met with such hostility.

Sum of ratings: [2 \(1\)](#)

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**Re: Letters of Contrast.**  
by [Philip Highwood](#) – Saturday, May 14, 2016, 5:32 PM

Titus,

Good day to you my friend. It is interesting, the statistics from the RG letters. It is also interesting that we as Veterans have a saying, whenever we see a Vietnam era Veteran. Shaking their hand and saying "Welcome home".

Vietnam Veterans don't wish for medals, awards or citations of valor; they simply want to be appreciated. Appreciated for doing what was ordered of them; by the very people, who were voted into office; by the people who disrespect them.

Philip

Sum of ratings: [1 \(1\)](#)

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**Re: Letters of Contrast.**  
by [Mikayla Cervantes](#) – Sunday, May 15, 2016, 12:22 AM

As I agree with you, I cannot help but wonder if some veterans disagree that they were spat on because they do not want to relive the pain and hurt they felt that the people they believed they were protecting decided to punish them. Every veteran I have met does not talk about the war very often, and it takes a lot for them to relive the war. Some didn't want to think about how their own countrymen and women treated them after they spent time protecting them, and I think that is how it is even in today's life. Veterans are given less than others, and it is honestly horribly wrong. They protect us, and yet we allow them to return to a place that they cannot get a job, and are treated differently because they were away protecting us civilians.

Sum of ratings: [1 \(1\)](#)

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**Re: Letters of Contrast.**  
by [Trevor Kaye](#) – Sunday, May 15, 2016, 11:35 PM

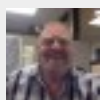
It is striking that, as you said, over 50% of the Register Guard letters supported the allegations of anti-war protestors spitting on veterans returning home. It does beg the question, that considering all of the media coverage surrounding the war, why is there no notable evidence of this occurrence taking place? Considering that all of these letters were from veterans in the Willamette Valley area (as the Register Guard is a local newspaper), one must consider whether or not their location determined the amount of abuse, verbal or physical. Eugene is a very liberal city, well-known for its demonstrations against violence and perceived 'injustice' throughout history. In fact, the University of Oregon wrote a 2,000+ word article on student protests on the UO campus in the late 1960s alone. Perhaps the fact that Eugene is a college town with many anti-war protestors contributed to the cruelty suffered by Vietnam veterans returning home. "3 out of 5

stories" does seem like a lot, so it can be interesting to consider the root cause of such a high ratio.

Article on UO protests: <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/scua/2015/01/21/student-protests-on-the-uo-campus-demonstrations-of-the-late-1960s/>

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**Re: Register Guard Letters**  
by Philip Highwood – Sunday, May 15, 2016, 6:31 PM



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