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Hst 195: History of Vietnam War

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Assignment #1 (part 1)

After reading Dang Vu Hiep's account from Vietnam out of Patriots: The Vietnam War remembered

from all sides by Christian G. Appy, this story of almost happenstance and its success had me reading it

three times in utter disbelief. Hearing the recount from the opposing end of a battle is a rare occasion

and the way that a group of 30 North Vietnamese troops wreaked havoc on a group of American

soldiers who had 5 times the amount was very concerning (9-10). Albeit dumb luck, according to Hiep's

account, the impact that occurred "...killing 9 Americans, wounding 126, and destroying ten U.S. aircraft.

It was to date the most costly assault on a U.S. position in Vietnam" (9), this attack would make any

soldier uneasy even in the so-called safest of places.

The erie part of this recount and the sentence that strikes a chord is when Hiep states how he has

"met with Robert McNamara and he says that if we hadn't attacked at Pleiku, American airstrikes

wouldn't have begun" (10). The way that the attacks had kept coming from the North Vietnamese seems

an unlikely outcome, but one that makes you think "what if". In regards to having too much time passing

to have possibly forgotten the exact events that took place, the way that Appy describes how Dang Vu

Hiep flips through his note cards, his reminders and his cliff notes he had written in, leads

me to believe

that this story has had a significant impact in his life and is a true milestone in Hiep's career. With high

credentials and a long history of battle in Vietnam, this recount comes from a seemingly reliable source

and by the way it reads, seems to be an honest and true tell.

Assignment #1 (part 2)

The most disappointing story in Part Two of Patriots: The Vietnam War remembered from all sides by

Christian G. Appy, was the story told by Henry Prunier and his accounts with Ho Chi Minh and Vo

Nguyen Giap. As Prunier describes how he was sent into Vietnam by the Office of Strategic Services

(OSS) to train soldiers to "support an anti-Japanese resistance movement called the Viet Minh" (38), his

encounters with Minh and Giap were pleasant and cordial, yet the end game was not. Ho Chi Minh and

Vo Nguyen Giap were great leaders for their country and after reading discussions of both, they seemed

to be polar opposites; in the sense of their destiny that is. Giap was a soldier out for victory and wanted

nothing more than success; which is shown as Prunier states that "Vo Nguyen Giap was with us almost

constantly....This was an elite group that we trained. They were all hand picked from all over Vietnam"

(39). Ho Chi Minh was more of a people's person, or "man of the people" as Prunier states (40). The

way that Ho Chi Minh avoided military interaction and spent most of his time talking and mingling with

people as a whole, gives a peaceful impression of hope and a desire for freedom and the

love that he

has for his country. It is truly sad that this is not how the cards played out in the end. There was an

abundance of positive that resonated within this story which painted a completely different outcome that

was to be only a few years later.

After reading through Prunier's recounts of his time in Vietnam, it is very hard to think about what

might have been if America would have truly listened to Ho Chi Minhs requests for America to help him

create an independent Vietnam; however, knowing that Ho Chi Minh was a communist wipes this

fantasy away. Throughout the time that Prunier was with Ho Chi Minh and Giap, there was a sense of

attention to detail that the Vietnamese had in comparison the the Americans. The focus of perfection

and mastering their tasks were evident in the descriptions portrayed, but overall the American

descriptions seemed to have a feeling of destined success because of the simple fact that we are

powerful Americans. Prunier's story overall, truly resonates as he illustrates all of the compassion that

not only Ho Chi Minh had, but the sense of goodness that all of the soldiers had within them as well.

Both sides had the desire for safety and wanted nothing more than good health, shown by Prunier's

description of an American medic who gave Ho Chi Minh "quinine and sulfa drugs" as he was "dying of

malaria, dengue fever and dysentery" (39). Being a true people person as Prunier depicts Minh as

being, and being a country of freedom as America is, brought a sense of hope for peace which in the

end is what everyone desired but did not get. These were amazing recounts and really pulled you in

when reading them. It is enlightening to read and understand what really happened, especially being

able to read these from both sides.

Works Cited

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Hiep, Dang Vu. ""With all those choppers they seemed terribly strong."" Patriots: The Vietnam War

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Amissa
Giddens

Giddens 1

Escobar

History 195

04/09/2015

Assignment #1

“I don’t have much bitterness. Well, I don’t think I do. I just wish none of it ever happened -- for everyone’s sake.” (Appy, 22) After reading this statement from George Watkins, in his story, my eyes watered up a bit. George Watkins’s story had the greatest impact on me, and caught my attention the most out of all the stories in Part 1 of “*Patriots*” By Christian G. Appy.

The thing that gripped my heart was how his life is altered in such a seemingly negative way from the Vietnam War, yet he displays a selfless attitude of forgiveness and concern for everyone affected.

Watkins’s background of his hard working father wanting something better for his children, in combination with his own naivety of the war when drafted, is where I first felt for him. Watkins realized his dad’s hopes for his future; However, I doubt his dad wanted him to end up with no legs, or eyes. He was trained in military camp for engineering and ended up on the front lines with no infantry training. That is crazy! It angered me a bit when I read that because how can our military actually be successful with soldiers not properly trained, and what were the motives for sending him to the front lines?

Watkins goes on to talk about his encounters with the Vietnamese people, and how he observed them coming back to their homes that had been completely destroyed and starting over, he says, “They had to be some good people to with stand all that.” (Appy, 23) He even has the depth of character to empathize with the Vietnamese people.

Even though many years have passed since his time in Vietnam, I don’t see what Watkins would have to gain by fabricating any of his story. I believe what he is saying is truthful. His overall opinion of the war is that it was the politicians that put all people in the situation. His story coveys that view. The only thing I can think of in Watkins’s case that may have changed over the years, is his view of Communism, and the Vietnamese. If it was popular opinion at the time that they were fighting against Communism, he may have had a more prejudice view of the Vietnamese people and not have empathized with them as much as he portrays presently. With time and public opinion changing, and historical facts being more evident, that may have affected the way he views and relates to the past, taking a more empathetic approach.

I can't say if I experienced what Watkins did that I would even want to continue living. The war took a huge toll on his life, and changed it forever. Yet his ability to not be bitter is amazing. When I encounter challenges in life I will definitely remember his story. If George can handle having no eyes, and legs from an experience that was out of his control and still have a great attitude, then I can assuredly can handle life difficulties.

The story that was disappointing to read was that of Henry Prunier. What made it disappointing is that our country would send a team of Special Forces to help the Vietnamese against Japan, but only for our own intelligence with no real commitment to support Vietnamese independence. It puts our soldiers such as Prunier in an awkward position. They are sent there with a mission to help. The soldiers may form friendships and bonds with the people they are helping and then in a couple years' time be the same people they are killing. It's also disappointing because our motives were not pure. We only supported the Vietnamese when doing so had something to offer. Soon as that war ended we had no need, or care for, the Vietnamese to be independent anymore.

The positive lesson that I have learned from the readings so far, is that most individuals whose lives were affected by the Vietnam War had an underlying desire to be kind to the opposition. The nature of these people all comes across as good, and genuinely having a desire to do the right thing, and be connected on a personal level. This gives me hope, and also encourages me not to take people for granted.

I want to conclude with an attitude of humbleness. In effort to complete my first assignment I have answered the questions, and analyzed these stories to the best of my current abilities. I don't think I, or anyone else for that matter, will ever be able to fully grasp the magnitude and effects of the Vietnam War. While these are the opinions I have drawn from my limited understanding, I also know that I don't know it all. I want to be respectful to the sensitivity of this subject and not draw too many hard and fast conclusions.

Works Cited

Appy, Christian G. *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remebered From All Sides*. New York: Penguin Group, 2003. Book.

In the word document, this paper is double spaced, with 1" Margins, and 845 words, I also had page numbers, which threw off the format so I took out the page 2 header. I did read [how assignments are graded](#), I hope I am not docked points because the double spacing and format is not shown by copy and pasting. Please let me know if any changes need to be made for future assignments

Austin Helfrich

History of Vietnam War

Assignment 1

Part One

All around the world struggles have been running ramped across every corner of the globe, to every form of life, and in all points in time. The Vietnam war affected and brought many challenges for many people, not just in Vietnam but everywhere. Stories of each individual have been heard and read which brought true insight to what really went on. The personal story of Dang Vu Hiep from Part One of Christian G. Appy's book "Patriots - The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides" grabbed my attention and showed how the other side felt on their perspective of the war. Dang Vu Hiep was a political officer for the Northern Vietnamese during the war. His story shows the Viet Minh/Viet Cong's side of the conflict. He talks about the controversy of the attack at Pleiku as the South depicted it as "So provocative" when he and the men doing it saw it as "Just a normal battle". Hiep did not even distinguish between South Vietnamese and American troops, hence they were simply both enemies against what he stood for. Even though the war rarely seemed like it would ever tip in the South's victory the North were still scared and confused as to the new overwhelming power they faced. He says they had never seen the U.S army fight, never seen massive armored helicopters and in such numbers. They had to improvise with battle strategy, food, shortages, and medicine. His perspective showed how the North was just in the dark and finding difficulties around every bend as the South. His story seems very reliable as he was there and not only that but he isn't saying outrageous statements that may seem exaggerated or unbelievable. Hiep in the interview even apologizes for a very crude and potentially offensive song depicting the death of American GI's. One does not simply make this up and then apologize for it being offensive to some. There wouldn't be a motive for doing that unless it is a hard motive to grasp but doubtful. The information Dang Vu Hiep presents seems extremely trustworthy and not tainted by memory loss, hype, or any other common wartime inflections.

Part 2

Sad and downbeat atrocities seemed to be simply common, not even considered atrocities but simply the way it went. Pilot Richard Olsen tells of himself flying the H-21 or "Banana" helicopter that was originally designed all the way back in the forties and originally created for arctic conditions yet being deployed in a hot, tropical region. Really disheartening to see unsuitable equipment fitted to the effort. Olsen then talks about seeing the difference Vietnamese culture than to our culture back in the U.S. He saw children with bullet holes in their legs who didn't complain or say anything. He says how they could not fire unless already being shot at. That concept seems ineffective as to the enemy would already have the jump on you even if you had spotted them first you still had to abide by the U.S rules of engagement and wait for the enemy to fire upon you before you may return fire. Also Olsen says how the South Vietnamese troops which he flown were often sleeping in their hammocks during a potential raid or battle. The South

Vietnamese would call him in to “Get a dead body” and then many of them would hop in the chopper to leave the battle to “Go back to their dead comrades funeral” while the conflict rages. How can one abandon what they are fighting blood, sweat, and tears for so easily? Extremely disappointed in kids getting shot with no complaints yet some of the people fighting would just want to up and leave when it was not kids you started the conflict and for the most part it was not kids fighting the conflict.

Though clouded and often in the darkness absent from light are positives that came out either directly or indirectly from the war even if they are small or not. As Sergi Khrushchev says the Vietnam War “Winner” would not be the United States, The Soviet Union, or China, it would be the Vietnamese. They outright wanted to be independent regardless of either North or South accepting aid from another nation. Eventually Vietnam got what it wanted but the Vietnam War help strengthen that resolve. Another thing was the war brought was to the nations that waged it, indirectly or directly and that was to learn from the war the mistakes and problems that occurred for future reference. Some say that leaders began realizing this war was not going anywhere and may have ended their role in it sooner had they been in power long enough like Kennedy and Khrushchev. Another minor thing may be that many people involved in this were now learning about all new cultures, ideas, peoples, and crossing over the language barrier. Improved ways of agriculture, medicine, communication, transportation, and even war erupted from this conflict even if it may have been only a slight improvement from before. Guerilla warfare seemed to heighten and new ideas emerged which seemed the ideal approach for countries going toe to toe with a dominant nation as a precursor to conflicts like Afghanistan, Iran and Syria. New knowledge how to deal with an enemy that you cannot see or predict helped the United States possibly create some new tactic or strategy to fight this style warfare for the years to come.

The account that caught the most of my attention in Part One of the Appy book was of the one of Deirdre English who stated, "How can my country be at war and I don't know about it." This statement reached out to me as a reader and brought to me a sense of shock. The fact that not many Americans realized what was happening in the little Southeast nation of Asia. Deidre brings the point out that Vietnam was a rarely known subject at the time, and little amounts of americans really realized that American troops were in Vietnam in the first place. As Deidre explained in the reading, she talks about going on strike to get a point to be taken in consideration by more people. I've been a part of a strike before and I can definitely agree that this is one good way to get a point a crossed to people that may not understand the subject you're striking against. Not only does it inform people on what exactly is happening but it includes them which causes more popularity. With more popularity brings in the option of catching major attention to make a change to what is believed to need changed. "We'd come in and say, "The campus is on strike. We're asking everybody who is against the war in Vietnam to leave class right now and go out to the green for an all-campus meeting," as she stated. This was a way to bring peoples attention to the Vietnam war and inform those students and some teachers on what is going on in this Asian nation. As I read this story I began to think about what I would do in this situation. As I read, I believe that what she is saying is true, in fact what she is saying currently happens in todays world as well. Strikes against the government happen very often and what she did was something that got their points noticed, maybe not by many, but enough to bring attention to the subject. Deidre deserves credit for standing up for what she believes in especially at the time where most people did not even know what was going on. She gave people information to a situation that wasn't getting the attention it needed. Deidre makes me believe that she was speaking out of uncertainty of the government, as she says, "We began to wonder if the government was not only at war with the Vietnamese, but would go to war with America's own youth."

From Part Two of the Appy book, I was a little disappointed in the story being said by Vo Nguyen Giap, as he seems to put only his thoughts into consideration. As I read his story it almost angered me to read, "Perhaps the Americans know this already, but they need to be told again and understand more." This statement angered me for the reason that he claims to be singling out the Americans who believe they know something but to him, Americans don't understand it enough. Although he had very interesting subjects in this story, that part just rubbed me the wrong way. Although the statement he was discussing to readers probably wasn't supposed to be taken this way, I believe more than just myself will think that he sounds almost to be pointing out that Americans need to know more about this what really happened.

Although Vo Nguyen Giap's story sounded as it was aiming towards the Americans, I also thought that his story was positive. He stated, "Our deepest aspiration has always been self-determination." This was an eye catcher for myself because I believe that statement to be true. Self-Determination could be a huge factor in many of things. He uses it towards war, but could be used towards plenty of things including sports or even education. Many competitions are won not because of skill or how good the opponent is, but because of determination. When I read this I immediately felt more interested in what he had to say as it had gained my respect for what he was getting a crossed to the readers.

One who has a good sense of Self-Determination is unstoppable. This could be a main factor to those who lack in confidence or skill, if they are willing to push themselves to a certain point that gains self-determination, it can make those who don't believe, believe. Hard work pays off, as I've learned through athletics growing up. This statement reached out to me making this a positive part of Vo Nguyen Giap's story.

Christina Bergman

HST195 Escobar

Assignment #1

In Part 1 of *Patriots*, the story that really caught my attention was Ta Quang Thinh's. It impacted me the most because it was a bit of a different kind of story than the rest and made me think about different things than the others did. A lot of the stories in part one are about fighting, people dying in terrible ways, or people surviving horrific experiences. This story, on the surface, was a story about somebody surviving a horrific experience, but the more I think about it, the most important part is how he felt about the war. It really resonated with me when he said, "Foreigners came to our country from out of the blue and forced us to take up arms. Don't you think that's absurd?" I thought, in response, "Yes, it is." It gave me a small taste of the emotion that must have been in his words when he spoke them. His story also made me think about his family. He couldn't see them or talk with them in any way for six years. That's something I just can't imagine. I can't imagine how hard every day was. Thinh's story seems very believable, however it definitely feels like there's a lot he's not saying. He even says at the end, "I have many memories but I don't want to remember them." It really gives me the impression that the story of him being paralyzed wasn't even close to the whole story. It was just a tiny slice of the pie, maybe because it was the only part he was comfortable talking about. But, I don't think any of what he did tell wasn't the truth. Since he was there and it happened to him that definitely gives him more credibility. Much more than somebody who wasn't, that's for certain. He seems objective when it comes to his own story, but towards the end, things change. He begins to use "we" instead of "I", which makes me think either that there were other people he knew that are part of his story that he isn't telling us about, or he was projecting how he felt onto a collective "we" of all Vietnamese. But, either way, in the last paragraph, it's obvious that his emotions are what's talking. Since there's a lot that he doesn't want to talk about, Thinh's story does suffer from too much time passed and too much forgotten. He's buried a lot of his memories and doesn't want them to resurface.

In Part 2, the most disappointing story to read was Paul Kattenburg's. I was most infuriated by what he remembered Vice President Johnson saying at the NSC meeting. He said that, "We haven't gone this far with this whole thing to give it up now." That's something you'd expect to hear in a movie about a young teen trying to achieve her dream to become a national ice-skating champion or something, not a war. I was just blown away because I couldn't understand how anybody could say something like that when people's lives were at stake. To just not even consider doing something else...It would be like somebody accidentally hitting a pedestrian with their car, running out to see if they're okay and then because they're still alive say, "Well, I started to kill you, so I might as well finish the job." Then they pull out a gun and shoot them. But, who in the world would do that? Just because something was started doesn't mean it should be finished. Not every decision is a good one. And even actions done in the name of good can be bad. But, only Kattenburg suggested that we should stop. And everybody else was so insecure that the only things they worried about were Communism and they're own

reputation. Like Kattenburg said, they thought, “that we knew all the answers.” But, in my opinion, that’s the worst kind of attitude to have when you’re discussing something. That’s really what was so disappointing, their attitude.

As much as this story angered me, there was still good in it. The good was Kattenburg himself. Unlike everybody else in that meeting, he thought differently and offered another option. It was turned down, but I’m glad he had the guts to say it. And because he did that, there was the potential for people to change their minds. The hope you can find in this story is just that stating your opinions and considering other options is worth it, because if you don’t then nothing will ever change. And it’s good to do, even if you’re turned down like Kattenburg was. Even if he didn’t say, “Hey, how about we get out of the war?” not much would have changed, but he wouldn’t ever *know* that. He probably would’ve regretted not saying it, thinking that maybe he could’ve stopped the war from continuing if he’d just spoken up. In other words, you don’t know what’ll happen until you try it. Because of his decision to suggest moving in a completely different direction, things could have been totally different. It was possible that people could have agreed with him and things could have changed.

Daniel Hovet

ASSIGNMENT 1

PART 1

Upon reflection, the story of George Watkins had the greatest impact upon me out of all the stories in part one. The man lost his legs and his eyes in one violent instant over in Vietnam in 1968. Such horrific injuries are hard to imagine, yet this man survived, and lived many years, *decades*, after the fact. To go through such an ordeal to only be rewarded with a lifetime of near debilitation is equally horrifying to me. Never again will he walk, run, jump; never again will he be able to see the world around him, his friends, his family; he will forever be dependent on others to assist him. In the end, there isn't even someone to blame or even take vengeance on- it was a random landmine that caused the damage. Yet what strikes me the most is that the sense I get from hearing the way he tells his story, he seems remarkably upbeat, or at the very least, remarkably not downbeat. He doesn't seem to be particularly resentful; he seems, after rehashing his ordeal, more concerned about how "fancy" his manner of telling it will come across. I am inclined to say that for the purposes of the story that he has to tell, George Watkins is extremely credible; after all, one can hardly expect him to forget about losing his legs and eyes. He never seems to embellish, or to posture; he, as they say, tells it like it is (or was). His message is not a political one, and much of what he says is apparently backed up by other members of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. On a separate note, while this has not been covered yet, George Watkins was one of the many economically lower class draftees to be sent to Vietnam- all socioeconomic controversies regarding the draft aside, George Watkins probably had considerable financial difficulties as a result of his injuries.

PART 2

Of the accounts I read in part two, the one I found most disappointing was that of Paul Kattenburg. As a low level government functionary, he was invited to a top-level discussion of Vietnam policy on 31 August 1963 due to his unique position working with Vietnam, as the head of the State department's Vietnam Task Force. At this time, South Vietnam was in a state of disorder after the recent Buddhist protests and self-immolation of monk Thich Quang Duc. Uncertainty reigned; Ambassador Nolting had just been recalled, to be replaced by Henry Cabot Lodge. Upon being shocked by the ignorance and detachment from reality of the bigwigs in the room with regards to the situation in Vietnam, he made what he thought was the best suggestion: leave Vietnam. Merely making this suggestion got him de facto banned from all subsequent top-level meetings, and effectively demoted (dare I say, blacklisted?). This event represented to me the whole quagmire of the improper handling and denial of the situation in Vietnam and the ineffectuality of entrenched and outmoded officials and policymakers, who were at this point sinking over a 1.5 million US dollars a day into the war (not adjusted for inflation). Also, it should be noted that barely two months after the meeting, Ngo Dinh Diem was assassinated with the tacit approval of the U.S. government.

The uplifting aspect I took note of in part two is contained in Rufus Phillips story, wherein he details the actions and ideas of Edward Lansdale, the leader of the CIA team

in Vietnam. His attitude that the Vietnamese should not be working for the Americans, but *with* them, with the ultimate goal of working for themselves, and that the Americans needed to be mindful of what the Vietnamese truly wanted, among other things, demonstrated to me that some people seemed to have a bit of a handle on things. The situation in Vietnam was not a blackhole which no reason or strategy could penetrate; there were some things that could have been done that would have helped a great deal, but for one reason or another, weren't. Knowing that there were ways which the situation could have been improved is somewhat comforting, as it makes the situation seem a little less hopeless in retrospect.

Part 1: In Part 1 of the Patriots book the story that had the greatest impact on me was the Story of George Watkins. He was a drafted soldier, which means he had no choice but to fight. As a volunteer U.S. Army Reserve soldier I feel bad for him because it wasn't the life he chose and the Army life isn't an easy one. The way this man speaks tells me of a man with humble beginnings. He said things like "I knowed very little about Vietnam..." (p.22), "We was doing a road sweep..." (p.23), and "They tell me I hit a pressure-detonated mine..." (p.23). It gives the impression that he wasn't very educated but even so he fought for the country. George lost both his legs and eyes when a mine blew up right under him but he held no bitterness over the Vietnamese. He just saw himself and others as victims of politics gone array. This humbleness connects with me because it tells of all the other soldiers that went there and had their entire lives altered and even ended. I see George's story as very reliable, trustworthy, and believable. He was a soldier that was suppose to be in a combat engineer battalion but got detached to an infantry division as is known to happen in the U.S. Army. Soldiers are rifles to be moved around as it sees fit regardless of the extent of their training. As I mentioned George lost his legs and eyes in the war so his story is believable because he wore the remnants of the war on his sleeve. George was a man that held no grudge against the Vietnamese enemy so it can be trusted that his story doesn't hold bias and therefore he didn't alter his story to make the U.S. appear grandeur. The fact that this man was on the front lines of firefights and engaged with Vietnamese civilians gives him credibility. His blindness can also be seen as a cause to his credibility. A man that has no vision is stuck in his own head to recall the memories he can over and over again not allowing for him to forget the details.

Part 2: Of the 15 stories in Part 2, the story of Henry Prunier was the most disappointing. I was not disappointed with the speaker but more with the events. Henry was an ally of Ho Chi Minh in 1945. He was a private sent by the Office of Strategic Services to train Viet Minh in resistance of the Japanese. When he met Ho Chi Minh, Henry described him to be pretty much dying. The fact that the U.S. couldn't defeat an army led by a sickly old man is demoralizing, even if the old man is a war strategy guru. Also the fact that the U.S. trains guerrillas and then turns on them disappoints. We have seen it over and over again, recently, in the Middle East. I don't understand why we build these relationships and then tear them down instead of building on them. What is most surprising is that Ho Chi Minh sought Americas support even though he was a communist. He did not want a war between the United States and the people of Vietnam and the U.S. should of taken advantage of that. Instead backs were turned on the simple basis that the north was a communist territory. Many lives could have been spared.

The positive lesson I took from this Henrys story is that there were connections built between Ho Chi Minh and Americans before the war. It gives the impression that Ho Chi Minh was not out to kill Americans for the sake of it. He only did what we would all do for our homeland and that is to protect it at all costs. No population wants to live in servitude of another. There is also the lesson to learn from our mistakes. In the future the

U.S. could use Vietnam as example of where potential good could have come out of, instead of destruction. The U.S. could also learn the lesson to never underestimate an enemy. The U.S. was then and is now still the most formidable war power but that doesn't mean that it will always win. Wars are won with much more than firepower. The people need to be behind the cause in order to raise morale. Soldiers being sent need to know that they're there for good reason and not just as chips in a political game.

Assignment #1

The study of war is a necessary yet emotionally draining experience, especially with one that still has influence and relevance to our lives. Many of our family members fought or had friends who fought in this war, so the subject can be extremely difficult to approach. When reading *Patriots*, the story that had the most impact was of George Watkins, who tells his story so nonchalantly and so sheepishly that it became the one story that stood out among the others. What stood out most was his concern over his eyes as opposed to his legs at the time. While the graphic analogy of scrambled eggs was disturbing, it was the fact that he seemed legitimately surprised that he was more concerned about them initially. The other aspect was in the author's notes after his story was told, showing the humanistic side, how he was concerned with how he would appear in telling his story. He wasn't concerned with pity, he just didn't want to sound foolish in explaining the event. The other surprising aspect was there was no anger, there was no disdain towards the Vietnamese people, which has often been stereotyped as the case for many disabled veterans of the war.

As far as being a trusted source of the experiences of war, it is difficult to not believe Mr. Watkins and his account. The man is forced to live every day with the war, with his life altered drastically by the experience. I found it interesting that he recalled the precise date of his being drafted, as though it was the point where life forever changed for him. Those small details provided proved legitimate as far as believing his story and his objectivity, regardless of time passed.

More specifics and details on a incredibly fascinating life was what I was hoping for and did not receive while reading the interview with Vo Nguyen Giap, the military general who was the architect for the victories against the French and the U.S. In our culture, we herald the military geniuses and applaud their successes. Two hundred and fifty years later we are still talking of George Washington and his victories on the battlefield, as well as studying Robert E. Lee, Ulysses S. Grant, and George MacArthur. Even Eisenhower, who was a military superstar, was shown our great honor by being elected our leader. So when a living military icon such as Giap is interviewed, it was disappointing to get very little out of him that wasn't already known.

Because of his fame, it appeared that he was simply answering the same question that he is always asked, as opposed to really providing insight into experiences he had during his life as a revolutionist. Instead like an athlete constantly repeating, "We played a good game", he just answered what he thought the author wanted to hear about the war and its after effects. This to me was disappointing, yet not entirely surprising. For starters, being a renown military commander, I am sure that his time was limited. A translator was required, so it is possible that more detail and description was abandoned for the sake of being able to communicate freely. It is also possible that Giap only wished to discuss or answer certain questions, which could too be responsible for the dry and bland responses provided.

However, Giap does provide hope ironically enough, in his responses again in the author's notes. While he lashes out at the war and its events such as the My Lai massacre, he also states the war was a "noble sacrifice" his people made for their independence.

While this seems callous, it is more of a prideful boast of his country and their resilience. There is desire there to be a successful nation, to be culturally accepted and understood, and to be a positive part of the world. It showed the same determination that the U.S. had those many years ago when we gained our own independence, and the desire to become a great nation is one we can relate to. It more importantly showed that even the great generals of our time understand that we are a better world without war but with understanding.

Giap finishes his response by saying that Vietnam cannot be compared to the United States in certain aspects, however, their quest for independence is incredibly similar to that which we faced with our own Revolutionary War. However, this new George Washington didn't say much, left a lot of insight unspoken, and ultimately was the most disappointing of all the stories in Part II of the book.

The account that caught my attention in Part One of the Appy book was from Deirdre English. One thing that stuck with me throughout reading this was the question, "How can my country be at war and I don't know about it?" It intrigued me that she felt nobody was talking about the war in Vietnam, whether it be the government or her teachers. I understand that the information probably could be found at the time, but it isn't very hard for me to believe that the government would try to keep things quiet about Vietnam. That gives Deirdre credibility in my eyes, because the United States has been known to try to keep things hidden from the public.

From Part Two of the Appy book, I was disappointed in Rufus Phillips's story. When I read the short background introducing Rufus, I thought I was in for quite the story. I was disappointed with the speaker's storytelling ability. To me, he made everything seem a little anticlimactic, like it was just another day. He didn't go into the detail I was hoping for about the use of psychological warfare.

In the same story though, I did like how Phillips said they would help the Vietnamese with "no ulterior motive." That gave me a sense of hope in humanity in general, especially in times of war. That showed me that there can be goodness found even in the most remote places. It shows me that deep down, humans do have compassion for one another for the most part.

Jeff Moat

HST 195

Spring 2015

Week 2 Examination of Patriots

In the book, 'Patriots – The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides' by Christian Appy, there is a story recounted by a former infantryman named George Watkins. To the point upon which the assignment has been issued, this story sticks out as particularly powerful. Many other stories have, subjectively, a more important story to tell, but the plight of Watkins and how he views what happened is particularly striking. Unlike some of the military commanders or the bureaucrats or the media who's accounts have certain cultural and historical connotations, this once young and quite intact American soldier has only his very brief experience to share. During his tour in Vietnam, a landmine detonated and took his legs and his eyes. Prior to the detailing of this event, George recounts his unfamiliarity with where or what Vietnam really was. He presents himself as a form of representative Americana youth, eager to serve his country but confused as to why he was there. It is a story that is not necessarily unique, but it is nonetheless powerful. There were other accounts of soldiers and their trials and wounds during the war. Many of those were, to some extents, more grisly and violent. And by no means is the injuries and the unfortunate fate of George Watkins to be compared to the Vietnamese who were at war for decades and saw countless fellow soldiers fall to the enemy. Instead, I feel that Christian Appy included George's story because of his familiarity. His story is told with an accent in the spelling. His words are whole and the manner by which he speaks aloud is maintained in the printed page. This makes Watkins larger than life, a true person rather than a character, and most likely someone Americans could relate to when reading the book. It would be of little surprise if this feeling of familiarity was present with Vietnamese readers of some of their countrymen and women's accounts. By no means is Watkins actually a viable analogy for the American soldiers who were stationed and fought in Vietnam. But in some ways his brief story is a good counter balance to other, more pessimistic or critical stories about the war. While his experience was simple, straightforward and he bears the brunt of his misfortune well, there are plenty of accounts of soldiers who were jaded and cruel after serving long deployments and witnessing continual combat. Perhaps that is what makes the image of George Watkins, a blind man in a wheelchair feeling the grooves of the names of the dead so meaningful. That in some ways his injuries spared him that bitterness.

In Part 2 of the book, a section titled 'Beginnings', there is an account by Malcolm Browne, the famous journalist and photographer who took many images of the monk Thich Quang Duc who set himself on fire to protest the South Vietnamese government's treatment of Buddhists. Malcolm presents himself as a passive observer for the first half of his tale, explaining his expertise and familiarity with the region after his initial culture

shock. However, he drifts from this narrative after his recounting of the ritual suicide to an abrasive, critical tone whereupon he takes central position in the story. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but the positioning of himself as a person of controversy from his confrontation with John Wayne to having a conspiracy suggested by Madame Nhu is somewhat suspect. At times it seems hard to determine where Browne fit in in Vietnam. He certainly displays a type of disdain for the Viet Cong when he talks about Dam Doi (the village repeatedly overrun every year and the people slaughtered). But most of all he seems to be critical of authority figures from the South Vietnamese government to American commanders like John Paul Vann.

Later on in that same section of the book there is a tale by Sergei Khrushchev, son of former Russian Premiere Nikita Khrushchev. This tale, coming from the direct lineage of a Communist leader during the Cold War is very illuminating and more than a little inspiring. The American involvement in Vietnam is obviously well known, but the attitude towards the North Vietnamese from Moscow had been conveyed as very different from reality. American propaganda spoke of the dangers of Communism and the looming threat of Moscow and Beijing influences on south east Asia. But hearing from Sergei the true attitude is enlightening. He tells the unverified story of American and Russian naval vessels engaging off the coast of Vietnam in friendly relations and trade. This small but charming bit of peaceful interaction is almost as hope inspiring as learning the Premiere's son moved to America to become a professor at Brown University. His and other tales from the book are wonderful examples of people once on the opposite sides in history now living in relative peace.

Jessica Seiler

Assignment 1

The Vietnam War, as Christian G. Appy describes it, was “shorthand for our longest and most divisive foreign war, and is often evoked as little more than a political or media cliché, a glib reference to a controversial war that ended badly, a time of domestic turmoil, a history to be avoided in the future” (XV, *Patriots*). George Watkins, a grunt with the 196th Light Infantry Brigade, shocked me with his view on the Vietnam War. In April of 1968, Watkins stepped on a land mine and subsequently lost both legs and both eyes. While reading his story that he so elaborately painted for us, I found myself furious. I was asking myself questions like, “How is he so calm? How is he not filled with anger towards the men he fought?” After all, it was these men that ultimately laid a trap that would claim not only his legs and eyes, but his quality of life. How do you endure that and not be angry towards the ones responsible? “They’re some of the most determined people I’ve ever run into. I don’t hate them. They did what they had to do. It’s the politicians that put everybody in that place. Although I would like to get ahold of that one that set the booby trap.” [Laughs.] (pg 23, *Patriots*). As I read on, I discovered that Watkins did harbor bitterness. However, his bitterness was not aimed at the perpetrators of a single act during the war. Instead, it was aimed at the politicians and their political motives that spawned the entire war. “I don’t have much bitterness. Well, I don’t think I do. I just wish that none of it ever happened—for everybody’s sake. It was a bad political mistake. Have you been to the Wall? I was there in ’85. I guess that made me feel the worst that I had felt since I’d been home. I sat right in the middle of it, right at the “V” of it, and run my hands up a ways on it. All those names. And then we went from end to end and picked out some that got killed in our outfits. I felt them. Spelled them out even. Each letter. I sat right there and just tried to think, “Why did all these people die?” The majority were my age. Their lives and their families all messed up. What was gained from it?” (pg 25, *Patriots*). Watkins story goes well beyond his own experience; he was distraught about all the men and women who perished during the war in the name of political gain. He understands that his sacrifices were nothing compared to those that paid the ultimate sacrifice, their lives. Watkins is an effective and credible witness to the war. He is factual and doesn’t let personal factors distort his memory of the war. Though the interview was conducted well after the War, I have full trust in George Watkins’ story of his participation in the War and the irreparable physical damage it inflicted on him. His memory is in tact and he recalls even the smallest details, such as the number of men in his unit declining from ninety-three men to forty. He remembers everything there was to consciously remember about that fateful day, “Seems like I remember looking at my watch and seeing seven-thirty” (pg 23, *Patriots*). “The next thing I remember is running my hand down to my leg and feeling with my fingers. I just said, “It’s gone” (pg 24, *Patriots*).

Throughout the stories I read in the book, *Patriots*, I find myself getting mad at different scenarios within different stories told by people involved in the war. There is one in particular that really stood out to me. John Singlaub states, “We had guys whose morale was so damaged as a result of returning to the States after their first tour that they volunteered to come back. They could simply not stand to read the paper or watch the

television” (pg 94, Patriots). How could we, as a country, do this to the people who were serving our country for us? It speaks to the fact that everyone at home only knew what the press told us, which was that we were losing. “The media was so biased. All of the great work American advisers were doing out in the countryside to benefit these people—agricultural work, building bridges, digging wells—all that was totally ignored” (pg 93, Patriots). They never spoke about the good that our soldiers were doing. Soldiers returned and were looked down upon. These soldiers who fought on a war in which was started by politicians, weren’t treated as the heroes in which they were.

As I continued to read John Singlaub’s story, I found compassion in his actions on an island he was working at, calling them the “Sacred Sword of the Patriot League”. The league formed a camp they considered a “Liberated Zone.” Yes, the people held on the island were considered “prisoners” although the mission of the League was to help these “prisoners” heal and send them back to the north. “All the personnel on the island were South Vietnamese who spoke with a Northern dialect. We would keep the captives for at least a month and take care of all their physical problems. Usually they were suffering from malnutrition or they had skin diseases, malaria, or worms. We’d clean them up and fatten them up and make them healthy again [...] Eventually, we sent them all back with a generous gift package—things we knew were in short supply up north; simple things like fishhooks, sewing supplies, and medicine” (pg 91, Patriots). This gave me a sense of happiness. People went to fight for their countries, yet the league took care of everyone despite that they were fighting for the opposite side as the “prisoners” they took care of. Granted, this was a way of turning people against the Communist party, but the league was helping people survive regardless of the side that they were affiliated with bringing a sense of happiness to me.

John Goodman

Joe Escobar

April 9th, 2015

Assignment 1

Part 1:

The story that stuck in my mind the most would have to be the one about Roger Donlon. He was sent to Vietnam to train vietnamese around their local area. So that they could defend themselves if they needed to. The reason it stuck in my head is because I remember him talking about how a lot of the vietnamese soldiers were actually viet minh and they were able to infiltrate the south army like that and trick people was incredible. Yes, they didn't look different, probably didn't act much different, but to have the intelligence to do that and then be able to successfully do is pretty incredible. Also, when he is talking about the vietnamese interpreter, who decided to sprint across the battlefield to get to his mortar pit. "a 57-millimeter round caught him right at the knees and took his legs off. he just kept running on the stumps." After reading that I read it out loud to my roommate who was sitting in the next room because I pictured it so vividly I felt compelled to share what I just read. Another part of the story right after mentioning this he also mentions the mortar firing he instructed. and he said that some mortars would go up 1000 feet and come down 25 yards within where there pits where. Reading this personal account actually freaked me out, I could just picture in my mind what it would look like and then thought "multiple that by 10." As far as his credibility, this man has enough for everyone in the book. He was the first American in the Vietnam war to get the medal of honor, he worked in one of the most dangerous areas of vietnam in the northern south, on the border. He also lead one of the greatest one man army's ever recorded saving some of his teammates life's, while systematically ordering mortar hits and fighting off a demolition.

Part 2:

The most disappointing story I read in the second part of the book had to of been Ngo Vinh Long. Right off the bat you get hit with gruesome images of dead bodies around the river and floating down the rivers. Then it transitions into talking about his dad and how he had his doubts with America, but Ngo naively believed that the U.S was their for the right ideals, and they were trying to help the vietnamese people. On page 56 he quotes himself saying, " well, maybe, but if they have good, detailed maps then they are not going to bomb or shell innocent civilians, so whats wrong with that?" This disappoints me because it shows the deception and corruption our government not only imposed on

foreign countries but also the Americans. He then goes on to talk about the starving people he saw in the early 60's and how the U.S deliberately burned rice crops so they couldn't grow back, and they created agrovilles. At that moment he says his views changed greatly and pronounced that they needed to change their policies or they would only create more communists. He then talks about his disgusts and eventual drop out of the map making process and advocated against the americans being in Vietnam and the war in general.

One positive lesson I have taken out of reading these short stories is that a war like this will never happen. The absolute destruction of villages, and no disregard to human life. The way this war got magnified, I think opened a lot of peoples eyes up about war in general, and how disturbing it can be. It definitely helped the movement of basic human rights, even outside of your own society, the care for humans across the world. History is made so that we don't repeat it and this is one of those things we won't repeat.

Joseph Foley

History of the Vietnam War

Assignment 1

Professor Escobar

Sacrifices of War

Christian G. Appy's oral history of the Vietnam War, *Patriots*, is a hard book to put down. First-hand accounts from both sides of the war provide a unique perspective not found in the average western history book. It is important to remember that first-person accounts are not absolute fact. If ten people witness a car accident, you will hear ten very different versions of the same accident. Each account is only one perspective of a complicated conflict that stretched over multiple decades.

The war in Vietnam understandably brought out extreme viewpoints from all sides, and still does. Our job as historians is to sift through the countless perspectives and formulate a bi partisan and factual account. We have to compare as many sources as possible in order to formulate a balanced assessment. The first portion of *Patriots* is a series of brief interviews with soldiers from both sides of the war. The chapter includes accounts from high-ranking U.S. and North Vietnamese officers, as well as soldiers on the frontlines. It would be impossible for me to select the most interesting account because each interview is so personal and emotional. The interview with George Watkins, an aging and plainspoken American Veteran who lost his legs and sight in Vietnam really resonated with me.

Watkins was drafted in 1967 and was trained as a combat engineer. Unfortunately for Watkins, upon arriving in Vietnam his responsibilities changed. He, like thousands of other Americans was re-assigned to the infantry; just another grunt. His duties included manning an M-60 machine gun with only minutes of training. His initiation to the war was agonizing, to say the least. Constant patrols, unfamiliar terrain, no sleep and constant carnage.

He was amazed by the local peoples, resiliency. The Americans would absolutely decimate entire areas from the air, and the next day the Vietnamese would be rebuilding that very same village. He realized that the North Vietnamese were not going to give up. Watkins said, "They had to be some good people to withstand all that. They come right back to nothing and start all over... They's some of the most determined people I've ever run into. I don't hate them. They did what they had to. It's the politicians that put everyone in that place." For the villagers, this was their home, in fact, most of them had nothing else. No matter what the outcome, they were not leaving. Many American Soldiers did not understand that Vietnamese history is filled with foreign invaders

embattling and imprisoning the locals. The Northern Vietnamese soldiers had the unique benefit of centuries of jungle and guerilla war tactics, passed from one generation to another.

Watkins lost both of his legs and vision when he stepped on a booby trap while patrolling with the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. His interview captured his vulnerability and honesty. He has every reason to be bitter, yet his account of his injuries was informative and matter of fact. While explaining his realization of the extent of his injuries, Watkins says, "I'll tell you what's surprising. I didn't think about my legs. Legs were a second thought. That's all I can say. All my thoughts and worries were on my eyes." Despite being instantly blinded, George held out hope for several days that his vision would return. I can't imagine the incomprehensible demoralization that he must have been feeling.

Watkins doubts in regard to the motivation and direction of the Vietnam War only grew after returning home, an understandable stance, especially considering his personal sacrifices. When he described his only visit to the Vietnam Memorial, Watkins said, "I sat right there and just tried to think, "(Why did all these people die?)" The majority were my age. Their lives and their families all messed up. What was gained from it?" These questions have been asked by many of those involved with the Vietnam War. Watkins inquiries reflect the thoughts of many Vietnam Veterans.

There are plenty of interviews with high-ranking officials from both sides of the war, but those who viewed the war from the lowest-ranking positions offer a perspective that only they could tell. The death toll of foot soldiers and locals become statistics for those pulling strings from above. Watkins perspective has obviously been influenced by his personal losses. Despite some personal experiences that all singular perspectives carry, George Watkins gives a captivating account of what it was like to be a green American infantrymen during the Vietnam War.

Part two of Appy's book offers lengthier interviews. I can't say I have been disappointed with any of the perspectives, although many of the interviews are disheartening and rather depressing. An overwhelming majority of the interviewees from both sides question the tactics and motives of the war, while painting a harsh wartime reality.

Luyen Nguyen's story was particularly sad and frustrating. As the war progressed, many of the U.S. military tactics utilized in Vietnam were doomed for failure before launch. Military mistakes are one thing, but sacrificing human lives for an inevitable failure is beyond discouraging.

Nguyen was part of the American CIA program that dropped small teams of South Vietnamese soldiers into the north. Though it showed no signs of success, the program ran for nearly a decade in the, 60s. Nguyen complained of the projects poor training, motivation, discipline and preparation for the non-combat ready South Vietnamese commando groups. Many of those recruited joined for the higher pay and planned to desert before they even hit enemy territory, which Nguyen called, "A planned Failure."

Nguyen was dropped behind enemy lines in Northern Vietnamese territory as the commander of a small-team of inexperienced South Vietnamese soldiers. Even he was unsure of the specific details of their mission. Nguyen said, "They had no experience of combat. When they didn't see the enemy they thought they were completely safe... And when they knew the enemy was close, they lost their spirit and became passive. It's like they lost their souls." Despite successfully hiding for multiple weeks, Nguyen's team was captured by the North Vietnamese Army.

Soldiers held Nguyen in North Vietnam for 21 years. He spent a jaw-dropping decade in solitary confinement. After several months in prison, his family was notified that he was dead. He never sent word to his children and wife that he was still alive because he did not want them to relive the tragic experience. His wife even remarried and had another child after years of financial struggle. Nguyen said, "I didn't blame her for remarrying, but it was a very hard blow. You can't imagine what I had to suffer in my heart." He was remarkably candid in his interview while explaining some unimaginable circumstances. He mentioned that he had still not shared with his family certain specifics of his imprisonment. Despite suffering life-altering hardships, he wanted to protect his family from any further pain.

Nguyen's first decade in camp was a living hell. He told Abby that, "During the first eleven years in prison they kept me in a dark cell and shackled me all the time. I had to lie down on a plank. There was a steel bar at the end of the plank and I had to put my ankles on top of the bar. They used a shackle to lock my feet above the bar." Throughout his prison stay, Nguyen refused to repent to the North Vietnamese troops. Hence, he spent over two decades, as a prisoner of war. Near the end of the interview, he mentioned, "When I left home in 1966 my eldest son was ten years old and when I returned home he introduced me to his son, my eleven-year-old grandson."

Nguyen's incredibly tragic story also had an equally miraculous ending. Nguyen reunited with his wife and children. He moved to the United States with his wife in 1990. At the time of the interview, he had completed a Master's Degree and started work as a student advisor. Nguyen's perspective is heavily influenced by the trauma he endured in the war, but he seemed to have found a way to process his pain. His story is a testament to the sheer power of the human will. A powerful and unique account from a non-american participant who fought against communism.

The Vietnam conflict is much deeper than communism versus capitalism. There were several world powers involved, all with separate motivations and concerns and independent regions of Indo-China struggling for their own nationalistic goals. Whether it was a good idea for U.S to be there or not, most agree that U.S. planning ran afoul. Despite many Northern Vietnamese being proud of their resilience and accomplishments, it is obvious that they suffered enormous casualties. However you evaluate this war, it had a dramatic impact on both cultures.

Source cited:

Out of the stories in part one of the Patriot's book, the one that stood out to me the most to me was that of Roger Donlon. It caught my attention in several different aspects. Before I started this class I viewed Vietnam as I do any other war, a cohesive, well planned out and executed endeavor. The stories I have read thus far, specifically that of Roger Donlon, have proven my view to be ignorant. Donlons passage shows how unorganized the effort was, and how undirected the ground forces were. I re-read the lines that explained how a third of the outer perimeter forces were Vietcong sympathizers and that their first line of business was to slit the throat of the man next to them, effectively reducing their first line of defense by two thirds. The question that came to mind was "how can you expect to win a war you conduct in such a way?" I have always failed to understand why we didn't "win" the Vietnam War in the same American tradition we have handled other conflicts in the past.

As far as the fortitude of Donlons credibility, I believe when a person experiences such horrors as the ones that are depicted in this story, that those memories are forever ingrained in the person that has experienced them. Trying to forget such a thing, would be like trying to forget your name, you simply can't, it has been a part of you for too long. I do not believe that Roger Donlon would stand to gain anything from lying in his reliving of these experiences, and if he can't forget them and stands no gain from lying about them, then I believe his credibility and integrity therein are intact. Donlons passage has shed led on my quandary and, I believe, has set me down the right path of questions to form my own educated opinions about Vietnam by the conclusion of this course.

Out of the stories in part two I was most disappointed with that of Daniel Redmond. His account left a bitter taste in my mouth. He was a part of operation "passage to freedom" in which the American military aided over a million Vietnamese catholic refugees from North Vietnam to South Vietnam. Although the cause seems noble at the surface, it was nothing more than propaganda, an American attempt to pander to the masses back home. Moving so many people so far from home under the guise of religious pilgrimage is a disappointment in my book to say the least. Redmond doesn't go on to tell what happens to the displaced refugees in the end so to speak, but I can only imagine the chaos that so many people called life for so many years to follow the conflict.

To the contrary though, I found great enjoyment in the passage from Richard Olson. The first thing that jumped out at me about this passage was in the description of Olson as "bubbling over with enthusiasm", it gave me this immediate sense of hope, even though I knew his stories topic was that of great tragedy. As I finished the text, what I wound up taking away from it was not the recounting of the actual events, but about the men that he remembered working with and how he almost romanticized the culture of the south, which gave the country, cause, and men involved a certain personable quality that made me hope and wish for a successful end in the face of certain defeat.

In closing I hope that the passages I have chosen to pull from, and the thoughts I have conveyed on those passages have succeeding in conveying my thoughts and feeling on the first two parts of the Patriot book, both to the negative and the positive.

“Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides” showcased wartime heroes’ stories and their outlook on the war. In the first part of the book, many of the stories led to the same question: Was the war worth dying for? George Watkin’s narrative gives a fairly straightforward reply. He had served in the 196th Light Infantry Brigade and lost his legs and eyesight from a landmine (Appy 21). His life had been forever changed by the aftereffects of the war. Instead of being resentful, his point of view was simply one of questioning. After all he had suffered he was able to say, “I don’t hate them” (23). In fact, he would go further to place blame on the government instead of the people, “It’s the politicians that put everybody in that place. Although I would like to get ahold of that one that set the booby trap” (23). Even though this viewpoint seemed somewhat biased, Watkin’s perspective was both believable and trustworthy because of his first-hand encounter with war and his ability to lightheartedly reflect on the war. Taking something as serious as losing his legs and eyesight and posing it in a joking manner demonstrated his distance from the situation. Although time had passed, he was able to calmly recall with great detail the incidents of combat. As he described his unit, he remembered exact numbers and dates: “Our worst time was about the entire month of December 1967...we went from ninety-three men down to forty” (22). Recalling specific dates and times further supports his story. Many would see his service in the war as being heroic. Watkin humbly and respectfully addressed the lives of those who died during the war: “All those names...I felt them...‘Why did all these people die?’ The majority were my age. Their lives and families all messed up. What was gained from it?” (25). Still questioning the war, Watkin points out that it is acceptable to not have all of the answers.

Although most war accounts were inspirational and focused on being fairly unbiased, Vo Nguyen Giap had a strong prejudice which influenced the way he viewed war. Giap led an anti-colonial army against the French. He participated in the North Vietnam military. Speaking in absolutes and generalizations about the French and Americans made his ideas less credible. “The Americans inflicted insane atrocities” (42). Although many Vietnamese died, it cannot be ignored that many lives were lost on both sides of the war. His outlook was flawed with disrespect and personal bias. When describing the catalysts of the war, he placed blame solely on those in leadership. “History is not made with “ifs” but if American leaders had been wiser I think we could have been spared the war.” (42) It is true that the government’s decisions played a large role in the course of the war, but this long war was two-sided and both parties were involved in starting and continuing the war. Evidence of the horrific treatment of both sides of the war was displayed in Daniel Redmond’s recollection of Operation Passage to Freedom where Vietnamese were moved from their homes to new sites (47). In Redmond’s case, he was still biased because he had a personal connection with the people. However, he accurately conveyed the situation of the people with a compassionate spirit. “The people were terrified, absolutely terrified. Your heart just broke when you saw them” (48). The harsh treatment of the people was unnecessary in Redmond’s eyes and he found himself being “pissed off at the French as [he] was at the Viet Minh” (48). The circumstances Redmond found himself in were horrific and unjust. His involvement allowed others to see people on both sides as being human.

Even though the war was a time of death and sorrow, it taught both sides the value of life. Watkins may not have had his eyesight or legs, but he had snapshots of

memories of people. He remembered the importance of the lives he was protecting. “I don’t have much bitterness. Well, I don’t think I do. I just wish that none of it ever happened--for everybody’s sake” (24). People were dying on both sides of the fight. Taking into account that war is personal, Redmond appreciated the significance of people on both sides. He understood what it meant to enforce commands from leadership in which he did not agree. Even though all accounts were biased towards their point of view, they were all able to give a primary source for the battlefield. Although people like Giap were prejudiced towards their own cause, he pointed out the weaknesses of American government and how there needed to be more consideration in the actions taken before war. It is important to point out the fallacies in both forms of leadership. As a result of the war, leadership was questioned and lives were seen from a new perspective.

Part 1

Ta Quang Thinh had the greatest impact on me and it caught my attention when he talked about how he was flat on his back in a hammock being carried all the way to the north. It made me think about how crazy that would be, even taking out the fact that war was occurring around them and he was being carried by two men in a hammock throughout Vietnam. If you think about what he would be thinking well going through this, is just mind blowing. All the stories I read in this part so far seemed one hundred percent truthful, this whole book is about stories of war and I don't understand why they wouldn't be able to be truthful. A great example of this is the ending of his story, when he's talking about how we doesn't want to remember it, and the fact that he doesn't like war. Well being that I said the story seemed one hundred percent believable, then I would say it has a lot of credibility. I think he gives the reader details and facts about what happened, I do think more could have been told about what happened welling staying in the South for four years. But that's really the only area I found that I would have liked to know just a little more information about.

Part 2: Disappointed

I honestly enjoyed all the stories, however since I have to choose one. Im going to say Paul Kattenburg because I think he could have shared more or wrote more on certain points. His story that he shared was really interesting, however I think since it was an event that wasnt "crazy" in a way that would check the readers attention, compared to the other shorter stories that really grabbed my attention. So I was disappointed in the length, I wanted more details and facts, I wanted more.

Part 2: Hope?

Well honestly I think a lot of the people were giving false hope, and not true enough facts. However I think a lot of people had pride and faith in their country and wanted to see it succeed no matter what side north or south. I found this throughout part 2, mostly in the stories about citizens living in Vietnam, and wanted to help their country in some way. However I do think a lot of the people involved Vietnam citizens, American soldiers, etc. were not told everything or the truth so finding hope in lies would be a little difficult.

Marcus Farset

HST 195

Writing Assignment 1

In the Patriots book the story called “All my ancestors are buried here” from Phan Xuan Sinh on page 25 really caught my attention by first, what happened to the fishermen. Second, how the area where the elderly people lived was just a zone to fire upon anything that moved. Third, what they did to the people’s home, and fourth that the people came back despite how dangerous it was. The “intelligence” was not very reliable in this instance, saying a whole company of Viet Cong would be arriving in boats, when really it was a group of innocent fishermen, women, and children who were fired upon by soldiers, killing twenty-five of them. The people should have been positively identified before it was assumed that they were the enemy. Phan said there were free fire zones where they would shell indiscriminately at night. This just reinforces the idea of the fishermen story because they were just assuming that the enemy was in the area, when really it could have been a bunch of innocent people. The fact that they were doing it during the night made it worse because they couldn't even see. When they flew over the old people’s home, they stopped, took the people and burned their house down. Sure, they were trying to help, but that just didn't seem right. Later on they flew over the same area and there was a new home built in same spot. When they stopped, the man said “all my ancestors are buried here and this is our land. We’re not going to leave.” That statement was very powerful because it showed how dedicated these people were to their land, and no matter how dangerous it was, they were not going to leave their family who was buried there. This sparked something inside of me. Phan Xuan Sinh seemed to be very believable and reliable in the story he told. He was right there witnessing all of these things. No matter how much time went by, the sad and heart touching experiences, would stay fresh in his mind they just happened yesterday. One more thing that I noticed towards the end of the story was when they killed a man who carried mail, and Phan read one of the letters that showed how much the North hated the South even though the South did not have very strong feeling for the war. This illustrates how the communist led North used its power and propaganda to almost brainwash their people to have some kind of hatred for the South, when on the other hand the free South who could make their own choices had really no feeling for the war, they were just there because they had been drafted.

In part two, the first disappointing story I came across was “If they're making maps, they're preparing for war” from Ngo Vinh Long on page 54. In the middle of his story he began to describe the agrovilles or strategic hamlets. In my mind, these hamlets relate to the concentration camps of Hitler’s time. The way took the people away from their crops, which are their lives, and burn them so they cannot be used again. Also how two-hundred starved to death within a month. He says the people smelled horrible, had flaky skin, and crinkled hair. They were so neglected, this act of the hamlets was so inhumane and wrong. The doctors came and said it was a sickness from heaven, not starvation, and just

left.

The second story was “Boy, you speak just like an American.” from Chester Cooper. The first thing I found disappointing was when he said most of Kennedy’s team couldn’t even find Vietnam on a map. He also said their problem was they didn’t know that they didn’t know anything. This is so disappointing because they were spending \$1.5 million a day on the war according to video two, and sacrificing many American lives on something they had no clue about. Another point is when he said McNamara wanted to fly in a tanker to show that he could rough it. It is a joke that these big officials have to fake things so they can look bigger, like when they tell the American people that the war was going great when really they were losing, just so they didn’t take a hit to their reputation.

The positive thing I saw is from the above story from Ngo Vinh Long when he and his team refused to move on from the hamlet they visited because of the way the people were being treated. They stayed, no matter their orders, to make rice and to try to get the people who suffered from malnutrition back to health. They achieved this after about three weeks. The lesson I learned from this is that even in the worst times during this war the good side of people still shined through all of the dark.

The Vietnam War is widely regarded as one of the darkest military conflicts in American history. Over 58,000 United States service-members lost their lives fighting in the tunnels, dense jungles, and cities of Vietnam. It is easy to say that, such a horrific war, can show nothing but darkness; the worst aspects of humanity. However, one light shines through that darkness, the love that those men had for one another. As such, the trials that those men faced, brought out just what humans are truly capable of under the extreme pressures of war. One such instance was that of Army Special Forces soldier Roger Donlon who disregarded all personal safety, and continued to lead as well as to support his fellow soldiers with weapons, ammunition, and even medical aid. Captain Donlon even refused treatment for his own wounds in order to continue aiding his men. Such an act is not only incredibly brave, it shows an indisputable sense of heroism in the face of danger. Donlon's story showed not only his personal emotional investment in the operation, but his own humanity, which at times, even allows the reader to get a sense of just how he felt about the Vietnamese soldiers he fought alongside. He admits to the American soldiers at times being manipulated by the Vietnamese people, and spoke on the lack of military intelligence that his men regularly faced.

However, this war did have its truly dark moments. Atrocities were committed, as well as experienced by, both sides. Malcolm Browne recounts his experiences witnessing the aftermath of a slaughtered village. He describes the decomposing bodies, littering the village's streets. He also addresses his knowledge of the torture methods employed by the Vietnamese, one of which was a severe electro shock to the victim's genitals. You watch Mr. Browne as a journalist shift his perspective on the war from a sort of, excitement, to truly seeing the gravity of what was taking place in Vietnam. Mr. Browne even witnesses a Monk immolate himself in the streets of Saigon. An act of protest that is extremely disturbing. This not only contributed to his personal revelation on the state of Vietnam, but also, gave Americans a wake-up call to just what was truly happening in a country that seemed worlds away. What was the most frustrating about this situation, was not merely the act of immolation, but how Browne responded to the act. He didn't attempt to stop it, he didn't even question it; he merely took photographs of Mr. Thich Quang Duc as he slowly burned to death in the street.

Events such as these make it hard to see any good that has come from the war. It makes one question whether or not there was any solace to be found in the country of Vietnam, as it was ravaged by the campaigns of both the Americans and the Vietnamese. The only act of love that seemed to prevail in the Vietnam War was that of the men fighting alongside one another. Luyen Nguyen described the operations that American Army Special Forces soldiers recruited, and trained, South Vietnamese Commandos would be sent on as what can't be called anything else but literal suicide missions. This showed not only a deep disregard for the lives of the Vietnamese commandos by the American Special Forces who trained them. He states that although the commando operations were a complete, and utter failure; the Americans continued to send the men out into enemy territory from which none of them would ever return. This is an extreme waste of human resources that would be employed for seven years. Why would such an ineffective, and wasteful strategy continue to be employed? It seems almost as if it were designed to exploit the very soldiers whom the Americans were supposed to be fighting alongside!

The Vietnam War, from the perspectives presented, seemed to be nothing more than costly in human life. It's truly difficult to find a true source of light amidst the darkness of the war. The cost of human life is reflected on both sides of the fight, both the American forces, and the Vietnamese suffered heavy losses over the course of the almost twenty years of warfare. The casualties of Vietnam are still being discovered to this day! For all that took place in that country, the only consistently prevailing light was the love that the men fighting side by side exhibited for one another, being willing to lay down their lives in the jungles for one another.

Matthew Maffioli

Assignment one

George Watkins story caught me immediately due to how graphic it is. When he says they “cleaned out every living thing in that valley it really creates a clear portrait about what was actually happening in that war. What Americans at home had no idea about. The devastation and how desensitized people fighting in it became. I think he is extremely reliable; he would have no reason to lie about how they slaughtered “four or five hundred people and animals.” I think it’s factual. He is telling it exactly how he remembers it. When he goes into detail about how he felt about losing his eyes and his legs. Describing them as “scrambled eggs” he is remembering everything about it. Like it was yesterday. He described down to the time he stepped on the mine. There is no subjectivity here. It’s exactly what he remembers.

Le Lieu Browne was the most disappointing. Only in that all the other ones shared a more interesting viewpoint for me. I can see how hers would be included as it was about a civilian child during the war. I however didn’t find it interesting. When Richard Olsen Described the plane he had to fly and keeping the morale of the troops up that was engaging. When Malcolm Browne described dressing up in tuxes and going to black tie dinners that was interesting because it’s a side I had not known about.

I think Rufus Philips one was the one that had the most “hope” Dulles told him to save them. I feel like he was really trying. Throughout his story he talks about helping them, and how mad he felt for them. He helped them build confidence after the French took it away.

The greatest story that impacted my thought process was that of Bernard Trainor. The background of Trainor is that he was a general of the United States marine-corps who served two tours in the Vietnam War as a colonel of the 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment. The story given by him gives perspective of a frontline soldier with first-hand experience of orders given through the hierarchy of the military. With his history in the military, his story is for the most part reliable. His views on what happened were definitely subjective towards a one sided view. First signs of subjectivity can be seen when he said, “We viewed Communism as a monolithic dragon which controlled all of the Eurasian landmass.”(4 patriots) This view was most likely embodied by a majority of most soldiers at the time. Trainor goes on to talk about some of the duties that he underwent to stay in the graces of his superiors. The impact of the things he had to do could be seen as extreme. Trainor explained that because of the intelligence that was given to him he led a “search and destroy mission” that resulted in the invasion of a hospital in search of a front posed for military rest and recuperation center of the North Vietnamese soldiers. Through blind following of orders, innocent lives were taken by the hands of soldiers. Americans went into the Vietnam with the idea that they were “...not out here fighting a war; we’re out here campaigning.”(6 patriots) It was meant by this that the objective was to peacefully win the hearts of the people that they were there to protect. Things changed when General William C. Westmoreland, the commander of U.S forces from 1964-1968, introduced his search and destroy method of warfare which in turn did the exact opposite of what the implied objective was. In the 1st episode of the dvd series it told the side of a Vietnamese villager saying that, “wherever the Americans went they killed and burned everything down,” giving some proof that the methods imposed by General Westmoreland strayed from the initial plans and was a negative impact toward the view of the soldiers. This was a disappointment to know that the general of our military orders the destruction of innocent’s homes and land by completely disregarding the guidelines given to him and led American forces to portray an image of murder and desolation.

The story told by Henry Prunier gave way to frustration and disappointment. The quote in the beginning “these were not ragtag farmers”(38 patriots), showed the type of mentality America went into this war with. After coming off of the front of World War II America had this attitude that they could walk into Vietnam and just win this war quickly. Fortunately this wasn’t the thought process for all soldiers. Prunier says, “these were not ragtag farmers, and it would be ridiculous to assume that our training and weapons had anything to do with their eventual victories over the French and then the United States,”(39 patriots) giving perspective that not all the Americans had the same mindset. Prunier goes on to explain his understanding of the patriotism of the Vietnamese and that because they were fighting for their homeland that this war would not end swiftly and with ease. To more disappointment he explains that because of his view of the Vietnamese, his daughters were scrutinized and told by fellow classmates, “Oh, your father’s a Communist.”(41 patriots)

Some clear principles can be drawn from the same story told by Prunier. One basic lesson could be that you should never judge someone on the way they look by when Prunier’s comment was stated about Ho Chi Minh, “he just didn’t seem like the military

type.”(40 patriots) A lesson can also be drawn from the way the classmates treated Prunier’s three daughters. The idea that looking down on someone because of someone’s association with another’s political views. It showed that there was a stigma towards the views on the war. From how people agree with media in today’s world it shows that the way things are portrayed are not always what they seem and that one should draw their own opinions and not simply agree with the views told to them. Having your own mind could be a crucial lesson to learn from Prunier’s story.

Part 1

The story that stood out to me the most in part one was by Roger Donlon. His account of the attack on the base he was stationed at allowed myself to envision the scenario vividly. It was interesting to think that these Americans were standing so close to their own enemies that would soon turn on them. As Donlon talked about the attack, he gives details about what went on during those hours and the misery and horrific sights they saw. What really struck me about his story was his feelings toward the American Flag “Not seeing it made us all a little more lonely” (13). That statement was touching and gave great insight to the pain that these soldiers suffered.

A person with the firsthand experience is more credible than a story you read about the situation. When a story is passed on from person to person, errors are generally made. I feel like a person who was there and witnessed such events will never forget the events that played out, giving it a more objective feel. However, that being said, situations like the one Donlon encountered are often blown out of proportion and can seem subjective. The one part of the story that I felt was more subjective was when he told about George Tuan’s injuries; “Partway there 57-millimeter round caught him right at the knees and took his legs off. He just kept running on the stumps” (14). Although it’s not impossible, the situation seems unlikely.

Part 2

I was disappointed in the voice of Daniel Redmond. His tone throughout the article is poor and almost hard. He is direct and to the point and on the verge of being downright rude. The tone of the article gives off an arrogance for Redmond and makes him seem better than those around him. He puts down the book, *Deliver us from Evil*, seeming cocky as if there was nothing good in it. Redmond talks of sharing Dooley’s beliefs but feels that the book exaggerates and incorrectly depicts the outcomes in Vietnam. While this may be true, he calls the book “a piece of shit” and disregards any truth that may be in the pages. In no way am I condoning the acts on either side, but the arrogant attitude doesn’t give his work much credibility.

Vo Nguyen Giap’s response to winning the war was a positive look on something so negative. When asked about how the Vietnamese people won, he merely said that they would rather die than live in slavery. Showing such allegiance to your country is a very honorable act. This article was enlightening in that regard. Standing for your belief of freedom is an important stance to take and Giap’s take on the war is not of tragedy but of nobility. The potential for good rings true in the account that Vietnamese people wanted their freedom, not a war with America.

Paul Turner

April 12, 2015

Assignment #1

Part 1

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Roger Donlon told a thrilling story. Reading how a Green Beret captain earned the first Medal of Honor in the Vietnam War was really interesting. Not only was Donlon's story action packed, but it provided insight on many things that I was unaware of. I did not know that "small teams of Americans worked with much larger South Vietnamese military units" and Nung mercenaries (Appy, p.12). Donlon's story evoked imagery in my head which made it more impactful. This sentence stood out to me: "The first thing each of the traitors did when the attack started—and they knew it was coming—was to slit the throat or break the neck of the person next to them" (Appy, p. 14). That sentence grabbed my attention and stuck in my mind. It would be horrifying to witness that happen in real life. It is quite amazing what Commander Donlon did throughout the five hour battle at the Nam Dong camp. Donlon's story was my favorite from part one of the book.

Roger Donlon certainly has a position of credibility after serving first hand in the Vietnam War and receiving a Medal of Honor. However, anyone who went through war, especially something as intense as Donlon, can be a questionable source of information. Donlon received some serious injuries throughout the battle. At one point Donlon was unconscious after being knocked back by a mortar; other soldiers thought he was a dead body. It's incredible how Donlon healed without any long term issues. In this case, Donlon's Medal of Honor is a token that helps support his story. His heroic acts were noted in his Medal of Honor citation. Without the military honor to back it up, many people would be question the truth of Donlon's story just because it hard to believe a human can do such things. Compared to other stories within Appy's collection, Donlon told his story with a great sense of clarity and level-headedness. For the most part, the Green Beret's story seems factual.

Part 2

The story that Henry Pruner told is very disappointing. There are a few reasons behind my opinion. Pruner talked about how he trained Viet Minh soldiers and met Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap. Pruner stated how the Viet Minh soldiers were an intelligent, elite group that were "hand-picked from all over Vietnam" (Appy, p. 10). The fact that American's were training Viet Minh soldiers who they would later be opposing is ironic and disappointing. The Americans even provided Ho Chi Minh with "possibly life-saving quinine and sulfa drugs when he was gravely ill with malaria" (Herring, p. 11). Pruner portrays the Viet Minh group, Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap as decent human beings; it is a shame that things took a turn for the worst. Ho Chi Minh treated the Americans nicely and even gave them gifts in recognition of their help. Although it was apparent that Ho was using the American figures as a way to publicize and legitimize the Viet Minh, he never had any conflicts with them at the time. Ho once stated, "Yes, I'm a Communist, but there's no reason why we can't be friends, why we can't live together" (Appy, p. 40). Now, after a long and brutal war, I think everyone wishes it could have played out differently.

Ngo Vinh Long told a refreshing story. He was a very smart, home-schooled kid that made maps in Southern Vietnam for American use. His intelligent and non-violent approach on life displayed a rare sense of goodwill during war-time. Long states that one day instead of moving on with his map-making team he stayed in a village to help feed the starving people. No one really cared about the starving villagers. Even

doctors looked the other when. When no one else would, Long cared for his fellow Vietnamese. Long resigned from the map making job after the Diem government began publicly executing communists and placing their decapitated heads on stakes for all to see. This made me realize that no matter what you must do what feels right, even if that means going against your own government. Long exemplifies that even during nasty wars there are people who still have compassion for others.

References

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

Herring, George C. *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*. Fifth ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2014. Print.

Part 1

The account by Roger Donlon, entitled “War Heroes”, had the most impact on me because his willingness to put others above himself is very admirable. Donlon was commander at a Special Forces Camp in Vietnam. His camp was attacked by the Vietnamese and it turned out men on the outer perimeter of his camp were traitors and turned towards the camp to help attack. Donlon called for back-up but none showed up. Donlon moved all over his camp, while being attacked, and helped all of his men to defend the camp. One specific man he tried to save, Pop Alamo, was wounded. Donlon tried to drag him out of the mortar pit when a mortar went off and blasted them back into the pit. Alamo died and Donlon was severely wounded. He risked his life to save that man, and many others as well. He is a true hero. His total disregard for his own life in an attempt to help others is very admirable. His story seems very real and the details given in the story seem to suggest that it is not fictionalized. Donlon recounted the man he attempted to save, giving a background and a clear description of the man. He recounts feeling a love for his teammates that is indescribable to keep him going. The medal and recognition he received, further backs up his authenticity. “The casualties of war go far beyond the immediate battlefield” (Patriots, 15). This quote shows his ability to look past the combat zone, and look back home and see the impact that the war was having in the United States. The men that were lost had families and loved ones back home that were deeply affected as well. Donlon talks about being in Vietnam to “advise and assist” (15). This only adds to his objectivity. He was helping the Vietnamese people develop pride and loyalty to their country and to stand up for what’s wrong. That is what his camp was based around to not only train the Vietnamese but to help them too. He was not looking at his mission as solely a way to help the United States, he was looking at all aspects of his training and abilities and using them to help both sides.

Part 2

Daniel Redmond’s account of moving the Vietnamese refugees was very disappointing and sad to me. These people came from little villages. They had never left these villages before. They were very unclean people, who had never had access to bathrooms. The French decided they needed to be moved out of their villages and moved south. The French had decided that the people in the villages needed to be saved from the Viet Minh and the communists. However, the villagers did not want to leave. They were being forced by the French because the French thought they knew better. The French, according to Redmond, were forcing the Vietnamese refugees onto the boats as if they were cattle. They were also sparing them down with pesticides. It is frustrating that one group of people could decide to evacuate another group of people from their homes in order to ‘save them’.

Vo Nguyen Giap provided an interesting and positive account. He talked about the Vietnamese people having great hope and determination to not give up. According to Giap, the Vietnamese people are very proud. They are upset in that the American’s decided to take over the war, when the Vietnamese wanted them as allies. Giap recounted Uncle Ho talking about fighting back and reclaiming their independence. He said that even if they were knocked down and everything was destroyed, they would just stand up,

and rebuild everything better than it was before. The theme of Hope in Giap's writing is admirable. The Vietnamese people's devotion to their country and their independence and looking to the future, even during the war, is a very positive outlook on a bad situation. Giap talked about meeting with Ho shortly before he died, and all Ho could talk about was his devotion to his country and to winning the war. Even in the grips of death, hope is very apparent, and I find this enlightening.

Samantha Westrope

April 12, 2015

HST 195 Assignment #1

Joe Escobar

When an individual makes the decision to no longer be ignorant of a given situation, in this case the Vietnam War, it is bound to have a profound impact on the individual. It was difficult to choose a singular story from Christian G. Appy's book *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides* that had a more profound impact than the others. All the stories are incredibly powerful in their own way. It is a very rare thing to read and try to understand a different point of view for the first time. An American typically does not come across war accounts from the opposition the same way they would hearing tales of valor from an American troop or from the American media.

Dang Vu Hiep's memories of the war offered a great introduction to a view from a member of the Viet Minh revolution. Hiep's words did not come across as biased or hateful when speaking of Americans. They seemed analytical and impartial instead. When Hiep spoke of the attack at Pleiku in February of 1965, he just spoke about how he did not understand why there was so much interest in this attack. It seemed to him to be a logical move made by the Viet Minh and that both sides of the war knew that the Central Highlands was a crucial location. Hiep portrayed a confusion that was easy to relate to. He didn't understand why the attack in Pleiku was so influential to the Americans. Hiep also made it clear that the belief held by some Americans that if the Viet Minh had not initiated attacks on Pleiku that the United States would have not initiated air raids was a "groundless claim". The plans for conducting the air raids had been in place long before the Viet Minh attack. The impact of Hiep's story is within how easy it is to relate to the confusion that he had over the U.S. Government's antics. This relatability can make an individual feel a better understanding of all sides of the war and feeling closer to the individuals that were involved and realize we are all humans. (9-11)

The story regarding the Buddhist monk committing suicide in protest to the war was disheartening, horrific, and strangely beautiful. The way Malcom Browne romantically spoke of the situation gave it that beauty. It could have been the only way he could talk about such an awful event. Browne talked about the beauty of Saigon and described the day of the incident with such emotion it felt as though the reader was there. The ceremonies prior to the incident and procession monks gave the impression that something big was going to occur. When Browne spoke of the details from the suicide, it broke my heart. The lotus position that the monk, Thich Quang Duc, sat in and his meditative state was so different from the events that came shortly after. It was disappointing that Buddhist protesters had to go to such great lengths to have their voices be heard. Many had to pay the ultimate price in hopes of becoming martyrs for their cause. It is so disappointing that so many people are hurt or killed just to share their message. Duc's death was so disappointing because that was how much he, and other Buddhists, would rather die than live under the control of Diem and his Catholic

government. Although Duc had made his statement it would not be easily heard in its full effect due to the censorship that was occurring in Saigon. (64-72)

The national pride portrayed by the Vietnamese people interviewed in *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides* was personally astounding. After a life of not trusting or having faith in one's own government, nationalism seems like a novel concept. There is good in having pride in a nation. It proved to be the key to victory both the American Revolutionary War and the Vietnamese War. Viet Minh soldiers and supporters believed in what they were doing. They were willing to, and did, put their life on the line for their cause. They desired to be a free people not ruled by some larger nation. They were willing to fight to the death for their cause which gave them the perseverance to withstand anything. Vo Nguyen Giap stated that "We won the war because we would rather die than live in slavery" (42). It is fairly common knowledge that American forces had no real purpose to be involved with the Vietnamese and this is what separated them. I have never felt a sense of national pride, granted Americans have done lots of good, but have also done equally as much that was bad.

Part 1

I was a freshman in high school when the Kent State incident occurred in May of 1970. I picked Deirdre English story because I feel that was the mindset of a lot of young people at the time.

Yes, we witnessed protest of the war but for the most part we were not aware of what was going on in

Vietnam. A majority of us were like Deirdre, we didn't know where Vietnam was. I don't remember

one history teacher mentioning the Vietnam war and how it is effecting our society and the men that are

over there fighting. Until I read the first two chapters of America's longest war I always thought just

like everyone else that this war was started due to communism. In the end that was what it was about

but prior to that the french went to Vietnam to colonialize them, as if they had a right to take their land,

culture, history from them and make them assimilate the french culture, language and rules. I didn't

know that this war started in the late 1950's until I was older and read more about this war. I know first

hand the effects of this war on a person that fought there, my husband was a Vietnam vet from 1965-68,

Special forces, gunner in a helicopter. He had nightmares all the time and would talk in his sleep how

he was going to kill this person or that person. He was 17 at the time when he went over there and

when we had our son, I thought about what if that was our son. I could not imagine having to go to war

at such a young age, witness the tragic, horrible things he witnessed and then come back over to the

United States without a fanfare, being called baby killers etc., and expect to be proud that

you fought

for our country and to prevent communism from taking over Asia. Everyone's perspective is different

and so everyone's experience of a situation will be different and will be interpreted in their own way,

from their point of view. I am looking at and remembering this as I read each one of these stories.

Factual, credible? In my opinion we will never know because who is going to refute what they are

saying. It isn't like today where you can go back and look at old tapes, old recordings and say wait

a minute, that's not how it happened. For me, I am going to take their word for it and believe that

situations occurred in the way each person shared their experience.

Part 2

In Richard Olsen's story the most disappointing part was when he mentioned that the South Vietnamese would try to get on the transport for wounded soldiers to get out of fighting. "The South Vietnamese would call us in to get a dead body and ten guys would want to jump on the chopper to get the hell out of there" (pg. 64). when I read how regardless of how upbeat and positive Richard Olsen was regarding the war his paintings still show the horror of the war and what he went through as well as so many other men. "My paintings would have something of the war in them even if I painted flowers" (pg. 64).

This statement is so sad to me as it shows that even if you try and have a good positive attitude you still are haunted by what you experience and see in war.

The hope that I saw in this story is when he shared how he went back to Vietnam in 1994 to attend his exhibit and he decided to go swimming at China beach near Danang. There was a riptide that he got caught in and he thought he was going to die, however there was a man that came to his rescue. "All of a sudden a ninety pound man came up to my face like a dart. We were face to face. The first thing I thought was Viet Cong! Here he was, rescuing me, eyeball to eyeball. We looked into each others soul and he was brilliant. This young Vietnamese lifeguard pulled me up and tugged me in" (pg. 64). This shows hope that eventually we can all live together in spite of differences. I am not talking about all of us assimilating to the European culture as it has been for so long. I am talking about all of us living amongst each other and respecting each others cultures, and

language. I know this sounds naive, but I feel that if we treated each other as human beings and not treat people based on your feelings about a certain race or ethnicity our world would be a better place for all of us. In all these stories I see forgiveness and hope because they are talking to each other.

Part 1

The story from the book *Patriots* that impacted me the most was "Paying the Price," a story about a North Vietnam nurse wounded by bomb shrapnel from an American B-52 bomber. The story's point of view begins on the ground, miles from civilization, with a North Vietnamese Army nurse who was in the unfortunate path of an American B-52's bombing run. The injured and ultimately disabled Vietnamese nurse relives his grueling journey back to what was his home near Hanoi. With no roads or vehicles, this injured man was carried by others for a seven month journey from the jungles of South Vietnam to what once was his home in North Vietnam. He ultimately loses everything, his health, home, and his wife. From his point of view, he had no choice. He was fighting foreign invaders to his country. He was not fighting for Moscow. His ideology seemed strictly local. His motivation seemed to stem from a desire to be left alone and to have had the opportunity to become prosperous. This story seemed credible because it is told by the person who lived it. This story is impacting because what he did is what most would have done under similar circumstances.

Part 2

The disappointing story in part 2 for me was the short story by Evelyn Colbert, "Dissent which contradicted the public optimism was ignored," where she suggested U.S. government statistics were manipulated by the State Department for the purpose of deceiving the public into the false belief that the war in Vietnam was succeeding, in spite of credible interpretation of the same data that suggested otherwise. It would seem that the truth was not a consideration when it came to the government's reporting to the public. Soldiers and whether they lived or died did not seem to matter to policy makers, at least not as much as I would have liked. Worse, the government blocked the reporting of data conclusions that would have said the "Viet Cong were doing very well." (*Patriots*, P. 84) U.S. governments seem to have a history of viewing soldiers as a throwaway resource. As long as there are no penalties for lying to the public at the cost of human lives, this will happen again. That is disappointing.

Is there any "hope", "compassion", "goodness" or the "potential for good" that comes out of any of these stories? There was a story about an American destroyer and a Russian submarine, each patrolling Vietnamese waters. It seems both crews had become friendly and would occasionally visit each other eventually exchanging gifts. (*Patriots*, P. 88) This small action on the part of crew members of both naval vessels showed compassion for one another. In this section of reading, problems seem to be a common theme, not goodness or hope.

There could be potential for good if America had learned from mistakes in Vietnam. The short story by Sergei Khrushchev ended with the observation that the U.S. had not learned any lessons from Vietnam. (*Patriots*, P. 89) He makes this observation following his assessment following 9/11 and the subsequent decisions that guided America's war on terror and the mistakes made.

Part1

Bernard Trainor

The quote, "It turned out the mayor of Danang was a double agent" shocked me and perked my interest in reading further and learning more. Bernard Trainor's story had a great impact because he seemed to sum up the war in Vietnam with different first hand accounts. The fact that there were many double agents in the south was new information. In many documentaries previous to the American Experience that I have watched did not state this fact or was highlighted as an important part in fighting the war. This fact alone shows how determined and strategic Ho Chi Minh and the North Vietnamese communist government was. In the documentary *Vietnam: A Television History*, It stated that after the Geneva Conference of 1954, the line was drawn at the 17th Parallel dividing North and South Vietnam. The North government left behind political agents in the South to stir up political dissent not take up arms, hoping that after two years, elections would take place and the agents would gather mass support for the election of Ho Chi Minh and unify the country.

Bernard Trainor seems like a trust worthy and believable source with credentials such as two tours in Vietnam, a war correspondent and a teacher at the Kennedy School of Government. In the beginning he seemed to have grand ideas about his duty in joining the fight against communism. He stated he was "inflamed by Kennedy's rhetoric to bear any burden, pay any price for liberty." As a Catholic he also had a personal connection to the arising conflict in Vietnam. "We were on a holy crusade to stop the spread of godless communism and give the budding democracy in South Vietnam an opportunity to take root." Bernard Trainor came into the war inexperienced, patriotic and idealistic. He came out with many experiences, still patriotic but the harsh reality of the war brought him to a realization that the war was not just about communism but nationalism, anti-colonialism and corruption in South Vietnam. Great honesty and credibility is shown when a person can admit changes about their own ideals and views that are very dear to them, as Bernard Trainor seemed to have done. His objectivity is supported by his vivid memory of the raid on the leper hospital and the cavern that contained the dossiers about double agents. His historical correlation between the Viet Cong and the American Revolutionaries fighting for independence and resisting outside ownership of their life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. Like the Americans the Viet Cong used guerilla tactics and knowledge of their home turf to gain sufficient advantages over the "foreign invaders" shows his historical military knowledge.

According to the author Christian G. Appy, Bernard Trainor seemed "fully engaged with political and military crisis of our times." He has many credentials that were previously stated. He served two tours and his last as an infantry battalion commander where he gained understandings and insights on the war in Vietnam. His first hand accounts, lifetime of being involved in world affairs and reporting on world conflicts solidifies his credibility on the war in Vietnam.

Part2

Paul Kattenburg

Paul Kattenburg's story was disappointing because of the blatant disregard of his expertise and professional opinion on the matters in Vietnam. His view of "dealing with a sunken ship" was arrogantly ignored by the National Security Council and the Vice President. As Appy stated "Kattenburg was the first person at any high level Washington meeting to suggest a more fundamental alternative— withdrawal." (*Patriots* p.82.) Paul Kattenburg studied Diem and came to the conclusion that the U.S should not back his repressive and corrupt regime. This sentiment was also shared by Undersecretary of State Chester Bowles and veteran diplomat W. Averell Harrington. Harrington also stated that Diem's "repressive, dictatorial and unpopular regime" should not be supported. (*Americas Longest War: P.102.*) Kattenburg was considered an expert and was called to the high level meetings for a reason. He seemed to have had enough respectable credentials to give quality information that should have been taken more seriously. Instead he was denied and ignored. He was reassigned to Policy Planning which was a post that no one wanted, and he was excluded from all top level meetings on Vietnam. In this story it sounded like the drum beats for war drowned out any other opinion. The way the U.S government seemed to ignore the policies Diem's regime and ultra repressive policies on the communists, Buddhist monks and political dissenters is a major disappointment and very disheartening.

The positive thing that comes out of this story is that Kattenburg had an opinion and stated it among high level persons in the U.S. government. I am sure that its not an easy thing to do. Even though he was kicked out of the Bureau of East Asian Affairs and reassigned, he kept his opinion on U.S. policy and Diem himself. He had potential to do good and raise eyebrows among other U.S. officials such as Senators and Congressman about Vietnam. He might have had a big impact on the Anti-War movement if it was massively mobilized earlier in the war and gained allies such as Bowles and Harrington. His statement "I still wish I'd done it, but wouldn't have done any good. It would have hit page eighteen of the *Washington Post*." (p.83) was maybe true at the time but it had potential to do good things and make the U.S. government re-evaluate their position on Diem and his South Vietnamese regime. It could have created policy that would have replaced Diem and put someone else in power. At the time the Kennedy administration said Diem was "the best man for the job." What the U.S. need was a more middle ground man instead of a "hardliner" and a leader more receptive to U.S. advisers suggestions. This new leader might be hard on communism but soft on the Buddhist and political dissenters. The people needed their hearts and minds won, some one to lead them to prosperity, instead of alienating them to a point they simply sympathized with the North.

Part 1

Bernard Trainor's account of his time in Vietnam is quite powerful, in part due to the use of background to establish a connection with the audience. It begins as a touch on where he is from and how he grew up, then transitions after some time into a narrative of the overwhelming force used in Vietnam. The language used supports the idea he is projecting his view and not a generalization of the war, which establishes a good degree of credibility.

"Our hope early on in Vietnam was to win the hearts and minds of the people," (Appy, pg. 7) is supported by episode two of *Vietnam a Television History* at the 27:30 time mark where a soldier with the US Army talks to a reporter about putting himself in the Vietnamese people's position. Fricke, the soldier being interviewed, talks about how he and his bodyguard went to houses for tea and assisted picking watermelons. Attempts to relate with a downtrodden people are not often successful when a soldier, who some may see as an oppressor, travels with a bodyguard. This is apparent in the result of the United States effort, mentioned shortly after the above quote in Trainor's story.

Part 2

Malcolm Browne, the lone journalist present when Thich Quang Duc famously sacrificed himself, had to endure horrible things in reporting on the Vietnam War. While he admits that "...the danger added a certain spice to life." (Appy, p.65) he was required to visit the site of many massacres. Four times he was made to visit Dam Doi and experience the horrors of what had happened. One may argue that seeing such aftermaths is something that goes with the job, but no one signs up to visit massacres time and time again to see the days-old corpses that have been rotting away. Browne mentioned that some days would include upscale diplomatic events and others would include hiking through rough terrain, but to call seeing the devastation of war on such an intimate scale 'disappointing' would be an understatement.

Daniel Redmond's account of Thomas A. Dooley brings a side of this war rarely focus on. Redmond recalls working with Dooley in both fond and critical lights, though is quick to point to all the good Dooley accomplished despite personal irritations. The doctor would visit field hospitals and showed a noted genuine concern for victims. These actions show how needed compassion is in such dire times. Dooley appeared to embody the spirit the United States' original objective of winning the Vietnamese people.

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