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90/100

Part 1:

After reading all of the personal accounts from the first part of the Appy book, I would have to say that the memories from George Watkins caught most of my attention. Unlike most of the stories in part 1, Watkins has some of the most graphic and detailed descriptions of what he went through when he lost both his legs and eyes. His story seemed to me as the most "typical" war story that the average American might have heard from part 1. Watkins' memories seemed to be from a relatively short period of time, which is something that also interested me. Judging by what I know and what I've learned so far in the readings, it seems to me that the average time a United States general infantry soldier spent in the field was quite short. A good portion of the GIs may have only been in the field for just a few weeks before they were injured or killed. While this amount of time might seem pretty short, I'm sure it feels more like years to someone huddled in a ditch with gunfire and explosions everywhere nearly every moment of the day.



Judging by Abby's opening and closing comments about Watkins' current living conditions, Watkins seems genuine about his experiences from Vietnam. Physiologically speaking, Watkins, as with every other person in the war, went through very difficult physical and mental conditions while serving their country. Because of these difficult conditions, I have to consider that there may be some added or missing content when soldiers like Watkins retell their stories of the front line. It's not that they are lying. It's just that their minds, under the difficult conditions, don't allow them to fully remember and recall these events with perfect accuracy. The mind has a tendency to fill in the gaps of memory. Plus on top of that, Watkins and the others that recall their memories have lived several decades since these events actually occurred. However, these reasons for doubt for me do not dampen the trustworthiness or creditability of the stories in the Abby book... I guess they should just be taken with a grain a salt. **Thoughtful analysis here...**
One of the best in class.

Part 2:

The stories in part 2 of the Appy book seem to be more of an overview of the beginning of U.S. combat operations in Vietnam. A few of the stories go into more detail, but most lack detail of what was actually happening on the front lines or the U.S. political considerations that were made. The story I found to have some of

the least details was a short story by Richard Olsen. Olsen had some good comments about aircraft and the men he served with on those aircrafts, but other than that, the rest of his story only briefly covered his thoughts on a no firing unless fired upon order. I would have liked it if Olsen went into more detail about the ARVN general that ordered him to shoot into the "war zone," and I would have like more detail about the reasons the ARVN general was on the airship to begin with. For the lack of detail and because the story didn't really add much to story of the Vietnam War, Olsen's story was the most disappointing story for me in part 2 of this book. 

Obviously, all these war stories are filled with human tragedies and suffering. One must look quite hard to find any kind of positive hopes or goodness in these types of stories. It's difficult to put myself in the shoes of nearly all the people sharing their stories in this book. The story I picked as having some type of positive outcome is that of Luyen Nguyen, a South Vietnamese recruiter for top-secret commando missions for the U.S. As he told his story I kept thinking about if I would be able to deal with the situation that Nguyen was put in. Nguyen was imprisoned for decades, and I don't think I could deal with that. However, as tragic as Nguyen's story was, I'm glad that there was some sort of happy ending. His wife still loved him, his kids were all grown up, including a child he had never met, he became a grandfather, and most importantly, he was a free man once again. So it's good to see that even in the direst of situations, there can actually be happy endings in war.

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