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Escobar
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Assignment #2

There are some very impressive human traits that come across in these personal accounts and I must admit I found it difficult to choose a theme that connected so many different stories. I think I will choose "duty" amongst the three stories I chose to write about because this basis alone sets the tone for so much that can be done in war. An individual's sense of duty can be paramount to one whether the stakes are low or high. When one feels they have nothing left, it is often times duty that is the single driving force in pushing them to continue. The three stories I have chosen captivated me and I think are all linked. As a member of the Army National Guard we learn and live by the 7 corps Army values: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless sacrifice, honor, integrity, and personal courage. Duty is a great basis for any of the others to come together. It is said that to have 6 of these traits, means you have honor.

Dennis Deal goes in to great detail about his struggles and combat experience in Vietnam. (Appy 130) He was considered an elite in that he was a ranger and graduated airborne school. Though I think any typical grunt could have been in his place and done what he did. His telling of events is quite unique and if you have seen the movie *We Were Soldiers*, you would see how incredible this engagement was. He talks of many different situations but the part that stood out in my mind the most was where he finally makes it to the creek bed and they prepare for another assault. He says "My platoon was on the right flank and I was the right man. Nobody was to my right-I was alone." (Appy 132) I almost thought this should be in capital letters because of the incredible realization that must be to a soldier especially given his account that they just got blown to hell not more than a few minutes prior. This feeling of being alone in such a situation is everything that fear is. Sense of duty in a soldier can help a soldier do anything. Accomplish any task and overcome any fear. It is something that is drilled into ones mind from the moment they enter the service. For good reason to. David Smith is a very dedicated doctor who fully believed in going to Vietnam and believed what Johnson was saying about it. I think, by his telling of events he realized what the president said had little to do with what he was dealing with. As a triage officer he had the difficult task of separating those with the worst or simplest injuries.

I can't imagine a job that would be more emotionally taxing on one's spirit and commitment. His account is unique because he managed to take the best away from all he saw and did. "So professionally it was just wonderful. And regardless of how bad it got, I could always feel I was doing something good for somebody." (Appy 168) I think given his duty, a monumentally difficult task in a war, his attitude helped him prevail. There is something special about this I think. I think his position as a triage officer shows his "duty" and ability to overcome no matter how hard things got. I am sure he has seen some pretty devastating sights as a common soldier in the field would have.

The story of Vu Hy Thieu was a tough one to read coming from the account of a North Vietnamese soldier. It is difficult to take my emotions away from the story and sense of national pride as an American. When you can do this though you begin to see the similarities in human character. The level of dedication and willingness to prevail no matter what the scenario or consequence is. This man starts by being given an opportunity in to study in the Soviet Union after he graduates school which I am sure is not very common for these people. So, like wealthier white Americans who managed to avoid the war, this guy had an opportunity to do so. He chose to sign up. That's courage, and worth noting I feel. Some of his accounts show what duty leads him, or a people to do when necessary. He spoke of how they made smokeless fires by piping the smoke horizontally underground and leading up the exit so the smoke dispersed. Duty, and necessity spawned such a trick. When he spoke of sandals he said "If you lost your sandals it was a huge disaster." (Appy 192) This guy understood that to perform certain duties adequately, you need specific tools. In this case, sandals for something as simple as marching. Incredible! He goes on to speak of how he became an expert boob trap maker. While this is sad to read of the deaths he spoke of, I mention it because it is similar to what duty spawns in us to do. Unfortunately this was a war where it seemed that body count was a major factor. Those who kill the most win. And get bragging rights. I felt he was bragging here. American soldiers have done the same so I am not judging. His duty in setting booby traps though, plays hell psychologically with soldiers, and is just one more form of creative tactics brought about by duty to your country, service, or cause.

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