

Due date: Sunday, 1 May 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 1 May 2011, 09:05 PM (832 words)

85/100

Observations

As we know, war is filled with all sorts of terrible tragedies. We know this based on the cost of human life and quality of life afterwards for those that fought in the war. It wasn't just soldiers and military that were directly involved in the war. Many civilians had first-hand experiences in Vietnam. In Christian Appy's "Patriots," a number of the stories in the book come from these people who were not directly in the war, but still were closely involved. Their experience in Vietnam and with the soldiers offers interesting perspectives and insight into the war.

Trails to War

Helen Tennant Hegelheimer

Helen Tennant Hegelheimer recalls her time spent as a stewardess aboard one of the airlines that was responsible for delivering and recovering U.S. troops from the front lines of Vietnam. She tells her story as though she was responsible for all their lives. She even noted that she felt like their wife, sister, girlfriend, or even their mother. All she could do for these troops was to just be there. For me, Hegelheimer had one of the best views of the troop just entering and leaving Vietnam. For those just entering, she was possibly the last "civilized" person these troops will see before they enter the horrors of war, and for the troops that were returning from their tour, she was the first person the troops would look to and try to ring out some of the bad habits the troops picked up while out in the field. Hegelheimer's unique perspective on the before and after changes to troops has made this one of my favorite stories in this book.

Morale Boosters

Nancy Smoyer

Like Hegelheimer, Nancy Smoyer was one of the few nonmilitary people who met with U.S. troops. Smoyer traveled from base to base in Vietnam with the Red Cross to entertain the troops. Her goal was to play any type of games with the troop that might get their minds off the war, even if it's just for a little bit. Smoyer talks about how some of the troops were so shocked to see an American girl that they stumbled while trying to flirt with her because they were so out of practice. Some of the troops seemed to question the reason why Smoyer was there in a war zone. But that seemed to only make Smoyer more protective of them and want to help them even more. Smoyer's story was interesting in the fact that a lot of