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History of the Vietnam War

Assignment 1

Part 1

I think that the story in Part 1 of the "Patriots" that caught my attention the most would

probably have to be the George Watkins one in the "Paying the Price" section. I had to read it a

couple of times, because to me it was powerful. I think it caught my attention because Watkins

represented the typical American soldier that was over in Vietnam. He did not have a

particularly spectacular family background, and he was drafted, just like many of the soldiers,

including my father, who fought in Vietnam. And, also like many of the drafted soldiers, he

knew very little about Vietnam, and only knew that he was going over there to fight against

communism. (My Dad told me that one of the only things he was told prior to going to Vietnam

was that the people they were supposed to be fighting over there all wore black pajamas. And he

said that when he got there, *everyone* was wearing black pajamas. He was very confused at the

time.) He was also there during the worst time, which was just

after the Tet Offensive started in

early 1968. Despite losing both his eyes and legs due to a booby-trapped land mine, he said he

harbored no bitterness or hatred to the people of Vietnam. He was impressed with the way the

Vietnamese had the will to rebuild from scratch what had been destroyed several days prior. He

stated that he wished the war had never happened, for the sake of America as well as Vietnam.

This sentiment was shared by many Americans and Vietnamese back then and still is shared by

them today.

I think that George Watkins is pretty believable in his recollections of his experiences in

Vietnam. He was not an officer, commander, or politician. He was your average frontline grunt

who fought the war. I find that the recollections and memoirs of those average soldiers in any

war are the best, most accurate accounts written. They do not embellish or sugar-coat anything,

unlike most recollections from commanders and politicians involved in a war as controversial as

Vietnam. He was there and fought in the war. He remembers what he remembers without

making it into something it was not. And to me that is all the credibility he needs.

As to his recollections being too subjective, factual and the like, I cannot answer with any

certain³. He experienced what he experienced and remembers it the way he remembers it, the

way it happened to him. I cannot pass judgment or dispute it. I wasn't there; I hadn't been born

yet. He was there. And something like the Vietnam War you never

NICE

forget. It stays with you for
the rest of your life.

In the immortal words of Forrest Gump, "That's all I got to say about that."

Part 2

I felt that the most disappointing story to me in Part 2 was the John Singlaub one in the

"Paradise Island" section. In fact, "disappointing" isn't the word I would chose to use.

"Appalling" would be a more appropriate word. I think it was his whole attitude to the conflict

in Vietnam that got me. He seemed like he was a warmonger and liked the fact that he had

"never seen so many dead people stacked up." He likened the American presence in Vietnam as

a "cross between a missionary among heathen and a frontiersman who was building in the face

of enemy attacks." He also likened what the Viet Cong were doing to the American Indians

during the westward movement. But he likened them in a way that made them out to be the bad

guy. The Viet Cong just did not want anyone taking away their country and their way of life,

just as the American Indians did. Who's the real villain here? The Viet Cong, or the

Americans? He called Jane Fonda and other Americans who opposed the war "traitors." Are

you a traitor because you have freedom of speech guaranteed by the governing documents of

your country? Singlaub just seemed so callous and insensitive he

made me sick. And these were

some of the people running that war. No wonder we lost. We should never have been there in

the first place. They didn't want us there.

This is too big a jump
or conclusion to make.

I think a positive lesson I learned from Part 2 was that there are both sides to the story. That

not everyone hated the other side in the war. Many questioned why they were even fighting the

war in the first place. From the lowliest private to the most top-ranking officer or politician. I

feel that if you question your own actions in a questionable war, then you have a conscience

about what you are doing. Hopefully we can all learn the instances of good from the participants

of the Vietnam War and emulate them in future wars.

Very well done for
a first paper.

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