

the troops basically lost their life and livelihood. They seemed to have some type of atrophy that washed away the knowledge of how they used to live. This is yet another amazing insight for me, into how some of the troops adjust to the circumstances of the war right in front of observers like Smoyer.

Cameras, Books, and Guns

Duong Thanh Phong

On the Vietnamese side of the war, there may not have been organizations like the Red Cross or USO to encourage their troops, but they did have combat photographers that used the photos taken as anti-American propaganda. Phong was one of these combat photographers that had a number of good views of the war on both sides. Phong recalls his first encounter with the American enemy. He saw an American GI die right in front of him, and shortly afterword, another GI came to take the body of the dead soldier. As he watched, he witnessed the GI crying as he recovered the body. That crying was first time Phong realized that the Americans are just like the Vietnamese, humans, and not aliens. Phong went on to note in another observation that a lot of the Vietnamese soldiers didn't feel fear because they were able to accept their own self-sacrifice for their country. (Phong added more to the actual events that happened in the field of war, but was able to do it while adding a bit of emotion to the individual soldier, and not the troops as a whole.)

All three of these stories had observers in the war that had a great role to play. They were all trying to be their best in the face of overwhelming pain and grief. Even though they weren't directly involved in the war efforts as soldiers, they might have had the largest effects on those that were serving in the war. Hegelheimer was able to see dismay on the faces of the soldiers before entering combat, and the agony of defeat of those exiting. Smoyer witnessed the hard conditions adding up on those serving on their long tour of duty. Finally, Phong had some of the best observations of the human conditions right in the middle of a warzone. All three were able to add some amazing color to the story of the Vietnam War and offer a unique perspective from individuals closely involved in the war, but not engaging in battle.

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I don't know what your theme is ... paper seems like a random collection of non-combatant stories.