



Spring 2011 ► HST 195 Sp11 (Escobar 42695) ► Assignments ► Assignment 1
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Patriots - The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides by Christian Appy

In this powerful collection of stories of participants in the Vietnam War, you will complete three written assignments on a number of topics. Before you begin, be sure to read the handout How assignments are graded .

If you glance at the first page of the Acknowledgments that appears at the end of the book, you will find that this book contains only one-third of the 350 interviews he conducted. I often wonder how Appy arrived at which choices he decided to include and not to include in this book.

VERY IMPORTANT POINT

This book contains accounts from 135 individuals and you are responsible for reading the entire book over the course of the term. This book gives you a personal connection to the war, something that the more "academic" and narrative Herring book and PBS DVD series do not. It would be unreasonable for me to expect that you memorize and/or take notes on all of these accounts and be able to answer midterm and final exam questions on the wide variety of stories presented in this book.

More importantly, you will soon discover that in the class assignments, I let YOU CHOOSE to write on the stories that have the greatest impact on or interest to you. Therefore, this book will serve as the main source of information for the written assignments this term, but you will not be expected to answer exam questions on the facts or opinions expressed by the speakers and their specific stories.

Of course, when I use a story in the Appy book as an example, as I did in the case of the Jo Collins Video Clip which I required all students to watch, then that information is "fair game" for the midterm and final exams. Speaking of Jo Collins, were you aware of her Oregon roots? Talk about a connection to the war that is "close to home". [CLICK HERE](#)

ASSIGNMENT 1

This is a two-part assignment:

Part 1

Which single story, other than that of Jo Collins, in Part 1 of the Patriots book caught your attention? Why? How reliable, trustworthy, believable do you believe that speaker to be? After all, unlike you or me, they were there, at that specific point in time. Does that give them more or less credibility? Are they objective and factual or do they suffer from too much subjectivity, too much time having passed, too much forgotten? (These are not easy questions... please take some time to analyze what I'm asking for here.)

WARNING: Some of these stories are very powerful, and will have a great effect on you. But do not make the common mistake that just because you read a single, firsthand account about someone's experience in the war, that you can then generalize and make that account the "norm" or the "common" way things were for everyone else, everywhere. For example, all soldiers were not pot smokers, just because you saw some soldiers obviously smoking pot in the DVD video series introduction in Episode 1. The accounts in Appy provide a very small snapshot of one person's experience, often shared with at least a few other people mentioned specifically in the story. Be sure to take that into consideration when you write all of your assignment papers. Regardless, the war WAS a human event, and we will use the text to hear from the humans who were most directly involved in it.

Part 2

In Part 2 of the book, the stories get a bit longer than in part one. They also get a bit more "official", with stories by official participants, such as journalists, governmental officials, and even the leader of the eventually victorious North Vietnamese Army.

Of the 15 stories you've read, you will comment on the following questions.

Which story or stories (definitely one, but not more than two) were the most disappointing for you to read and why? You may have been disappointed with the speaker him/herself (with their attitude, for example) or disappointed by the events in their story (with the frustrating way in which they were treated or in the negative situations in which they had to interact with others). Start your answer to Part 2 with this negative, critical point of view first.

NOTE: I am NOT asking you which story you think was boring. Disappointment and boredom are two very different things. Unfortunately, some students in the past have misinterpreted the instructions this way.

In the second half of Part 2, address any positive lesson(s) you may have learned from one or more of the accounts in Part 2 of the book. Is there any "hope", "compassion", "goodness" or the "potential for good" that comes out of any of these stories?

NOTE: I am not forcing you to find good where you might believe none exists, but if you've read the accounts carefully and analytically, you will probably will find something positive.

You have until the deadline to complete this assignment.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON YOUR FIRST ASSIGNMENT

In this assignment, Parts 1 and 2 should be given equal time. I envision Part 1 as consisting of one long paragraph, while Part 2 definitely requires two paragraphs.

Click the Edit My Submission link below to turn in your paper.

Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

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HST 195 Sp11 (Escobar 42695)

Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:31 PM (379 words)

Part 1

Paying the price, account of Ta Quang Thinh, caught my attention because of the familiar sound of the story, not from an American veteran, but a Vietnamese veteran. The different perspective was new for me to hear, despite some differences in the details of the story, it could have been told by an American veteran. The speaker of the story seems a reliable source though some of the more dramatic details, such as checking his watch just before the bombs fell, seem a bit of a stretch. To an extent, anyone who was there at that point in time has some loss of credibility in their memory of trivial details and of emotional events. But those same people also gain credibility for being present to witness the events firsthand and, literally, have the scars to prove it, mental or otherwise. The subjectivity of the speaker is undeniable, the speaker is telling of his understanding of events after a large amount of time passed from the time of the events to his retelling.

Part 2

Paradise Island, account of John Singlaub, was disappointing on various dimensions. So many things throughout the account were idiotic or were disappointingly true. The idea of our allies, with the help of our special forces, kidnapping costal villagers and trying to convert them to being anti-communist I find moronic. That being said I make no judgment on the time, back then it seemed a viable option. But the tactic of dropping in your best commandos into enemy territory and trying to establish a resistance against the government of the north after evacuating all of those who would have resisted years before makes no logical sense. Although that is a poor tactic, the continuation of the tactic, at the behest of a political appointee, after intelligence has proven it is ineffective, was the most disheartening for me.

I find it hard to see "goodness" in the accounts. The most I can find is a hope to a quick end to the war in most of them. The desire for peaceful end to the war within the text seems to be the most encouraging aspect of most of the accounts. Other than that the accounts seem rather dark, even in the more upbeat accounts.

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Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

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Assignment 1

Part 1

TRAN THI GUNG, "I was stuck in a tunnel for seven days."

The thing I found most captivating in this entire selection of stories was the part where her comrades gave her a "funeral mass for the dead". A ceremony that honors the achievements of a fallen comrade while the stand still living and are told how they died in action, how much they are missed and how noble their sacrifice was. The psychological impact that such a ceremony would have on a person, especially a person who's political and cultural background was so rooted in ceremony and community, seems deeply profound. I found it to be a moving metaphor, capturing to me the essence of what the Vietnam war must have meant for the Vietnamese. Her accomplishments may have been exaggerated, her actions glorified but I don't see why she might lie about this ceremony.

Part 2

EVELYN COLBERT, "Dissent which contradicted the public optimism was ignored."

The most disappointing thing about these accounts is just how much evidence, historical, social, rhetorical, and statistical evidence was being ignored in the forming of the U.S. policy in Vietnam. The motivation seems so monolithic. It is as if the policy makers did not intend to win the war. more than that it is as if the war was a small part of a larger and equally absurd conflict. It seems as if going to war is not the correct term even. we did not go to war, we were militarily involved. and our involvement was never based on the success of that involvement, we never seemed to have clear objectives, we just needed to be involved, we needed to proliferate the cold war. I find it illuminating and repugnant.

SERGEI KHRUSHCHEV, "The Vietnamese had their own ideas."

I enjoyed the perspective that this story had, and I think that it is an important one to remember. Vietnam seems to have been basically a nationalist struggle, or at least civil war, that was blown

out of proportions by cold war rhetoric. Every world power seemed to casting their image in Vietnam with little understanding or concern for the will of the Vietnamese. I think that the lessons of vietnam should help the world view military involvement with skepticism. I would hope in the future we might act with purpose and in ways that achieve specific goals instead of wasting life and money pursuing ideological ends.

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Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

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After reading Part 1 of Christian Appy's book, "Patriots," I was struck by Roger Donlon's story. Roger was a young Green Beret Captain sent to Vietnam to command the Nam Dong Special Forces camp, and "advise, assist and train the Vietnamese." He was awarded the first Medal of Honor given to a participant of the Vietnam War because of his valiant efforts to help his comrades and friendly Vietnamese forces survive an attack by a reinforced Viet Cong battalion in the early morning hours of July 6, 1964. Even as his story begins, Roger's remarks insinuate that he realized early on that the American troops were ill-equipped to handle a war that had been going on for so long, against a culture they did not understand, and the pride in their country that allowed the Vietnamese to out-maneuver and outlast the French, Japanese, and ultimately the Americans. He referred to his command as "babes in arms in every way." Roger's story goes on to tell about the attack that earned him that Medal of Honor. He has vivid memories about how it started, the message his communications sergeant sent over the transmitter to let another camp know what was happening, and the various scenes that he witnessed during the barrage of mortar shells and bullets. He recounted one particularly disturbing death he witnessed, where a Vietnamese interpreter lost his legs at the knee and kept running to his post before he died 30 seconds later. Roger says, "That's one of the things you'd like to forget." In my opinion, Roger's story is very believable and compelling because he spoke plainly about his experiences, and wasn't sharing a strong opinion one way or another about the war as a whole. Even though he had aged considerably at the time of his interview with Appy, his tour in Vietnam seemed to be burned into his memory as if it was a defining time in his life. He didn't come across bitter, just matter-of-fact. He was there, in the middle of it all, and told his story from a firsthand point of view.

In Part 2 of Appy's book, I was most disappointed after reading Luyen Nguyen's story. Luyen was part of the "lost commandos," a group of 500 South Vietnamese soldiers sent into North Vietnam on top-secret, small-team infiltration missions that were virtually guaranteed to fail. He was captured and imprisoned for 21 years ultimately due to the United States sending these soldiers out, completely unprepared for what they were going into. Luyen was treated poorly by the American advisers and the Vietnamese he was working with, and paid less than the men he

was training. He wasn't even intended to go into the North, but out of loyalty, he went with the South Vietnamese soldiers after they threatened to desert if he didn't go with them. He endured solitary confinement and torture, and his family was told he was dead. Luyen endured all of this, remaining loyal to the United States the entire time. Eventually he was released and returned to his family, and in 1999 he was awarded \$42,500 in compensation from the United States. I think it is disgraceful that he was put through all of that, and barely received a "thank you" from the Americans for whom he sacrificed a large part of his life.

Finally, in Part 2, I liked Le Lieu Browne's story, and found it to be the most positive one I have read so far. Le Lieu was educated in Europe, and returned to Vietnam to work for the Ministry of Information. She was right in the middle of the political unrest and censorship that was taking place, which was how she met her husband, Malcolm Browne. Malcolm was an AP reporter, and it was Le Lieu's job to let him know if the ministers didn't like something he wrote. These interactions led to an unlikely romance, and they eventually married and moved to the United States. Le Lieu was in a very tough position, balancing her job responsibilities, her relationship with Malcolm, and her belief that Vietnam could someday be truly free. I think this was the best example of someone having hope for the war and for her country, despite all of the adversity going on around her. Le Lieu maintained her religion, her personal political stance, and her role as a woman working in a man's world at the time. And of course, her story had the closest thing to a "happy ending" because she met and fell in love with her future husband in the midst of such a horrendous war.

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Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

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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 of salt.

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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Mackenzie Clark

Tran Thi Gung pg. 15-19

Tran Thi Gung was a guerilla fighter who joined Ho Chi Minh's guerilla army in 1962 when she was seventeen years old. In the narrative "patriots" by Christian Appy she gives an account of her experience during the Vietnam War and tells her story of self determination. This story interested me because it gave an insight of the determination of some of the Vietnam guerilla fighters and that it truly was a war for Vietnam's independence. She recalls horrific stories of courage and proved that the Vietnam War was not a Russian insurgency but had nationalistic roots. In George Herring's text on the Vietnam War he states that, "Intelligence reports stressed that Ho had remained loyal to Moscow throughout his career. The lack of close ties with the Soviet Union simply meant that he was trusted to carry out Stalin's plan without supervision." (13). This means that the United States had a strong belief that Ho Chi Minh was a communist willing to enforce Soviet policy even though there was no clear evidence of this being true. Tran Thi Gung's account of her experience as a guerilla fighter gives testimony of the Vietminh's determination for independence. She tells of her self determination of "killing American GI's" during the war and recalls how "easy" it was. Her account is interesting because if Gung's account of the war is true to what the other guerillas felt then America truly misunderstood the Vietminh. Gung goes into detail about her self-determination to liberate "her" country and even recalls; "In that first battle against the Americans I shot so many G.I.'s I was awarded a decoration..." (17). She recalls many horrific experiences of the war and even recalls a time where a piece of shrapnel hit her in the head and went unnoticed until another "comrade" noticed. This proves that Gung had a strong conviction towards her cause and this could have blocked her judgment on the "events." It is hard to say whether or not Gung was being accurate about her "experience" in the Vietnam War because she believed in the cause with a strong passion. When a person believes in a cause it could mean that a person remembered the events in a light that would better suit their "cause." This means that information can be left out and in my opinion it seemed that Gung only was willing to talk of her victories and that she felt "just" for the killing she did; which can give an assumption that it

was a one sided conflict. However, Gung still points out the determination of the guerilla fighter when they were trapped in tunnels for seven days nearly starving. The Vietminh continued to fight and Gung did as well and I believe that their determination and our misunderstanding of this is why so many lives were lost.

Malcome Browne pg. 64-72

Malcome Browne was the only reporter when Thich Quang Duc in protest let himself on fire as a sacrifice. Browne recalls the protest in horrific detail and as he does I found myself wondering, why? I could not see a reason why someone would feel oppressed to the point where they would go to such extremes in protest. The Buddhist began their protest in the spring of 1963 after Ngo Dinh Diem's soldiers killed eight worshipers. Diem refused to compromise and used force against the Buddhist protesters Thich Quang Duc lit himself on fire according to tradition. This seems like a drastic action but if a person is willing to subject themselves then the oppression of Diem's government must have been great. In my opinion the most frustrating thought while reading Browne's account is the fact that Diem was an American supported leader. The United States supported Diem's government because of the "threat" of communism but Diem had an oppressive government that lead up to the Buddhist protest.

The Buddhist were forced to this type of protest because of a philosophy of non-violence. Diem's regime was unwilling to listen to the Buddhist so Thich Quang Duc used the highest form of protest. The Buddhist used the western media in order to make the world conscious of Diem's oppression. They stood up to his regime in a horrific way but they did not harm any innocent for their cause. Even though Quang Duc's actions seemed drastic and obscene he achieved his goal in the end. Diem's regime would soon have renowned opposition and would soon fall. Diem's government did not fall solely for this reason but these protests showed public dissatisfaction with the government. This protest gave the western world an insight on the conflict and gave an assumption that it was "out of control." In my opinion I can not think of a more horrific way too bring attention to a cause but the Buddhist did succeed by utilizing the western media.

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Assignment 1, part 1. George Watkins

George Watkins' story resonated with me because he was a sort of real life Forrest Gump. Except that in the real world we cannot rely on simply being the lead character in our own storylines to protect us from the costs of war. George Watkins is a common man. His family background is that of a common working class family.

George is no elite, no pampered American. George is, in essence, the American equivalent of a Vietnamese village peasant.

In George's encounter with the villagers of Que Son Valley he says, "They had to be some good people to withstand all that." I don't think that George realized that he was seeing his own family in those poor struggling Vietnamese. George didn't demonize the people on the other side of the conflict. I respect George for his ability to see beyond national lines and appreciate the hardships of those people that he was directed to treat like livestock.

We can take George's story at face value. He expresses no agenda, has no cross to bear, no blame to place. He seems to feel no long simmering resentment towards the people of Vietnam or their national identity. He doesn't even express disapproval of his own government in terms more harsh than "It was a bad political mistake." for sending him to fight and suffer for a cause that he describes as "...fighting over there against communism, so-called." His story is too simple to express the complexity of the overarching political circumstances of the war, but in its own way its simplicity is the perfect expression of the truth of the war, for in the end wars are primarily fought and paid for by people at the bottom of the social spectrum.

Assignment 1, part 2. Luyen Nguyen

The war was, of course, not lost by a single story, but Luyen Nguyen tells a story that helps explain why we lost the war. In his story we can see the elements of the mindset that prevented us from utilizing our resources and alienated the Vietnamese.

In Nguyen we had the heart and mind of an apparently resourceful and determined young man. His initial perspectives are right in line with the doctrine that we were trying to spread in South Vietnam. He believed that he was fighting for his own country, and that the American's were there to help. In a war, like Vietnam, where counter insurgency is an issue, this kind of asset is of the highest

value.

It is terrible that we undermined his sense of purpose by telling him "You know nothing" and then failing to show him proper respect while he tried to do his job well. According to Nguyen the American trainers would tell the fledgling commandos that they should ignore the Vietnamese because the Americans hire and pay them. I feel a sense of shame reading that Americans would act so arrogant. Even more so that it was happening in a place and time where earning the goodwill of the population was so important to the cause. This kind of thinking is disappointing in how shortsighted it was. We state explicitly that we want to help build a nation, that we are there to teach them to hold themselves up. Instead we treat them like stupid savages. How can we expect to gain their support? The moral boost of purporting ideals could not outlast the honeymoon phase if we would not apply them with conviction.

Nguyen says that he believes that the operation in which he was captured was a "planned failure". I don't think that there is enough information in this one source to accept this idea wholeheartedly but consider it very plausible considering how the Vietnamese were generally treated in his story and others in this book. Also this claim gains plausibility when we consider how little consideration was given to the fates of the commandos in John Singlaub's account of his request to discontinue the program. In the interview immediately before Nuyen's John Singlaub explains that the program Nuyen was in was found to be ineffective. Singlaub states that the teams sent into North Vietnam were almost all captured, killed or turned. Despite his findings, five years into the program, it was kept running for two more years. John states that he expressed to his superiors that the program was a failure and supported his reasoning with logical explanations, but that the program was kept in place. It may be sarcasm but John says that he suspects that Secretary of Defense McNamara wanted to increase the number of colored pins on the northern part of his map.

It's possible to extrude that Nguyen may have suffered twenty one years of prison because the map on McNamara's wall needed more colored pins in the Northern part of Vietnam. What does it say about the moral of the entire war making edifice when middle management have no confidence in their superiors, and no respect for those they command? What does it say when valuable resources like Nguyen are wasted with disregard?

Looking for a silver lining on this cloud was actually pretty easy. War is a tragedy and exploring it can be disheartening, but inevitably it comes back to the human component. The postscript for Nguyen's interview tells us that he has regained his wife and his children, in spite of the drama of her having remarried. He also apparently has no longstanding resentment towards Americans.

Nguyen has moved to the United States and has continued to better himself through education. I cannot help but respect a man that puts his trials, no matter how heinous, behind himself and looks and acts in a forward direction. It's also nice that the American people can feel a small bit of guilt relief in the compensation paid to Mr. Nguyen.

I doubt that we could have won that war at any costs, but feel bad that we were so foolish and petty in our attempt and that people like Luyen Nguyen had to pay the price for it.

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Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

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PART 1:

Deirdre English's story was one of the main stories that caught my attention. Her story talked about a kind of feeling that peoples even now a days feel which is the feeling of not knowing what is going on around you. Sometimes I feel that way and that is mainly why this stuck out to me. I believe that this is a very trust worthy story. But, it is true to the context and the part of the world that she was in. She states that in 1970 after Nixon invaded Cambodia, "a national student strike was called. I was at Wesleyan College that year..." She is able to speak for her own surroundings. The truth that I take out of her story is only in regards to her part of the world. She is able to give a story about her college and even the other schools that they were able to involve. I feel that is you look at it that way the recollection is very credible. Once you start assuming this is how it was for all college campuses, with out any further research, that is when it becomes less credible. One thing I love is the fact that Deirdre, along with the students that were in her committee, were able to bring together so many students from different schools to make a stand for something they believed in is amazing. One thing that really blew me away is the fact that they did all this without the help of modern day conveniences like cell phones or the Internet. The things that we would use today to get information around were not accessible to them. They had cars and heart, that's what ultimately got them far.

PART 2:

On thing that really disappointed me came up at the end of Daniel Redmond's account. He begins to talk about Tom Dooley who was someone that he worked with who became famous because of his book "Deliver Us From Evil." He talks about how he was so kind and we occasionally suggest that they go up to the field hospital to visit French survivors. As he goes on to talk about the book he mentions, "'Deliver Us From Evil' was a piece of shit." In the book Tom exaggerated and made a lot of inaccuracies his once example had to do with a man Redmond's used to see everyday and Dooley said that he was a victim of Communist torture, which was not accurate. This frustrates me to thing that someone who could in once sense be so nice and want to reach out to French survivors and even gracious with enlisted men and the Vietnamese would then turn the other way and talk so poorly and inaccurate of the Vietnamese people.

When I read Henry Prunier's story I felt a sense of goodness from it. They had come to help the Vietnamese and teach them. They were ill armed and so he was a part of the "Deer Team" coming to help. But what really stuck out to me was the end when he talks about 1995, a delegation of OSS veteran reunion. General Giap was starring at him seeming as though he was trying to remember him and he then grabbed an orange out of a dish and made a motion like he was lobbing a hand grenade. At that moment He realized he had actually taught them something. They had gone to help and General Giap had remembered. Prunier even said, "Isn't that amazing?"

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Heather L. Davis
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HST 195

The Perseverance of the Vietnamese

War is a chess game played by "armchair warrior" politicians and leaders. They use people as pawns to destroy others so they can claim a checkmate and conquer a piece of land. Humans are caught in the middle of horrible situations and are forced to do whatever they can and lose their sense of humanity in the moment. The story of Tran Thi Gung caught my attention. Even though she was an enemy of the United States, her personal telling of her experiences during the war and reasons for joining the Trung Lap Ha Hamlet guerrilla force told me that she was human like everyone else. Her reasoning and emotions were very real.

Tran Thi Gung's father was a member of the communist party and Viet Cong soldier. When he was killed by the Saigon government the soldier showed no remorse or emotions. He told young Tran Thi Gung that her father was dead because of what he believed in and to "go fetch his body." Tran Thi Gung's hatred for the Saigon government brought out her vengeful side to carry on what she believed her family wanted, to live comfortably on their land and under a communist rule that they felt belonged. She was dedicated to her cause. Hearing her tell about killing GI's and watching American soldiers cry for their fellow mates, and how she was focused on taking their weapons that were left behind and going back into the tunnels showed me how dedicated she was. If American soldiers were that dedicated to our cause would we have lost the war? But, then again, Tran Thi Gung knew what she was fighting for. Were most of the American soldiers like George Watkins from the next story in the Appy book? "I just knowed that we was fighting over there against Communism, so-called" George Watkins ((Appy, Christian. "Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from all sides" 2003. 22).

I believe her story to be very compelling because everybody wants to belong to something important. Tran Thi Gung, a small framed thin young girl, saw Americans as giants attacking her homeland and to be a great threat. It's her own modern version of David and

Goliath. She did not have a sense of guilt because what she was doing felt justified, or how she put it, "... I never felt guilty about the killing I did. It was war" (Appy 19).

The disappointment that was brought to light within me is, why can't the United States leave other countries alone? People just want to be happy and live life in their own way. The fear of Communism seems like a joke to me. Especially now, where in our country the rich are getting richer and the poor or getting poorer. Where would that leave us? Are we heading in the direction of being run by Communists or dictators? Unless there is an uprising soon, like that of a revolution, it may be so.

The story of Daniel Redmond made me think of how the war could have been diverted if it wasn't for the fear of Communism. Mr. Redmond was sent to Vietnam to help move the Catholics from the North to live in the South. He told a story of a woman who gave birth and didn't want any help. She bit the umbilical cord and washed the baby in dirty water. It's not what we think as sanitary or even up to living standards but it showed that the Vietnamese were happy with their way of life. Daniel Redmond also told about a man named Tom Dooley who was a self-righteous communist hater. Tom Dooley fueled hatred about Communism to his own means. He was a fabricator of lies seeking approval from higher ranking officers. Tom Dooley proves my point about history. It can be a work of fiction, like his story about a man that was supposedly tortured by the Viet Cong who was just born disfigured. It takes someone like Daniel Redmond to tell the truth.

There is much potential for good in these stories. Reading the story of Malcolm Browne it's hard to see any good on either side. Quang Duc's sacrifice of burning himself alive and how he didn't yell out once made me realize how passionate the people of Vietnam were about fighting for the greater good. Even though Quang Duc lived in Southern Vietnam which was ruled by Ngo Dinh Diem, an American ally who ruled the country as a Republic, was not a believer in of freedom of Religion. Quang Duc was a Buddhist Monk, peace loving people who believed in not harming anything. Quang Duc, with help from his fellow followers, killed himself in protest to stop anymore hatred of any one individual based on his or her religious beliefs. There seemed to be hope, due to perseverance which is displayed by the Vietnamese in the "Patriot" book. Unfortunately, when a fellow monk, Thich Tri Quang, was under house arrest thirty years later, he said that the human rights problem under the Communist rule was just as awful as under Ngo Dinh Diem's rule.

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Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:33 PM (887 words)

Part 1

The story of "Tran Thi Gung" wasn't a story I expected, probably because I have only read things about Vietnam from American perspective. The way in which Gung talks about her view of Americans at the time with such coldness was far from what I had heard in any other account I had read previously. Due to the personal knowledge and experience of her people, I wouldn't say the story was told as a reliable account of why the war was being fought or as a generalized perspective. Heightened-emotions, mislead fear, and paranoia from past situations, coupled with misunderstandings of other cultures and political views and objectives, distorted reality at such a tumultuous and vulnerable time in Vietnam and the rest of the world, in my opinion. Gung, having been there, makes her personal account reliable but only from her perspective if it is understood to be just that. In her story, there seemed to be no compassion, or understanding of Americans, and Gung seemed almost cold and heartless when recalling her memories of killing them, "As soon as I started to fire, I killed an American. After he fell, some of his friends came rushing to his aid. They held his body and cried. They cried a lot. This made them sitting ducks. Very easy to shoot. From then on we knew that if we just shot one American soldier others would rush to him and then we could shoot many more," this is why I believe Gungs' view was blind to all but her emotions and need to seek revenge; making this a very subjective account (Appy 17). Although I was enlightened by her perspective because it helped me see things in a new light and in a different persons view that I wouldn't have had the opportunity to see without.

Part 2

When reading the "Richard Olsen" story, I was disappointed because of his "...I'm not one of those veterans who's embittered with a whole host of grievances," nonchalant attitude about what occurred in Vietnam while he was there (Appy 63). Regardless of what side you are on or what you thought at the time, people who lack the capability of looking at the situation and acknowledging regrets, are missing the only positive Americans can gain from this and also emotionally lacking in regards to other humans. Human compassion should compel a response from those who witnessed or

participated in carrying out such tragic atrocities against people, such as the massive deaths that resulted from the war in Vietnam on both sides, so they can prevent such horrific events from occurring in the future. Olsen does mention many things that make me question how much of his sentiments toward the war were impressed upon him by propaganda of the time with regards to American objectives in Vietnam, and the possible lacking of knowledge about the Vietnamese culture. I know a lot of people were supportive of American initiatives in Vietnam because of the fear of communism and the US claims of supporting the independence, liberation, and democracy, but when he says "I had the thought that we needed Americans there to show them how to do it," I was offended by the arrogance it seemed to portray about himself (Appy 64). I did see some good in his story, it wasn't all disappointing to me, but I thought the way he seemed to have had no compassion or respect for Vietnamese or the role he played in the war was very sad.

In the "Malcolm Browne" story, I found the tone to be caring, and respectful for the people, and soldiers alike which I found impressive. At a time when there were so many people willing to put the blind fold on because of fear, Browne seemed to want to show the truth whether it looked good for him, the US, communism, Vietnam, etc., showing a lot of integrity for Browne. I felt his role in reporting news for the AP was one he held with high regards, and wanted to do so in an honest manner no matter the obstacles he faced. There was compassion in his words for humans and distaste for poor moral conduct even though he could be viewed as a traitor, or communist if he expressed anything that could be considered negative or opposition to the US and their involvement in Vietnam. Browne talks about the way it was, exposing how, "Americans certainly knew that their Vietnamese counterparts sometimes resorted to torture. The "ding-a-ling" torture was common. It was done with a hand-cranked generator used to produce electricity for radios. The interrogator hooked electrode to the genitals of prisoners and turned the crank causing agonizing pain," which shows Browne had courage to not be intimidated by fear, and I believe this makes his story the more reliable personal testimony about the Vietnam war experiences that I have read (Appy 66). Browne seemed to not be explaining, or reasoning why or what but rather he told about it as he remembered. Others I read told what they remembered but they excluded or left out unfavorable events to protect the image of the group they associated themselves with, whereas Browne included these regardless of who would find it favorable.

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Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

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Q 1.

The story of commander Bernard Trainor is one I found most intriguing not because it's the first story in the book but because of the similarities that he pointed out. When he compared how the north vietnameise were like the Americans who opposed the British government/way of thinking and pulled away to become independent and resisted greatly the attempts of control. It's comforting to know that a lot of the American troops could see the injustice in the large picture and feel compassion but at the same time it's disheartening that they can know this but still follow their orders as if on a leash. This account drives home the fact that war repeats itself.

Q 2.

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Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

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While reading part one of the "Patriots" book, the story that was most memorable to me was that of Bernard Trainor. He seemed to be able to remember specific situations like they had just happened. He did not make himself the hero and seemed very honest of all the situations that occurred while he was in Vietnam. I think that he was a very credible source. In no way does he act as though he was better than anyone there or has arrogance in his tone. He seems to feel remorse for his actions while also staying proud and confident. He seemed to be able to fully put himself back in that time, that place and remember vividly everything that happened. He continued to stay true to the events that had happened even if it made him out to be somewhat of a "bad guy" and also told of mistakes that had happened while they were over there such as not listening to the Vietnamese officer about the leper hospital and instead going with other "intelligence" that stated that the hospital was a R & R center for communists and ended up attacking innocent people because of their lack of intelligence. I felt he was true to his memories and in no way tried to embellish on things that happened while he was there. Instead he seemed very sad and ashamed of many things that happened while over there for 2 tours. He was the most memorable to me because of his ability to talk about the way things happened in general rather than sticking to the way things were as far as what he could remember.

One of the most disappointing stories I read in part two of the book was about Malcolm Brown, a reporter in Vietnam. I was disappointed by the events that happened throughout his story. He told of an older monk burning himself alive in the middle of a street because he had to protest their beliefs. The thought of someone as holy and peaceful as a Buddhist monk having to put on such a disturbing display to defend their beliefs in such a morbid and sad display really began to make me feel disgusted with the whole situation. The fact that Malcolm Brown was called to this protest and could take pictures was beyond me. I could never imagine myself doing something like that. I would have felt like an awful human being and instead tried to save the person, even if they were doing it to support their beliefs. I found this story to be very interesting as time went on but still could not forget what the monk had done so unselfishly for his people.

A positive or more of a hopeful message that came from this story

was the fact that the people were shown that one of their elder monks loved them and believed in peace and hope so much that he would give his own life for his people. When I read that they had taken his heart out and kept it in the Xa-Loi pagoda to become a "kind of icon of the Buddhist insurrection." I thought that was one piece of hope that their culture had and something that would live on within them and live on for the rest of their lives. It would always instill the promise of hope and a better future to the Buddhist culture as well as someone to look up to and allow them to have the courage to be who they are and believe in what they believe in no matter what type of violence or acts of cruelty are brought against them. I thought that was really inspirational and it showed even hope can come from true tragedy.

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Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Thursday, 7 April 2011, 04:57 PM (1226 words)

Kate Kendrick

Assignment 1

4/7/11

Joe Escobar

The story in Part One of the Patriots book that captured my attention was that of the female Vietnamese soldier, Tran Thi Gung. Since I am an American, it is always interesting to me to hear the opinions of citizens of countries that we were once at war with because their understanding of the war is usually much different than mine. Gung's recollection of her time spent fighting in the Vietnam War is completely different than any story I've heard, mostly because she had no remorse for the massive amounts of killing she did. Gung states, "if I went to America and killed people there, I would feel very sorry and guilty. Since the Americans came to my country, I don't feel guilty." It was shocking to me at first to read her tales of ruthless bombings and bloodshed of our American soldiers. Gung described these acts like they were simply part of a job, and as if the soldiers were not people at all, but objects to destroy and conquer. The idea she had of Americans made me pass judgment on Gung at first, but after I thought about what I had read of her childhood, I was able to sympathize more with her. She was taught her entire life that the Viet Cong was fighting to free the Vietnamese people, and she was a first hand witness to the pain and starvation that the French and Americans caused. After her father was killed, Gung devoted her life to fighting for the same cause her father fought for, and that is exactly what she did. Gung describes, "I believed my mission in life was to continue my father's cause, so in 1963 when I was seventeen, I joined the guerillas." It is intriguing to me, being able to put myself in the mind set of someone on the opposing side of my country, because it helps to understand that Americans are not always the "good guys". Sometimes we are misinformed as a whole, and people like Gung were simply trying to defend their lifestyle, culture and freedom. Gung's story of her time in the war seems completely factual and believable to me, because she was part of a fighting side during the war that I have heard nothing about. During my lifetime I have only heard about the American's point of view of the war in which the Vietnamese were "wrong", and to hear the tales of the other side is

eye-opening. I don't feel that there is any amount of time that could make someone who fought in a war, especially someone who killed many people, forget any of the important details. Even though Gung is now an older woman and decades have passed since the Vietnam War, I believe everything she recounts to be factual. Even if she doesn't feel much remorse for the killing of all those men, killing is still such a life changing experience to have that I don't think she could ever forget any of it. Gung also witnessed her friends and comrades murdered by American, French and other Vietnamese soldiers which is an experience that one never forgets. She said that when asked about the suffering she witnessed during the war she has nightmares in which she relives the many deaths that occurred. This does not sound like someone to me who has let time get in the way of their memories.

In Part two of the Patriots book, the story told by Ngo Vinh Long disappointed me the most. My disappointment did not stem from anything that Long did, but instead came from the things that he admits the Americans did, or didn't do, during the war. By now after reading the material I have about the Vietnam War, I know that America did not need to be involved. It was not crucial to our people or our government, and it only did harm. We lost the war and were ill prepared for the fight the Vietnamese were willing to give. Knowing this information, it infuriates me that the Americans supported Diem, just so that we could gain control of resources that we would lose if the Communists were in charge. The Americans practically forced the hands of the Vietnam to put Diem in charge when he was not the right man for the job. Long was an extremely intelligent, hopeful Vietnamese man who grew up trusting and respecting Diem for "saving" his country. As Long grew older, he learned that the Americans and Diem were not the saviors of his country that he had been misinformed of. Lots of unsatisfactory things happened under Diem's regime, including herding thousands of villagers out of their homes, and letting these people ultimately starve to death. These were innocent citizens of Vietnam who had no political part in the war games, yet their lives were altered for the worse. Long recalled that he came across a village named Ka Rom where "two hundred people had starved to death in the past month." He described their appearance as far less than healthy, and the Diem government was creating this suffering. When Long attempted to help these villagers by alerting the U.S. Embassy and Diem's government about it, they told him they would do nothing. It is extremely heartbreaking to me that my country was willing to risk thousands of American lives, thousands of Vietnam lives so that they could maintain their resource connections, but was unwilling to send food out to a dying village. Human lives mean more than political strategy and it is more than

disappointing that America chose not to believe this way.

John Singlaub was involved in a much different experience than Long did, and said that it was a shame that more people didn't realize all that the Americans did in fact do to help the native Vietnamese. This is an expected and welcomed story for me to read, because I assumed I would be reading about many points of view in the Patriots book. Singlaub described the American's actions in Vietnam, "All of the great work American advisors were doing out in the countryside to benefit these people--agricultural work, building bridges, digging wells--all that was totally ignored." Even though the Americans during the war might not have sent out all their soldiers to help the Vietnamese survive life after attacks, it is comforting to know that we did other things to help them thrive. No one wants to be a part of a nation that shows no compassion towards others and only focuses on their potential benefits, so I was pleased to read Singlaub's story. He also remembered Americans engaging in such tasks as, "teaching their villages sanitation and helping them. We'd have our medics rotate through the various villages and do civic action types of things." Although Long's story makes me very sad, Singlaub's story shows that not all aspects of the America's intentions were tainted by greed and pride. Though most of our finances and resources were spent on the strategic and killing part of the war, we did in fact use some men to improve the Vietnamese civilians quality of life.

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Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

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Jesse Kennedy
History 195
Online
Assignment 1

George Watkins's story stood out to me. His story is just so candid that it cuts through all of the rhetoric that was being professed at the time. I especially like the author's comment at the end of the interview about George's request to "fancy it up." George was truthful in his interview about how scared he was and about how little he knew. His honesty gives great credibility to his story. He paints a very vivid picture in my mind of what the life of a grunt in Vietnam might have been like. The situation on the ground would have been profoundly impacted by the instability created by the bureaucracy of a military seemingly improvising at every turn when he says, "...I reckon they just drew a line somewhere on the list and I went to infantry..." The simple fact that he said that losing his legs was nothing when compared with losing his vision struck me with some of the stark realities that soldiers faced in Vietnam.

The account by Malcolm Browne shows us a first person viewpoint into some very critical events and shows some of the double-play that was going on in Vietnam. The "advisory" role of many Americans is put under scrutiny in this account as well as many others. I was particularly disapproving of the account in which Americans were flying bombing runs in Vietnamese planes and that Browne was threatened with expulsion for attempting to report it. I was very disappointed with the censorship that is represented both in this account and that of Le Lieu Browne. America was there in the name of democracy, yet supporting an authoritarian government that was so blatantly out of sync with and abrasive to its own people that Thich Quang Duc burned himself. Although, Malcolm's reputation would benefit from the idea that some potentially explosive reporting was suppressed, I believe that he seemed to genuinely feel for the people of Vietnam. Frankly, his account feels honest. It would be hard to verify some of the assertions he makes, but his account of the monks and his spouse lead me to believe that he is trying to show us how life in Vietnam was.

During Browne's account there is also a underlying current of the determination of the Vietnamese people. The Vietnamese had been fighting for their independence for a thousand years, America was a newcomer to the scene. Browne's account of the Buddhist insurrection and Thich Quang Duc's martyrdom is profoundly moving. I cannot imagine the level of determination that would be required to go through something so painful. The hardest thing to imagine is being in the place of those who loved the man and were watching him suffer, but were so dedicated to the rightness of the cause that they laid down in front of the wheels of the fire truck to ensure that Duc was left in peace. His account ends with the utter failure of American bombing tactics due to the tenacity of Vietnamese fighting spirit, "Of course maybe forty percent had been killed and many had their eardrums shattered, but they were still an effective fighting force." As Giap said in his account of Ho Chi Minh, the Vietnamese would fight as long as they needed to in order to win their right to self determination.

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Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:52 PM (468 words)

Part One

George Watkins account really had an impact on me because it sounded very honest. Watkins related about how they destroyed everything they came across in the Que Son Valley, people, animals even burning camps and villages. He didn't try and make the war sound better for the Americans or justified, he just related his experience how it was. Watkins doesn't sound bitter towards the people he fought against he even states how the vietnamese had to be good people to go back to their destroyed villages and start again from nothing. He does blame politicians for the war having to happen in the first place. Also, Watkins was drafted into the military and served his time without question. I like how he opened the story with the story of his dad not wanting any of his children working in the coal mines. I think this is meant to be ironic, since working in the mines would've been favorable rather than fighting in this bloody war. I'm glad the author put Watkins story in his own words instead of making it grammatically correct. It gives the story a distinct voice which makes it more personal to me. I believe George Watkins to be a reliable source since he was there and has nothing to lie about. I think that he wouldn't be so honest about the destruction him and fellow americans caused if he was trying to hide anything. He was straight forward and didn't sugar coat anything right up to losing his sight and legs.

Part Two

One of the most disappointing stories for me was the account by Henry Prunier. It was frustrating to hear that he at one time was helping the vietnamese and Ho Chi Minh against the japanese but when America was in war against the same people that he didn't speak up enough for what he believed in. Prunier says that he was anti-war but because he was afraid of what persecution his daughters would face in school he stayed silent. I think that everything comes at a price and that standing up for what you truly believe in is important.

Reading Vo Nguyen Giap's account was powerful to me because it presented the fight of people and their culture. Giap talks about how the vietnamese people were not going to give up that they would rather die than live in slavery. I thought that was a positive lesson because these people were very determined and were not

going to give up without their best fight. It didn't matter that America had more and better weapons because the vietnamese people had something much deeper they had courage and a fierce self-determination. It is much like the Americans fight for independence.

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Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:21 PM (575 words)

Jennifer Lusby

ASSIGNMENT 1

Part 1

The story in Part 1 of the Patriots book that caught my eye was the story by Bernard

Trainor. The reason that I liked the story so much was because I found it very interesting. It

let me know as a reader how the "Vietnam Conflict" as they called it was really like. I think

that the speaker was believable and think that he was trying to tell us as Americans what he

had to go through in the marines. I think that he is also very reliable and also very trustworthy. After all, unlike you or me, they were there, at that specific point in time. I

believe that being there themselves gives them more credibility then less. I know from my

own father being in the military that they don't always tell the truth in the media. So meaning

that they have more knowledge about what is really going on than the rest of us Americans

back in the United States. Are they objective and factual or do they suffer from too much

subjectivity, too much time having passed, too much forgotten? With some of these stories I

believe that some of the men might suffer from too much subjectivity. I don't believe that

any of them suffer from the having too much time passing. I believe no matter how

much

time had passed it is still very vivid for them. I believe for a lot of these men there experience they have had have changed their lives forever.

Part 2

One of the stories that were the most disappointing for me to read was the story by

Ngo Vinh Long in the section deliver us from evil. The reason that was so disappointed in

this story was that is talked about the fact that if a member of South Vietnam family went to

help the National Liberation Front the rest of the family would all be punished. The family

would either be fined or imprisoned find out this information upset me because just because

of a member of our family does something doesn't mean the whole family will do the same

thing. The story also then went on to say that "By 1959 there were already about hundred

thousand political prisoners in the South." I found this also very upsetting because that means that a hundred thousand people were being imprisoned for something they did not

do. Those in the prisons were probably not treated correctly at all because it was a time of

war.

The story that I thought showed some potential for hope or a potential for good was

the story by Ngo Vinh Long. He was talking about being Saigon making maps and he saw a

lot of people basically dying from starvation. He says in his story that he wrote to the U.S.

Embassy and the Saigon government and said that they need to help these people and nothing was done about it. So he and his group with him that were making map stayed with

these people for three weeks so that they would get enough nutrition to hopefully live. I

believe that food is a sign of hope of a potential of good is that he could have just wrote a

letter and left these people behind and left. Instead of living these people to die he stayed

and helped them out possibly saving their lives.

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Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 03:29 PM (1664 words)

Once again, it seems as if I cannot limit my submission to just a few paragraphs. I sincerely hope the length of this is not inappropriate for this type of assignment. I understand you have many of these to read and I certainly don't want to have my submissions be the cause of sighs and eye-rolling. 😊 Thank you, Roxanne

The reasons for and against a war are never as simple as pundits would have you believe and the Vietnam War was no exception. As a young adult I often viewed our world in minimalist and unrealistic terms, believing complex, long-term problems could be solved easily if people just tried. The jokingly overused phrase *why can't everyone just get along?* summarized my feelings about political conflicts but time has a way of illuminating the naiveté of youth. As I've matured I increasingly believe that not every problem will have a solution and not every war can be completely understood or justified. I am taking this class again to learn more about the Vietnam War and delve deeper into the political and social aspects of the war.

Part One...

In two weeks I will have surgery to alleviate carpal tunnel syndrome. In the interest of saving \$400 (the 20% portion uncovered by my insurance) I am opting to be awake. I will experience thirty seconds of what I am told is "extreme" pain while getting a shot. This shot is the nerve blocker that prevents me from feeling pain during the surgery. I am terrified about the shot... until I think about George Watkins.

Courtesy of a pressure-detonated bomb in the Vietnam War, George Watkins lost his eyes and legs. Regarding the time immediately surrounding his injury, he remembers pain and the wait for medical care on the S.S. Sanctuary [sic], a hospital ship. As he relives this memory to Christian Appy, author of the book Patriots, Watkins states he was told he probably wasn't bleeding much because the "force of the explosion will seal the ends of the arteries and veins." I was dumfounded reading that. Is that possible? Could an explosion have such force, severing a leg and exposing bone, and leave a wound that is not spewing blood? I'm not inclined to submit that question to a Google search. Suddenly, my thirty seconds of pain during a shot seems akin to plucking an eyebrow.

I don't doubt for a moment the accuracy of the memories Watkins bears from Vietnam. He was unconscious at times after his horrific injury and parts of

what he does remember are drawn from information relayed to him from doctors and other soldiers. Explaining my belief and acceptance of Watkins's accuracy would be difficult, at best, in a debate. I am basing my opinion solely on my *feelings* – an admittance that feels odd to write in a college-level essay. Where are my verifiable facts? Have I set aside my ability to think critically in favor of a story that makes my heart ache?

What I do have to judge the account's credibility is George Watkins himself, a simple-worded man from whom the reader gets a flickering sense of humor. I'm drawn to him. If I met Watkins on the street, I'd reach out to hug him...if he'd allow it. During the interview with Appy, the grammar Watkins uses suggests a lack of formal education. He speaks simply, but directly. He describes a time that "we was" [sic] destroying everything in a valley. People were rounded up and moved to a camp somewhere else. The livestock were killed, villager's homes were destroyed and the empty valley became a free-fire zone and anything in it was a target. Two days later the villagers are back. [Paraphrased pg. 23] Watkins states "They had to be some good people to withstand all that. They come right back to nothing and start over." "They's some of the most determined people I've ever run into. I don't hate them. [sic]"

There is nothing in his words that suggests to me that he is exaggerating nor does he appear to have a reason to exaggerate his experience. His account was difficult to read and left me feeling pain and sorrow for what he's suffered yet Watkins did give me reason to smile when he referred to the person who caused his extreme life-altering experience. "...I would like to get ahold of that one that set the booby trap [laughs]." At the end of this interview, Appy notes that Watkins shared that he "...says things that don't look good in print." He wanted Appy to "Fancy it up". In recognizing his own shortcomings, George Watkins has bared himself and the sheer simplicity and honesty of his words make his account one of Patriots' most eloquent.

Part Two...

From previous readings of Christian Appy's book Patriots, I know there are no shortage of interviews and none that I will find disappointing. Even if I do not agree with something shared with Appy during the interview, I will not be disappointed in the *person* doing the sharing. The courage I imagine it took to be interviewed, the painful memories it may have awakened and now fresh in their mind, commands my respect. I know this.... now. In my first read-through of Patriots, my mind was partially closed and holding preconceived opinions that were, sadly, without basis.

Over the past year, I've collected the television series That 70's Show. While it was still a network primetime offering I thought it was an amazingly idiotic show and I couldn't fathom why anyone would waste time viewing it. One

afternoon last year, while recovering from an especially grueling history exam I did not do well on, I watched a re-run of the show. By the end, my sides ached from laughing and I happily spent the last of Roger's paycheck on the series. There is an episode in which I used knowledge already gained from my previous Vietnam class. Eric, a 16 year who'd been grounded by his dad, Red, comes into the kitchen dressed in black, head hanging. Red is marching behind him, having just caught Eric sneaking out of his 2nd floor window. Kitty, Eric's mom looks at Red and says "Oh, hell's bells". With this, Eric turns to Red and states, "What now, Ho Chi Minh?"

Ho Chi Minh is not necessarily a person widely remembered with fondness. Time Magazine's Stanley Karnow said this of Minh: "There was no flexibility in Ho's beliefs, no bending of his will. Even as the war increasingly destroyed the country, he remained committed to Vietnam's independence. And millions of Vietnamese fought and died to attain the same goal." What I find disappointing is the realization that when a person commits acts that are labeled atrocities, anything positive they may have done is forgotten...and almost immediately so. Henry Prunier reminds us (I am primarily referring to Americans) of the kind side that Minh did have. Prunier stated that, "It is not an exaggeration to say that Ho's troops loved him like a father. Their respect was obvious." Granted -- followers of Hitler and Mao may have felt the same way about them. Do the horrible acts committed against "humanity" outweigh the fact that these men were loved by *their own* while being hated and hunted? This may be a question with no answer. Winners write the histories, I've been told.

Is there anything positive to be found in both the U.S. Embassy and the Saigon government allowing villagers literally to starve to death in order to "defeat" the communists? Ngo Vinh Long, a map-maker during the Vietnam War, recalls entering a village called Ka Rom where villagers had been put into a strategic hamlet (a relocation system). The villagers said two hundred people were dead as a result of starvation. [Paraphrased pg. 57] Long says to Appy, "Their hair was crinkled and brown, their skin was dark and flaky, and they smelled horrible." I struggle as I read this to find something good, a point at which I could cling and hold to my *happy* thought. Sadly, there was nothing.

I continue to search for something hopeful and compassionate and carefully read again the interview with Ngo Vinh Long. I completely missed the *something good*. Long refused to move on with his map-making team. They stayed in the strategic hamlet and fed starving people a broth of rice, water and sugar. When the map-making team left, most of the villagers had regained some strength and better health. I hear the words "I'm starving" often from the mouth of my bottomless pit, a.k.a., my teenage son, Matt. I myself have used this phrase. In fact, right now my stomach is growling and

I'm feeling the 'it's past dinner time' grumpiness settle in. The people I'm writing about fully understand what starvation is. Clearly, I do not.

The good in many of these interviews is difficult to find, but it's there even though it may be weighted down by deep sadness and indescribable loss. For me, I want the good within this book to take the form of a belief: education about *our* history holds the answers to prevent humanity from repeating our history. From his wheelchair in front of the Vietnam Wall in 1985, George Watkins summed the War succinctly. Unable to see, he could only feel the cold marble with his hands. "Why did all these people die? The majority were my age. Their lives and their families all messed up. What was gained from it?"

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Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Saturday, 9 April 2011, 09:00 AM (610 words)

HST195 Assignment

1

Emlee Martin

Part 1

In our textbook "Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides" by Christian Appy, my attention was caught by the interview with Roger Donlon (12). I found myself incredibly moved by the story of his encounter with the Viet Cong at the Nam Dong Camp on July 6, 1964. Donlon was the commander, a Green Beret, who received the Medal of Honor for his heroics in this attack. As I read his interview I could imagine the attack in my head, somewhat like a movie, it must have been very intense. I find his account to be incredibly believable, the images and experiences of this war are forever burned into his brain. I don't think he could have forgotten it, even if he tried. Some things time can never take from you, and an experience like his he will carry until he dies or loses his memory. I find him to be more credible because he lived it and experienced the battle. The story he told was factual, Roger Donlon did not forget about the attack he survived in Vietnam.

Part 2

The story I found most disappointing to read was that of Luyen Nguyen (94). I was saddened by his story of being a "lost commando", captured by the North Vietnamese soldiers at the age of 33. He lived imprisoned for 21 years, 11 of which were spent in solitary confinement. When Nguyen left for the North he was a married man with 6 children and 1 on the way. When he returned his son, who had been 10 when he left, now had an 11 year old son of his own, and his youngest, the daughter who was in his wife's womb, was now 21 and married. This moved me to tears, he lost so much time, and his family lived so long believing he was dead. As a prisoner Nguyen was treated harshly being forced to lie on a plank with his ankles shackled together. It was disappointing to see how this man lost his life and his family lost a father because he made a promise to his team that he would join them in the mission,

even though no one of his rank went north. He kept his promise and because of it, lived as a "lost commando" from 1966 to 1987.

The story I found a positive message in, was that of John Singlaub (90). At first when I began reading his interview I thought it was horrible that they were "snatching" peasants from the north and bringing them to "Paradise Island," basically abducting them. As I read on I saw that they were in fact abducting these people, and they were doing a form of psychological warfare on them, however the driving force was not malicious. They "...would keep these captives for at least a month and take care of all their physical problems" (91). These abductees were made healthy again and were also slowly indoctrinated to the concept of freedom. They were sent back to the north with a generous gift package, such as fishhooks or sewing supplies, which were hard to come by in the north and a sense of freedom, a "sham resistance". Even though abducting these peasants was not the best way to obtain them, I believe once they arrived at Paradise Island and realized it was help and not harm, their fears could subside. The program may have been rough to start but the outcome of it was a positive uplifting experience. (In my eyes, I am sure if I were one of the abductees I may feel differently.)

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Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

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Liz Potter

Assignment #1

Part 1

For part one I chose Dang Vu Hiep. Reading his story he seemed like a reliable guy with not so many details that would make it seem like he were bluffing at all. I like that he also gives his opinions on the attacks and battles or well he did on one of them. I think that made him more personable.

Part 2

I really enjoyed the Paul Hare Article. I thought his paragraph about confusion was really accurate on how most American soldiers felt about the Vietnamese. I like that he mentions dislocation because I feel that lots of people, Vietnamese or American feel that during wars of any kind. That sort of feeling where they take the feelings out of it. I also thought it was interesting when he described the man that came up to him. I think it is interesting how many people there were in Vietnam and how some of them did not support the Viet Minh. I think guy is a really credible source and that he is trust worthy. They gave a brief background part and he seemed like a very honest person. He was not very factual he sort of just told a small story that held a lot of impact. I think that this memory stuck out for him and he had details but not too many to suggest he was making it up.

I was disappointed in Roger Donlon's story because I thought there were too many details and that it may have been false. The more graphic the story the more I dislike it. I don't enjoy violence that much and I am much more happy with the part two stories that were more fun to read because they were more official.

Over all I liked this story and I definitely learned that not all of the Vietnamese people supported the Viet Minh and that just like the US have different opinions on things. I also learned that reading accounts on the horrific things that happened are much more depressing than watching them on a movie or documentary.

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Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

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Rachel Regelbrugge

1st Assignment

PART 1

Tran Thi Gungs story caught my attention right off the bat, mostly due to the fact that she was a female guerilla. She re-lives her father's death and her need for revenge leading her into the life of a war. I was intrigued in how she shows the same unattachment to killing as many of the other stories I read from both sides of the war, having no difference even though she is a woman. I don't believe that she added to the story to glorify her killings to make herself seem more heroic. Her story is credible to me because her memories of war match up with all the other recollections of what it was like to be fighting in the trenches and underground tunnels. As for forgetting over time I cannot imagine anyone being able to forget the things she saw and did in those years.

PART 2

It was very disappointing to read Ngo Vinh Long's story about his time in Vietnam and America, for two different reasons. He talks about the French randomly killing the Vietnamese and throwing their bodies in the river. As a child he would find the corpse of the dead in ponds at the end of the rivers. This paints a terrible picture of the French and would alter your childhood and train of thoughts about death. Never seeing any dead bodies besides those on stretchers or in coffins I sympathized with him for having to see this on what sounds like a monthly basis. Once he moved to America he spoke against the war at Harvard, he had molotovs thrown onto stage at him luckily he was not harmed. He even had to move eight times during his years in the US to stay safe after only speaking his mind about the war. Freedom of speech is what is supposed to be so great about our country but like most things it has its consequences.

Richard Olsen had survived Vietnam but nearly drowned while getting caught in a riptide in the ocean. A young Vietnamese lifeguard swam out and saved him, even though it probably went against his morals. Luyen Nguyen was in a prison for 21 years shackled to wall with his entire family thinking he was dead. His wife remarried after his "death" and had a child with her new husband while the entire time her first husband was rotting in a

cell. A US commando got out of the prison and was kind enough to find Luyens wife and tell her that her husband was still alive. She divorced her second husband and awaited for her first to come home. It was nice to read that even in the worst of situations some form of beauty can come prevail.

I learned that from reading peoples stories from the war you can actually put yourself in their shoes. I had never really heard the communist side of things and I was very intrigued in the hardships they went through. It made it clear that it was not only the Americans who had massive losses in the war but the Viet Minh too.

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Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

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Darin Richardson

L00527224

April 6, 2011

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

certainty. 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

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.

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.

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Jesse Rowe

History 195

Assignment 1

April, 9 2011

After reading through the many different stories to choose from, the one that caught my attention over all the others was that of George Watkins. I chose this story because to me it is a true testament to the spirit of the American soldier. Even though the nature of his wounds were extremely severe, not once in his story did he seem to feel sorry for himself, nor did he even express animosity towards the North Vietnamese soldiers, aside from stating that he "he would like to get his hands on the one that set the booby trap" that took his sight and legs, an improvised explosive device (IED) made from a 105mm artillery shell set with a pressure sensitive detonator. I truly do believe he saved the other man's life by telling him to spread out and move further away. In combat every soldier is trained to maintain their intervals, this way a whole fireteam will not be taken out by a single mortar or artillery shell. I believe this man's account of the events he experienced to be absolutely true and reliable, not only because he was obviously there, but also by some of the things he said in his story. For example, the way he explained how it felt after the IED was detonated, how he said he felt numb except for the heat in the crater from the blast. I have personally seen casualties in combat and while I have been so lucky to have only been grazed by bullets in both legs, some of my brothers were not so lucky. In having to assist with battlefield triage, I have seen many different wounds. Everything from a sprained knee or ankle, to the tragic loss of life because of a simple mistake or momentary lack of vigilance. I do not believe Pvt. Watkins' story to be subjective, nor had too much time lapsed. Quite the contrary, I found his story to be free of bias or subjectivity. As stated before, I did not feel that he showed any animosity towards the "enemy", and the information he gave was objective to say the least in my opinion. As far as credibility of memory, some things just do not fade with time. I find the fact that he came home, and created the best life he could despite the severity of his wounds, inspirational not to mention extremely

commendable considering that many soldiers that were wounded in the same way were not as fortunate nor as willful, many of them committing suicide in the field by using too much morphine or even their own sidearm. If not later after returning home, especially after the kind welcome that too many of our service men received upon their return.

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Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 06:59 AM (464 words)

I have chosen the story of Phan Xuan Sinh. I picked this account of his experience because I had not heard an account of a South Vietnamese military mis-intelligence before. My father and other family members severed in Vietnam and I had heard their accounts of bad or lack of intelligence. I have heard of innocent people bring hurt or killed at the miss guided hand of American troops and the regret and sadness it caused them. I can't imagine what he must of felt after firing of those fishermen. However, when he was able to remove the old man and woman from the "free-fire zone" he must of felt some good to have helped keep them safe for that moment. I do believe that their stories are as objective and factual as the human mind will let them be. I also believe that with time memories to become more blurred and subjective ,but, that the basic facts remain intacted.

I have chosen "Paradise Inland" from John Singaub as one of the most disappointing stories in Part 2 of "Patriots". I found it quite disturbing at we had used such psychological tactics. That we were at such a lost on how to possibly win or even save face in a war that was so clearly not ours, we would resort to this kind of a sham. In this story it also shows many other questionable decisions from the aircraft we used to bomb the enemy to how we could have stopped the follow of supplies to the North. It also speaks to the fact that at home (U.S.) the anti-war movement itself caused confusion and lowered morale for many our soldiers. Causing many to volunteer to return for another tour. I had heard of this before, my father severed four tours. I find as I read more about the official participants(government officials and other leaders)that I am questioning who was more censored and given more propaganda through out this war ,the Vietnamese people or the American people.

To look for positives where clearly negatives appear to out weigh them, could prove to be a difficult task. I do see some positive in that some American aid did get to the villages in the form of food and medical aid. There are stories of Americans working with the Vietnamese people in villages and helping them to improve their living conditions and creating life time friendships. I think what I see to be true for everyone (both Vietnamese and Americans) is the desire to survive and the strength to make the best out of bad situations. Time after time, in story after story, you see human

desire accomplish amazing feats.

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Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

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Assignment One Catherine Smith

In the midst of all of the harrowing accounts contained in the book Patriots, I found the story of Bernard Trainor to be among the most fascinating. His experiences seem unique and he tells his tale eloquently, in a manner that inspires empathy. Trainor served two stints in Vietnam, while also working as an undercover CIA agent. Recalling a time when he and his fellow soldiers shot up a hospital for lepers, one can hear the regret seeping through his written words. I feel that Trainor's personality is easily calculated by examining his way of expressing himself, and he comes across as credible and forthright. I believe that although his stories are clouded by the fear and confusion he surely experienced while overseas, his anecdotes still retain facts and wisdom rarely seen in recollections of war.

As someone who would like to believe that everyone on earth carries with them a massive potential to bring happiness to others and beauty into this world, it was difficult for me to read the story told by NGO Vinh Long. This man has witnessed countless acts of evil in his lifetime, filling me with apprehension and horror. It is hard for me to believe that some humans have souls while reading about a man whose father was brutally tortured, who witnessed his own people starving to death, who saw, as a small boy, the bodies of those the French mindlessly slaughtered floating in ponds. After reading Long's account, I was staggered by the amazing things a man or woman can conquer when they set their mind to it. To be capable of seeing things I cannot begin to wrap my mind around, and yet still move on and love, live freely, have faith in those around you, makes me feel hopeful. The human heart can conquer even the most horrific of experiences, and this inspires faith in my heart. If ever I go through something that seems insurmountable I know I can make it through, with enough determination.

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The story that Roger Donlon told about defending the Nam Dong Special Forces camp from a numerically superior force of Viet Cong caught my attention. It is truly amazing the camp survived when they came so close to being overrun. Considering the fact that he was awarded the Medal of Honor and the fact that he was a commissioned officer I believe the story to be very accurate. Judging by my own experience in war I'm quite certain that Roger Donlon can remember some of the most insignificant details even after all the years that have passed.

The most disappointing story was Henry Prunier's. What is frustrating about his story is that the war could have been avoided if America had supported the Viet Minh after World War II. Judging by Prunier's story if America had allowed Vietnam to become an independent nation they may not have become communist with the right support. Ho Chi Minh and General Giap seemed to be positively influenced by the OSS operatives training his troops. No one will ever know what might have happened.

Prunier talked about Ho Chi Minh as a very father like figure who was respected by his troops. Ho Chi Minh was very grateful for the support the Viet Minh had received in defeating the Japanese Army in Vietnam. I don't think the leadership of the Viet Minh wanted to go through such a bloody war for the next thirty years.

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Charlotte Thomas

Assignment 1

HST 195

Part 1:

The story that caught my attention the most from part one was the story of Tran Thi Gung, the story about the petite little woman who killed an uncountable number of Americans. This first caught my attention because she was a woman and she was the only woman in her unit. From the description of the photograph from 1966, I imagine her to look like any young Vietnamese woman just starting her life would, but she is lying in the grass aiming a rifle. She is practicing her shooting and learning how to be a soldier. From what I read she seems like a trustworthy person and it doesn't seem that she is bending the truth. I also find it easier to believe her story because, unlike western culture, asian cultures are more tightly knit and they tend to be honest. Lying isn't as common or acceptable in their culture as it is here, in the U.S. Also in her story she doesn't go into a lot detail except for when she is describing the first time she shot and killed an American soldier, but I don't find it hard to believe that she remembered that.

Part 2:

The most disappointing story in part two to me was the story of Paul Hare, and it wasn't what Hare said or his attitude but what Appy chose to write about. What disappointed me was the emphasis on the cockfighting. I feel that while Appy was initially interviewing Hare that they probably talked a bit more about more important things during Vietnam. I'm pretty sure they didn't just sit and talk for only fifteen minutes and all they talked about was cockfighting, yet he chose to write about cockfighting. We don't really hear much of what Hare did and by the end of the story it seemed like that was all he did was just sat around and participate in some local cockfighting. I don't know if Hare actually did anything more than just cockfighting and if he didn't then this story shouldn't even be in the book. Appy only chose a third of the interviews to put in the book and this story just seems like a bad choice. Although if Hare and Appy did talk about more important

and relevant matters then it's a shame that Appy wrote what he did and if I was Hare, I would have been extremely disappointed.

On another note, I really enjoyed the story of Malcolm Browne. I find that the stories from journalists are the most real feeling and most accurate accounts. He wasn't a General for the U.S. military or a North Vietnamese soldier; he was just a reporter in the middle of a war reporting what he saw to the American people. He met his wife in Vietnam and created lasting friendships with Buddhists monks. He was able to watch and record the great sacrifice of Thich Quang Duc and feel the compassion for that fearless old monk. He also witnessed the ruthlessness of the Viet Cong at Dam Doi and what they were capable of. I see both the good and the bad in this story. The good being Browne met his wife and was able to create friendships in the middle of a terrible war, and the bad being that he also witnessed horrible things that we wouldn't dare imagine.

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Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

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Michael Tieman
4/10/2011
History of Vietnam
Joe Escobar
Online Class
Assignment 1

PART 1

I believe Dang Vu Heip's personal account of the war in Vietnam to be a very valuable first hand account. After studying for years in the Soviet Union, to what avenue we do not know, he came back and began his career against the American's as a Lieutenant Colonel which is no low rank in any military force. The next step up is that of a general. Those that are capable of earning such a rank usually have a specific talent and intelligence unlike others. I know this first hand because I currently serve in a branch of the military and have seen first hand, what kind of individuals reside at specific ranks and the different levels of intellect that reside their.

This man left his family, a wife and three children, to serve in a very strategic and important part of the region for 10 years and returned home a general. The Central Highlands. This is an event that would impact any soldier greatly, but having not been affected like those at the front lines, it is easier to retain such knowledge about the who, why, where and how events were occurring or being planned. An individual in this position is not subject to the intense emotions of what happens in the face of certain doom. In his eyes he was just carrying out a standard attack against the South Vietnamese without fully realizing the abilities of the US or even why were there. They may not have the same intelligence networks we did, but I am sure they were better than ours at the time, 1965, given that they knew the ways of their people better than the US. Americans assumed to much and didn't fully incorporate ourselves within the country's political and social dynamics until later. So I do not believe Heip fully when he says he "never understood why the US government regarded this attack as provocative." He mentions later that after conversation with McNamara that he considered his claims that the US would not have attacked as "groundless" if the North did not attack Pleiku. Heip goes on to say that they, the North, believed the US used the incident there as a "pretext for launching long-term planned bombing strikes." Given this

information I believe the North, commanders in the field or those in Hanoi, knew this would provoke the US. I believe his statements to be subjective and somewhat factual given his portion in this timeline. But, who in any of this mess, is really going to be unbiased? Practically no one.

PART 2

Henry Prunier's "These were not ragtag farmers" disappointed me because of the hope of relations between the US and Vietnam by Ho Chi Minh. While I don't personally agree with Communism, I do understand an individual's patriotism and love for the people that reside in their country. When Prunier talks of the brightness in his eyes even though he was so physically frail, it makes me think of the personal accounts I have had with such individuals and their refusal to give up and fight. For anything, not necessarily war. So from this angle I can relate fully to what he was talking about. A man's love for his country, but moreover, one's willingness to take action and take a stand. That is truly a remarkable task no matter what one's belief system is.

The account of Ngo Vinh Long was particularly strong for me and provided me with a strong sense of compassion for him and the works he chose to do for his country. There is an individual like this in any war torn area of the world but they are never recognized or brought to light like say Mother Teresa was. This young man learned so much wisdom from his father that he was able to carry it over into his adult life. When he realized how poorly villagers were being treated he decided to take a stand physically at that time rather than simply overlook what was occurring and move on. So many now a days would simply gloss over such scenes of suffering simply for following orders. It doesn't matter what country they are from. I have read and heard many stories of such accounts occurring in the Middle East and Africa. I know this happened years ago but it gives me great joy to know that there are individuals such as this through out the world that won't just roll over, but actually take a stand to such despicable sights and try to make something positive happen from it. I hope to develop into an individual that cares this much and is able to help my fellow humans in whatever capacity is necessary.

There is a movie called "The Boondock Saints" where in the opening of the movie a priest talks about a greater evil which is "the indifference of good men." This is a true statement and has great meaning. I only hope others can learn from such a powerful statement.

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Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 09:24 PM (817 words)

Part 1

Which single story, other than that of Jo Collins, in Part 1 of the Patriots book caught your attention? Why? How reliable, trustworthy, believable do you believe that speaker to be? After all, unlike you or me, they were there, at that specific point in time. Does that give them more or less credibility? Are they objective and factual or do they suffer from too much subjectivity, too much time having passed, too much forgotten? (These are not easy questions... please take some time to analyze what I'm asking for here.)

The story that caught my eye first in this chapter was the story of Tran Thi Gung, I think I feel a connection due to us both being women. I also did not know that any women were allowed to fight in Vietnam or any place at this time, so that also caught my eye. I thought that it was very interesting that she was a member of the Viet Cong, basically everybody's enemy at that point. She seemed to be very angry at the Americans in general and went to fight in the war to avenge her father's death, at the same time she says "But I never felt guilty about the killing I did. It was war. Wouldn't you shoot me if you saw me holding a weapon and pointing it at you? I think it was justified." page 19, lines 11-13, Appy book. These lines made me wonder why she would even justify her role in the war, especially when she already stated that she was seeking revenge and avenging her father's death.

I really believe her to be true to her experience. She remembers the Americans as being easy targets saying "As soon as I started to fire, he fell, some of his friends came rushing to his aid. They held his body and cried. They cried a lot. This made them sitting ducks. Very easy to shoot." Page 17, lines 2-4, Appy book. In my opinion, she was scared initially because the Americans were so much larger than her, physically, but after she started to get to know their patterns the fear diminished. I personally feel like her credibility as far as this goes is true to her personal experience and believable, but as far as believing that the Americans were easy targets in general, I would never take the enemy's understanding as credible proof.\

I would also like to add that Tran Thi Gung seemed to be very proud of the fact that she had been awarded a decoration titled "Viliant Destroyer of American Infantrymen". In my opinion she have been so obsessed with the first battle in which she was awarded this decoration that all other battles may have been put on the back burner. After all she is a war hero in her country, right?

In the second half of Part 2, address any positive lesson(s) you may have learned from one or more of the accounts in Part 2 of the book. Is there any "hope", "compassion", "goodness" or the "potential for good" that comes out of any of these stories?

The story of Daniel Redmond and his recollections of his time active in the Operation Passage to Freedom in Vietnam sparks a negative feeling in my soul. I guess I have a real big issue with the thought of Tom Dooley, possibly, exaggerating the truth by publishing a picture of an innocent peasant who was most likely born deformed. I understand that this is hearsay from Daniel Redmond, but his interview seemed to reflect Tom Dooley as a good guy. Also, I did not get the feeling that he was jealous of Redmond's success, basically no motivation to sabotage his book by telling lies. Though I am not sure exactly what exaggerations were made, I can assume that Dooley's personal experience may have been different than Redmond's, even though they worked very close.

On the positive side of things, I liked the way that Redmond stated that "I developed a tremendous liking for the Vietnamese, and since I'm Catholic I felt a religious affiliation with the refugees." Page 48, lines 20-21, Appy book. It seems to me that not only did Redmond serve his country by helping carry out Operation Passage to Freedom; he found a way to identify with the people he helped on a personal level. This is something that I personally find enlightening. I also like that Tom Dooley had returned to the region to set up medical clinics in Laos despite being discharged from the Navy due to his homosexuality. It just shows that he had in fact had found a very special spot in his heart for the Vietnamese people and their tremendous need for medical attention.

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