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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.

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Most Informative Letters

by Robert Taylor – Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 11:04 AM

If I was the author of Patriots I would include only two of the letters presented to us. The first letter I would choose is “Vietnam vets verbally abused” written by Rodney Gordan. In his letter Mr. Gordan claims to be an actual Vietnam Veteran with personal experience, and manages to give a good first hand account with no personal insults or political bias. He also included a note that his experiences may not reflect most returning Veterans of Vietnam, yet claiming that they did not occur is false.

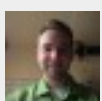
The second letter i chose was the last one we read, “Returning from Vietnam easy”” by Robert L. Shaw. Mr Shaw did not experience the same kind of negative return as Mr. Gordan, however he brought up some other important points. Robert L. Shaw states that even with a degree, his Veteran status following the war kept him from getting jobs.

I chose both of these letters for the same reason. Being critical of how we treated Vietnam Veterans is just as important as being critical of our actions in Vietnam. Together these letters represent that every Veteran had a different experience returning from Vietnam, and not all of them were positive. In the video clip American POW’s the soldiers explain being showed videos of protesters in america, and how little that changed their actual situation. It did not make a difference at that point if they should be fighting the war, they had to fight and they had to survive. All protests and discontent should have been directed towards the actual war, and not the soldiers who did not always have a choice.

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Re: Most Informative Letters

by Daniel Long – Sunday, May 15, 2016, 11:15 AM

Robert,

I agree with you that both examples create a equal boundary between right and wrong when these Veterans

returned home. The first letter does do a good job of telling his story without giving too much of his opinion regarding politics or people. He evenly shows his experience and that all. The second creates an even more in depth look. Our focus was mainly just spitting on Vets returning from home, but he tells that there was more than just spitting but name calling and throwing objects at them. I think that the use of media had a negative affect to providing people at home of what these soldiers were doing and being shown doing it for the first time. Also, the public burnings and city battles didn't help the image of the U.S. soldiers, when they were merely given orders without a choice.

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Register Guard Letters
by [Justin MacDonald](#) – Sunday, May 15, 2016, 11:36 PM

I would actually choose Herman Issacs's letter, "Veterans greeted with hostility." Mostly because I found his sarcasm hilarious, but it also shows his emotion and commitment to validating his fellow veterans experiences. Some of the best quotes:

"Those of us who came back through California experienced a lot of hostility in varying degrees. I wonder why I was never asked about my experiences."

I spent 20 years in the Army and I am damn proud of the military and the veterans."

"I would like to invite Thompson to follow his own advice: In the future, I suggest Thompson and his ilk talk to veterans of that war about our experiences before taking some junk off the Internet as the absolute truth and writing about it in public."

I agree too that hostility and discontent should have been directed towards politicians and as you say, "the actual war," not the soldiers. Especially considering many were drafties and had little choice.

As I mentioned in another post, something that hit me emotionally hard was a Veteran speaking in "Voices from Vietnam." He recounts initially being concerned and upset over sometimes violent protests. He then states, "I realized what this country is about..." people being allowed to voice their opinions, no matter how much he might disagree. That's the ideal he fought for.

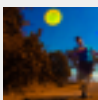
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The ignorance of some people
by [Dustin Brown](#) – Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 2:39 PM

If I were the author of Patriots I think I would include all of the letters except one, that being the one authored by H. Hilliard Gastfriend since it appears to be describing an incident at the Pentagon in D.C. which would mean those soldiers were stationed in D.C., so they were not returning from service in Vietnam. It is still disgusting that these so called protestors would spit on any soldier regardless of status, however being that is doesn't offer proof of returning Veterans being spat upon I would not include it. The other letters I would include because it offers perspective from the soldiers own experience, and shows that some were treated with dignity and others were treated as if they were subhuman for serving their country. As an Iraq war Veteran I can say that even today soldiers experience discrimination and it is usually by people that are too afraid to put on the uniform themselves and have no sense of honor or love for their country. Soldiers do not get to pick their war; they do their duty because they believe in what their country stands for. I would include a note to the reader stating that these interviews were conducted with U.S. Veterans of Vietnam and while there is no proof other than their testimony, these Veterans honor and integrity is not in question and nor should it be.

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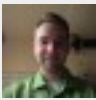


Re: The ignorance of some people
by [Adam Clairmont](#) – Sunday, May 15, 2016, 4:58 PM

Couldn't agree with you more Dustin. The thought that anyone would spit upon a serviceman after faithfully serving his (or her) country is appalling. These men may have not been involved in the most popular war in the eyes of the American people at that time but they still put their lives on the line to defend the freedoms

of the “spitters” and those who support them. I am surprised to hear that Veterans are still facing ridicule today. The armed services are not for me but I respect the hell out of those that do faithfully serve. America may have its share of problems, but without brave men and women to secure our freedoms and defend those who need our help America would not be what it is today.

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Question 1
by [Daniel Long](#) – Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 4:21 PM

Stories to use

While reading the stories and comments from civilians and veterans alike in the Register Guard I have decided to use the comments under the title, “Returning from Vietnam easy,” “Vietnam vet data incomplete,” “No one spat on Vietnam vets,” and “Veterans greeted with hostility.” All of these comments have equal importance to show two sides of the story.

With Bob Thompson’s comments, he uses the novel, “*The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam*” It seems clear that Mr. Thompson is without experience from Vietnam, and has to rely on fact rather than experience. This is what starts a long line of complaints and backlash to his comment. From multiple veterans, they speak out against Mr. Thompsons comments and share their own stories. “I was called a baby killer to my face more than once” (Isaacs 4). And, the use of quotes from the book that Mr. Thompson uses, and the use of ageing to disagree from Robert Shaw, “On re-entering society and applying for an entry-level position, I was slandered, degraded, cursed, etc., but never spat on” (Shaw 5).

I think that for this case I would use a note to the reader to give explanation as to what I am trying to say through historical experiences provided by these men and their comments. Additionally, I might use the POW video as part of the explanation to further dive into the experiences that no citizen can imagine but only create a base image in their head without pain.

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Question 2
by [Daniel Long](#) – Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 4:22 PM

Question Two

The compilation of stories from the audio files, POW video, and Register Guard letter to the editor all combine to show similarities between the experiences between morally defeated soldiers during a war without purpose, soldiers who have pride from past family members, and ordinary citizens who didn’t serve, but rely on fact and information provided by other resources. When all is combined, I myself come to the conclusion that War is never what the movies portray it to be, and that I have no means to value or devalue veterans and provoke my opinion about any war. Though, the major issue that strikes me is that the resources still neglect to see the viewpoint from the Vietnamese people. Their opinion is still valid to hear, and is what the PBS television series shows to even the scale.

The Register Guard “Spitting on returning Vietnam Vets” gives opinions brought by American veterans and citizens. The opening post by Michael Rooke-Ley was that of the protests demonstrated throughout the country in an anti-War movement. Mr. Rooke-Ley gives his opinion but without information to support him, much like when the people relied heavily on the news TV shows and photos provided form the news stations around the globe (PBS video).

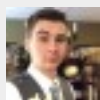
For the rest of the resources, they share the similarities of combining Vietnam War veteran’s stories. The audio file and POW video share an aspect from a soldier’s life; battle and torture. From the audio file from the Black Lions survivors, we hear of the massacre that took place “couldn’t hear a thing from all the explosions,” and “the first you smell is all the dead, I think that was indescribable” (Audio). For the POW video we hear from multiple survivors from prison camps that had to endure tremendous amounts of pain and exhaustion, “I got stoned and spit on, then walk 4 or 5 miles to the next village,” “We called it the Vietnamese rope trick, where they tie your hands behind your back and dislocate your arms” (POW).

All of these stories have a common opinion that War is not what we think it is, and that it is the closest form to

Hell if not worse.

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Re: Register Guard Letters
by David Leavitt – Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 8:37 PM

The first letter (by Michael Rooke–Ley), the third letter (by Bob Thompson) and the sixth one (by Robert Shaw) are all flawed. Now I understand these are all the papers from one side, and I hate to bash all the papers from one side, but I feel that they are all making blanket statements that don’t involve facts (other then Shaw’s personal experience). They all basically say that they haven’t directly experienced it, therefore it didn’t happen. Which I believe is a horrible mistake, and one that devalues their argument greatly. It all depends on what I was wanting to show to the audience, if I was talking about the mistreatment of war veterans in the states, I would use them all except the ones by Rooke and Thompson, as these seem to only be fueled by emotion, and no facts. These articles also don’t show any respect for the solders that served. From what the video on POW’s, and what they had to go through over there, them doing this in my eyes demands at least some respect, respect that these articles skip over.

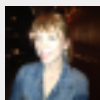
I would include a “note to the reader” explaining the story behind all these replies, and how they are all connected, as well as including some news–stories on harassment toward solders in the states too, to give them a more informed view on the subject.

Everyone has their own opinion and views on different topics, which is triggered by past experiences. When taking someone’s opinion of a subject, you must first look at how they are bias. I think everyone is bias in someway, even subconsciously, and when trying to formulate a accurate account of what happened, you have to try to get past the bias. Also, firsthand experience is always best. What I noticed from the articles was that the ones that were making big statements, weren’t solders in Vietnam (like Rooke, who said he was a protester during the war), and they didn’t take their information from solders who experienced these things, just Google.

Well first, all the soldiers speak and the POW video, all of them were talking about their firsthand experiences, which for the most part, are very accurate (although not always. The videos and audio is set up more like interviews, which I think also tent to be more accurate then the letters, which are people going back and forth “arguing”.

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Re: Register Guard Letters
by Tamara Berge – Sunday, May 15, 2016, 9:57 PM

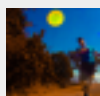
David,

I appreciate you bringing up the point about the POWs. I can’t imagine, after what they endured for years, anyone treating them with anything less than the utmost respect. I don’t believe that they received the same kind of treatment the average soldier did, though. They were the few that received a warm welcome when they returned, and deservingly so. But after hearing the audio from the soldiers of the Black Lion troop and of the story of just one of the likely many battles in the jungle, and what they endured that day, I can’t imagine giving them any less respect for what they went through. Unfortunately, they were not met with the same welcome. The POW’s received a party at the white house hosted by Pres. Nixon, the soldiers even requested the toast to be addressed to the MIA soldiers, the soldiers that didn’t make it home, and for all the soldiers that fought in the war; but instead Nixon did the official toast to the wives and daughters of the POW’s.



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To "google" is to know absolutely

by [Adam Clairmont](#) – Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 9:33 PM

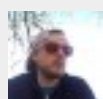
Question #2

This compilation of stories written to the Register-Guard shows us (especially in the case of Bob Thompson) that you cannot be assured of accuracy just because you ‘googled” something. Especially when dealing with an event that was not recorded to the extreme extent that everything is now-a-days. Every soldier has a different experience with how they returned home after the war. Some may have not received the “spitting” treatment but it seems to be a very large probability that some did. It just goes to show you that you should surround yourself with as much evidence as possible and come to a conclusion yourself based on what you see and experience.

One major issue regarding historical accuracy that we, as students, must come to terms with when studying events from peoples past is that perspective is everything. A personal account may take on a completely different meaning when told from a person’s point of view who is resentful toward, or who enjoyed a particular event.

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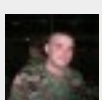
Re: To "google" is to know absolutely

by [Robert Taylor](#) – Thursday, May 12, 2016, 11:28 AM

I think you nailed it when you pointed out the issue regarding historical accuracy in that "perspective is everything". This is a huge detail to keep in mind when reading any first hand accounts. Whether its who one a battle, or if a war was justified, this can all be subject to the perspective of whoever is telling the story. Also perspective can become so concrete in the humans fragile memory over the course of 40 to 50 years, you never know for sure how accurate an account truly is. It is like how sometimes I can't actually remember if certain events from childhood happened to me, or a friend. I have told the stories so many times, I'm mostly remembering the last time i told the story, not the actual event. I am not claiming that any of these veterans are necessarily incorrect in their recollection, however you never know for sure. It is the same as the issue with a google search, one source of information just is not enough to form an educated stance. We are very fortunate to be getting what appears to be a good balance of information in this class.

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Re: To "google" is to know absolutely

by [Dustin Brown](#) – Sunday, May 15, 2016, 12:05 PM

I have to disagree with part of your statement where you suggest that maybe the veterans that claim to be spat upon have unknowingly distorted the facts due to decades having lapsed since the incident. It doesn't matter how many years have passed, one tends to remember the biggest events of their lives

such as marriage, births, COMBAT, and of course when one returns from war and gets saliva spit on or at them. That is something that stays with a person, and if it did not occur to a veteran that said it did, that would be a flat out lie not an accidental distortion of events.

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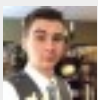
Re: To "google" is to know absolutely

by [Robert Taylor](#) – Sunday, May 15, 2016, 1:31 PM

Dustin,

I don't think anyone of these soldiers have distorted memories of the occasions they are describing either. These are not fleeting memories like the ones I forget from high school. I also do not think that they are all out lying. Im merely taking an objective view of perspective and memory, devils advocate in a sense. I also recognize my own perspective and bias, and i always try to view stuff from the other angle. My bias is to believe the soldiers right away, it sounds like this stuff actually happened. I also recognize that this might have something to do with the fact that although I never served in combat, as a Coast Guard veteran I have a tendency to identify with veterans. I still believe that even with ought my bias, most people would and should believe these veterans.

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Re: To "google" is to know absolutely

by [David Leavitt](#) – Sunday, May 15, 2016, 11:46 PM

I agree with both you and Dustin. Something and disrespectful and humiliating as getting spat on is not something I would be apt for forget. Memory's do tend to fade away with age, but some memory's are so engrained that no amount of age could take them away. My grandpa is 86, but still remembers story's from when he met my grandma, and certain life changing events that happened on the farm that he remembers clear as day, and Vietnam wasn't near that far back.

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Letters to the editor

by [Tamara Berge](#) – Sunday, May 15, 2016, 5:26 PM

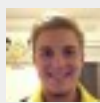
What the compilation of stories demonstrated to me was that every one of the veterans that returned from Vietnam had varying experiences and that all of their stories are valuable to understanding what the impact of that war had on that generation.

I believe the major issues concerning historical accuracy would be time, and perspective. While most of the accounts sound as if every detail is permanently etched into the mind of the teller, time does often fade memories and as human nature goes sometimes a small embellishment, after time, can become a truth in the mind's eye. The letters in the register guard speak of the different perspectives from those that lived among the turmoil here in the U.S. and those that faced the devastation in Vietnam, or those that experienced both. All of their accounts are valid as long as they are their firsthand accounts. Anything less isn't really worth talking about. It makes sense why Bob Thomson's letter brought on so much attention and hostility; he was demanding source information from someone that experienced these events in a time when internet and cell phones with cameras and the ability to record every impromptu event didn't exist! The veterans that replied all made legitimate points, but I think Herman Issacs said it best, "talk to veterans of that war about our experiences before taking some junk off the Internet as the absolute truth and writing about it in public. We were harassed back then, and now Thompson wants to keep the flame alive. What a country." I imagine that is how many Vietnam vets who experienced that kind of harassment would feel.

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Historical Inaccuracies (Question 2)

by [Justin MacDonald](#) – Sunday, May 15, 2016, 10:46 PM



Even retrieving the truth of the smallest of historical occurrences regarding the the Vietnam War can be daunting. So much bias clouds the relevant facts of the war, one almost must use a machete to clear the dense thicket of it. Even coming from the soldiers, things can be biased. Putting oneself in their shoes, after coming back from a gruesome war, how can one not try to justify all the bloodshed? A common coping mechanism of deal with high amounts can of stress is rationalizing what one experiences, least he/she go crazy. Then you have the bias of the anti war protesters and most of the media back then. The best way to combat bias is with facts. Perhaps the other side will still not yield, but outsiders and examiners to the event can be swayed.

In the American POWs video clip, one of the POWs is told by a guard "[you] must help win the war in the streets of New York...help your people understand the war...". As stated in the books we are reading, not to mention the PBS series, they all concur the way for the North Vietnamese to win the war is by persuading the hearts of Americans, and make them lose heart for the war. And that's just what happened.

Facts seemed to point to the Veterans not being treated very respectfully when coming home (mostly by anti-war protesters). In the "Voices from Vietnam" sound byte, two separate accounts recall how, "No-one welcomed [us] home...", Veterans arriving at Oakland had to remove uniforms, least they be yelled at or worse, while waiting for flights or busing home. Even none vets have proof: Jim Lindgren, a Northwestern University of Law professor cited multiple instances where Veterans were treated poorly, including spiting instances and even one where a sailor was stabbed. Now, this wasn't necessarily common place, and not every vet experienced hate. Rodney Gordon (a Vietnam Veteran) writes, " I don't believe it happened throughout the country and most vets did not have to go through this abuse, but it did happen to a few" (spitting handout, p.3). Even the vets who don't recount the spitting say they weren't treated great. The best rebuttal is from Bob Thompson in the Register Guard letters, who adds no evidence of his own, other than Lembke's book, which has been discounted by multiple sources, and proven to have a very biased sample source.

What really got me though was something one of the last speakers said in "Voices from Vietnam." When referring to the protesters banging on his bus home, he said "I realized this is what America was about." Protesters have every right to their views, right or wrong. That's what they were fighting for; Freedom. Most of these vets, even when confronted, may not like whats happening, but carry on. Few chose to get violent unless assaulted or directly spat upon.

But further research leads me to believe you can't really change either side. Many of those who agree soldiers were treated poorly tend to think it was widespread and all over the country on a regular basis(it seems it wasn't that bad). Those who refuse to believe soldiers were treated poorly, or at the very least weren't spat upon, tend to refuse to believe it did occur even when presented with facts and testimonies. This is because if something doesn't fit your narrative going into a subject you have preconceived notions or bias on, the average person tends to back into a corner and refute the evidence if wrong. People don't like being wrong. People like being told they are right

This leads me to something I experienced recently, that I can not help but recount seeing how closely related it is. Eugene, Oregon this past month has been awash with high tier political figures, most namely Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump, both running for the highest office in the land. Not wanting to pass the opportunity to see the next potential president in person, I attended both. Let me preface this as being my experience, and doesn't necessarily reflect all of either candidate's supporters.

Going to Bernie Sander's rally, most news sources and live streams seemed to point to the rally would be peaceful, energetic, and uneventful. This mostly came to pass. There were no protesters (that I noticed), security seemed lax, and Bernie spoke then my friends and I left after a fairly good time. The only thing I noticed was a few of my friends got an unusual amount of looks, considering they are army vets and dress very clean cut with nike boots and high and tight haircuts, contrasted to the bright colors, sandals, and relaxed clothing the average person wore.

Trump's rally was quite different. We expected violence: mainly from Trump supporters. What can you expect when an energizing politician speaks to crowds of blue collar workers, veterans, and the like? Quite the opposite happened. Walking to the entrance protesters booed and cooed at us. Arriving at the event, waiting in line, we were greeted very cordially. During the speech, the crowd, just like the Bernie rally, was energized. A protester brandished a Mexican Flag. Yet no-one laid a hand on him; they started chanting USA and he was escorted out by private security. The rally ended, and we proceeded out. A wave of protesters were chanting obscenities, waving hammer and sickle flags, quite upset. Most were peaceful, a few got in our faces, doing hail Hitler salutes, calling us racists, and looking for a reaction or fight. A few even made fun of one of my heavier set friends. This was common place for almost all rally attendees that night. And surprising to me, none of them fought back, or started anything.

I tried to explain this to a lot of my friends, especially my left leaning ones, about how it wasn't the Trump supporters being wild and out of control (I myself was surprised). They refused to believe me. The media tells us how violent all of his rallies are, yet further research shows (that I did after the rally) that's not true. Often it's the other side initiating conflicts. Then on the flip side, a lot of my conservative friends found it hard to believe most of the protesters actually were peaceful. Many of them were confrontational, but for every one of those there were 2 more that were respectful.

Most people will refused to listen to the facts because they are blinded by bias.

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