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Catherine Smith

Joe Escobar

History of the Vietnam War

Written Assignment #2

Strength of the Soul

In the majority of stories we hear as children, there is a clear line between the good and the evil. When it comes to reality, however, the line between the positive and negative can be much more difficult to define. Often this is because the dark and light aspects of existence combine to form what could be referred to as the grey area. The war in Vietnam, the individuals involved, and the families of these individuals, all fit into that grey region which spans the gap between the good and bad. In every terrible experience or occurrence in life there is a brighter side to be seen, and it is this theme that stood out to me while reading of the myriad horrors detailed in the Appy book. Even in circumstances that made me shudder to imagine, men and woman were able to see rays of optimism. Humanity possesses the power to find hope, beauty, and astounding strength of both body and mind, even in the midst of the most horrendous of situations.

The first example of resilience in the face of strife can be found in the story told by a Vietnamese woman by the name of Vi Thi Vinh. She, and other young people toiled to create and upkeep what we now refer to as the Ho Chi Minh trail. Vi detailed her struggle for survival as her group defused bombs, filled in craters, and sought out food that had escaped the destruction caused by American bomb raids. She speaks of scraping moss off of rocks, or of soaking twigs in water and drinking the juice. Even in the midst of her backbreaking struggle to live, even during nights filled with the sound of explosions and death, Vi Thi Vinh remained resilient. This resilience was summarized when she describes camp with other youth. They performed plays, and sang songs well into the night. I was so humbled when I read the words: "We use to joke that you couldn't hear the bombs over our singing." To be able to literally raise your voice in song to drown out the sounds of destruction is something truly miraculous.

Another instance which illustrates humanity's hardiness is told by a surgeon who helped in the war effort, named David Smith. Smith said he felt privileged to be in Vietnam, even though men were dying beneath his hands, because he could at least save a few. He tells story whose symbolic power clearly summarizes the theme of humanity overcoming hardship, or turning the darkness into

something that pierces through the negative. While walking through a Vietnamese village, Smith saw an old man working metal. Upon closer inspection he sees that the man is utilizing old shells from bullets; melting them down in order to craft beautiful and ornate vases. The man was literally taking part of a lethal weapon, a symbol of death and pain, and turning it into something that was capable of bringing joy and color into the world.

The last tale of overcoming scars, both physical and mental, comes from an artist out of Hanoi. Vu Hy Thieu was a Vietnamese man who chose to join the southern forces, marching along the Ho Chi Minh trail. He speaks of sandals made of old tires, of thirteen-year-old boys who had their intestines blown out onto the mud, and of hordes of mosquitoes and blood-sucking leeches. After all of these appalling experiences, however, at the very end of his testimony, Vu describes returning to his city. He went through hell and back, yet still he closes with a recollection of the sun, rising on the walls of his city. He is struck by the simple beauty, by the sight of something he once took for granted, but never will again. I am astounded by the fact that a soul can survive so much anguish, yet still retain the capacity to observe and appreciate beauty.

Reading all of the accounts contained by the Appy book, I was humbled, sickened, and moved. I feel privileged not to have experienced anything similar to the things detailed in the stories of the brave men and women in the text, yet I also am able to see how their mindset can be applied to many things in life, no matter how small. By looking for the positive, even if all seems lost or hopeless, a flame can be found. It is this flame that gives humans the ability to move through situations that seem to have no happy ending in sight.

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Charlotte Thomas

Assignment 2

HST 195

While reading Part Three: Escalations, of Appy's book, I have noticed a theme of patriotism. I chose this theme because it seemed like the most appropriate theme to talk about. It is war and you should be patriotic if you are risking your life to defend your country.

The first story of the section caught my attention immediately because it was the story of a young Vietnamese girl, not a woman but a girl, who showed her patriotism for her country by volunteering to work on the trails. Vu Thi Vinh joined the volunteer corps when she was only fifteen years old and her life consisted of school, working on the trails, and little sleep. In the story she talks about an instance where an unexploded bomb was dropped near a bridge and everyone on the volunteer team wanted to be in the group to defuse the bomb. These are people who volunteered to help build trails and every single one of them wanted to be a part of the "dare to die" team sent in to defuse the bomb. They all wanted to risk their lives to help out. Vu and her fellow volunteers may not have been soldiers but they were still helping defend their country.

Another story that I saw a great deal of patriotism in was the story of Dennis Deal, the story about the carnage in Ia Drang Valley. He watched so many men die that day and was risking his life every second for his men and his country. While fleeing from the massive number of Vietnamese soldiers he was separated from his platoon. He was left to fire upon a group of Vietnamese and killed every one of them while he was left untouched. He did as much as he could possibly do to defend and save as many men as possible. He fought for himself, his men, and his country.

The last story that caught my attention was Jim Soular's story. He says "I knew when I quit college I'd lose my student deferment and get drafted. I had no problem with that because I was a patriot. I believed in the flag, I believed in serving my country. And I was good at it." He started off loving the war. He was the pilot of a Chinook helicopter and he enjoyed every moment of it. He enjoyed being on an M-60 machine gun and firing away and he enjoyed being able to defend his country. Jim says that he feels a "deep, deep sense of sorrow" for the Vietnamese and he doesn't hate them. He was just doing what

he was suppose to which was to defend his country and it's what he did. He defended his country against the communist Vietnamese.

All of the men and women involved in the war showed their patriotism in one way or another. Whether it was by helping build trails, by fighting on the ground or in the air, they are all patriots. They all loved their countries and fought for them and they showed a great deal of patriotism.

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Darin Richardson

L00527224

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History of the Vietnam War

Assignment #2

Civilians. In every war, it is the civilians that suffer. World War I saw hundreds of thousands of civilians die in Europe. World War II saw millions of civilians die, again in Europe and in Asia. And in both wars, civilians in Europe were horribly disabled and disfigured by the thousands. The same can be said for civilians in Asia during World War II. And again in the Vietnam War, an estimated two million Vietnamese civilians were killed by Americans and Vietnamese soldiers, both North and South.

This essay is about the Vietnamese civilians that suffered during the Vietnam War. American civilians suffered at home, too, but what they experienced was nothing compared to the horrors the populace of Vietnam, both North and South, experienced. The "war zone" in Vietnam and the "war zone" in America, which was in the form of civil unrest towards the war and antiwar demonstrations, were vastly different. The American populace was not right in the middle of the conflict per se; they did not live in a country that experienced daily bombings, napalm, Agent Orange, defoliants, and constant killing everywhere. The Vietnamese populace was in the midst of all of this.

I chose to write this particular essay on the Vietnamese civilians because it seemed to be one of the constants I was finding in all the stories in the book "Patriots". It is the one subject that has been speaking to me the most while I was reading the book. I thought it might be a form of remembrance if I focused this essay on the Vietnamese civilians who experienced man's inhumanity to man during the Vietnam War. I have chosen three accounts for "Part Three: Escalation" from the book that show how these poor civilians suffered during the Vietnam War.

The first account I chose that shows what the Vietnamese civilians had to endure is the story by veteran Jim Soular, in the "Free Fire"

zone section of "Part Three- Escalations." He talks about how as a crew member on a big Chinook helicopter, he was called upon to move Vietnamese villagers from suspected Viet Cong-controlled areas.

On one of these forced-evacuation missions of Vietnamese civilians, he told how they forced sixty villagers to board the helicopter at gunpoint, and these villagers had never been near a helicopter before. They were frightened to death. They packed these poor civilians into the helicopter like sardines and they were so frightened that they were urinating and defecating in the helicopter. Soular said that after the helicopter started to lift off, one of the male Vietnamese civilians stood up and started going crazy out of fear and one of Soular's crewmates just pitched the poor man out the back of the helicopter to his death sixty feet below. Soular also mentioned that he always flew refugees out, but never any back in.

The second story I chose is by Truong My Hoa from the "Prisoners of War" section of "Part Three- Escalations." She was a civilian who joined the Communist Party in 1963 and was arrested in 1964 by South Vietnamese officials for supposedly causing trouble. She endured prison for eleven years, and one of those years she was imprisoned in a tiger cage with four other women.

Truong was tortured repeatedly and she had to eat, urinate, and defecate in the tiger cage. She wasn't given any clothing and her captors tried to force her to go against her beliefs and the Communist Party. Truong was a civilian who did support North Vietnam, but she had not committed any violent acts against South Vietnam or the Americans. For her political affiliation and her beliefs, she was imprisoned and tortured. This is another example of the suffering of civilians during the Vietnam War.

The third and final story I chose to show how the civilians in Vietnam suffered is by Phillip Jones Griffiths from the "Cameras, Books, and Guns" section of "Part Three- Escalations." Griffiths' story wasn't very long, but he did give two examples of civilian suffering. He visited a napalm ward in Quang Ngai's provincial hospital where he encountered a young civilian boy who had happened to be in an area that had been bombed with napalm. Griffiths said that the boy's eyelids, lips, and nose had been burnt off, but he was still alive, and he wanted Griffiths to take his picture. Griffiths did as the boy asked. He could hardly look at the boy's skull-like features. That story touched me. The poor boy had done nothing wrong except be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Griffiths also tells how American GIs tried to coerce a young Vietnamese boy into telling them the location of a local Viet Cong group or they would kill his father, but the boy had absolutely no

idea what they were talking about. Griffiths said he would always remember that incident.

The above three accounts are only a sampling of stories of civilian suffering I have found thus far in the book "Patriots." Although the Vietnam War ended thirty-six years ago, the suffering of the civilians was felt for many years afterward. It seemed as if no Vietnamese family escaped the horrors of the war.

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Elizabeth Potter

Assignment Two

The vietnam war tore apart many lives that would have been filled with happiness otherwise. The theme is broken. The stories written by Sylvia Lutz Holland, James Thompson, and Vu thi Vinh best described this theme. The stories all described a tale of young men and woman who lost their lives, not necessarily their physical life, more like they lost what their lives could have been if not for the war. The war effected many lives as wars are prone to do, but if there had been no war these men an women would have grown up to be happy old men and women. They would hold no ever lasting scars, both pyshical and mental. In all three stories there are the same underlying theme of broken.

In Sylvia Lutz Holland's recount she talked about how she was a member of the army Nurse corps. The underlying theme of broken is resounding here. The author writes unfeeling about the terror that she witnessed like she were talking about the weather. This story only help the theme of broken lives because this woman would have been a nurse in an American hospital maybe even an old folks home and the worst she would have seen as a wound maybe would have been a car crash. Nothing like the resounding terror of a person blown apart by a land mine. There would have been no need to throw a baby in the trash or to be spat upon. She will carry the scars of those sights for the rest of her life.

The second story that rsounds this theme was the James Thompson recount. James Thompson was most likely responsible for many mnay deaths. A young politician asked to sign a piece of paper. Ending the lives of many without ever realizing it. Nothing could break a man more than if he were to unwittingly kill hundreds of people. If there had been no war than he would have meerly been a politician, signing papers only to unwittingly cut and/or raise taxes. Never having to think of who the men were that he signed off their deaths.

The third story that embodies this theme probably the most is the Vu thi Vinh tale. At age fifteen she signs up to be a volunteer in the war lieing about her age. Her patriotism bringing her the greatest pain. She starved and worked and tried her hardest to help when

she should have been chasing after boys and going to school. Her life could have been filled with all of the conflicting emotions of a teenager instead of how to set off an undetained bomb without destroying too much of their bridge. If there ever was a more broken life than this. Her life was broken from their on out.

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Assignment 2- by: Emlee Martin

As I read chapter 3 in Christian Appy's "Patriots", I found myself flooded with many thoughts as to where I want to take this paper. I saw many themes as I read through "*Escalations*." The one I chose to write about is 'Deception During Wartime.' There were many instances of deception throughout the Vietnam War, but in my opinion the ones during the "escalation" period were crucial. I believe the war started, well really escalated, because of the deception in the Gulf of Tonkin incident. The result of which was the passing of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which gave President Johnson the legal ability to deploy troops and engage in warfare against North Vietnam. This was all based on a lie; a lie that initiated Operation Rolling Thunder and the deployment of many American troops. I will illustrate three more instances of "Deception during Wartime" from stories in the Appy book.

As I read the story of James Thomson (115-17) I was dismayed to find out he had signed off on so many "armed recce" missions without truly knowing what he was authorizing. This is a deception of omission; the colonel who presented the maps for authorization was vague in his description of what they were for. Thomson was authorizing armed reconnaissance, in which anything that looked suspicious was being fired upon. I also question why he did not further investigate what he was signing off on. I believe it is because he was the "new kid" in the office and did not want to "make waves." He also speaks of the "so-called Gulf of Tonkin incident" and the policy planning meeting he attended about it. He reports Walt Rostow, the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, stated in this meeting, it was unclear if the attack happened, but it gave the US the opportunity to "really go broke on the bombing" (116). This was deceitful policy making. Thomson was shocked to see after Johnson's election of 1964, the administration was "going for a slow-motion, but systematic escalation and the aerial bombardment of enemy positions north and south" (117). It was as if negotiations or withdrawal were not even options; escalation to war was the only way the Johnson administration saw fit to approach Vietnam. The attack was fabricated, but because of it Johnson was given the green light to start a war.

In the story of Jim Soular (156-61) I was moved to tears by the deception. The death of his best friend David was not at the hands

of the enemy, nor was it an accident. He was fatally shot in Vietnam by another American, Bob Harris. It was a senseless death, David should have returned to his family in Minnesota. At his Harris told the defense he had been drinking when David was shot. He showed no remorse and was sentenced to only 5 years. Soular visited David's mother twenty years after the war and at this meeting she discovered the truth behind her son's death. The military had lied to her and told her David was "accidentally shot." This is a huge deception, this woman sent her 19-year-old son off to war, to honorably fight for his country, and he came home in a body bag with a bogus explanation of his death. The government lied to his grieving family, where is the honor in that? I am ashamed such a thing would take place. I imagine the government was embarrassed that one of their men had taken the life of another, but I still see no reason why they covered up the truth. It was such a deceitful and disgraceful thing to do. It really is tragic that it took so long for this mother to know the truth behind the last moments of her son's life.

The last story I chose was that of Nguyen Duy (256-57). He was on the communist side of the war. He is also a highly regarded Vietnamese poet. We so much talk of who won the war, when in reality no one did. Nguyen states, "In the end, in every war, whoever won, the people always lost" (257). It is true, the people suffered, whether American or Vietnamese. He speaks of his poor but peaceful village, which he so badly wanted to return to. When he got the chance to go home, it had been destroyed, the beauty was gone. The war had ravaged the country and changed the Vietnamese society. Both Vietnamese and Americans lost so much in this war, I don't believe anyone won. In the end war does not really prove who is right or who is wrong, who won or who lost; it just proves who is left alive.

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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

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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Jennifer Lusby

Assignment #2

History 195

The theme to stories I have chosen is about women. When I thought about the Vietnam War I always thought about it involving young men heading off to a horrible place they had no idea what they were getting into. But in some of these stories there are women that were women involved in the Vietnam War in a way they either helped the men before going to war or they help the men after coming back from Vietnam. Some also involved women that went to Vietnam to help injured men with the Red Cross also there were women that went to Vietnam to help being up the morale in the troops.

The story that caught my interest the most was by Helen Tennant Hegelheimer. The reason that I found it so interesting was because I felt like her and the other stewardess did a lot for the men heading into Vietnam and the men coming back from Vietnam. Even though I might not know these stewardesses if I had not read this book or took this history class I feel that these women really helped the young men heading to war. From my own experience my father was a young man when he went into war in Vietnam and I hope that he had a stewardess like Helen that help him with his fears going into war. Also I hope that he found a stewardess like Helen to deal with being home after seeing the horrible things he saw in Vietnam before coming home.

The Next story in part three of Appy book that caught my eye was Nancy Smoyer story. The reason that I found this some interesting is that this woman Nancy was talking about the things she was doing for the Red Cross in Vietnam to help being up the morale in the soldiers. It just it amazes me that woman playing games with you could make to you feel better in a war zone but I guess it helps you get your mind off the things that are going around you. Nancy also talks about in her story about how "If I had known what I know now I couldn't have played games with them. I'd have probably been trying to warn them and warn myself." The things I feel Nancy does not understand that even if she warned the troops it would not have done any good. The men already knew way more then she could or probably can imagined what was a head of them her warning them would not have helped. I think that Nancy also did not realized if though after the fact she thought her games that she played with them was childish and did not help them at all I think it helped the men to stop fearing for their life's for a little while and being able to laugh for a second.

The last story that I chose is Vivian Rothstein story. The reason that I found this story

so interesting is that involved a woman that went to the Bratislava Conference because she was such a strong peace activist in the United States. I also found it interesting that this woman was able to stay her feeling about war and the things to do with war. The reasons why war is bad in America but the minute she had the opportunity to go to the place where war is happening she is afraid but our men are over there fight that war and not being able to be afraid like her or state there feeling about the war. If she think she should have the ability to state why the war is so bad maybe she should have to go fight in the war like the men are. Vivian went on from her experience in North Vietnam to talk about why war is bad in a different like a more positive light I would think. These three stories are different in many ways. The first story talks about a woman that was affect by the Vietnam War because she was a stewardess on a plane that transported support to and from Vietnam to America. The second story was about a woman that worked to raised morale with troops. The last was about an activist that changed the way she presented herself after being in the war zone of North Vietnam.

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War. War brings us a snapshot of life that we like to think existed only in our ancestors. It shows us a darker side of humanity. A person can spend decades studying philosophy, or devote his entire life to science or religion. Man is taught to value human life above all else, to give his life for his friends when needed. Through the scope of war that same scholar is transformed into a primal man that stands gasping for breath, covered in mud and sweat, towering over the corpse of a man he just killed with his bare hands, adrenaline coursing through his veins, thankful to survive. This scene could be from any century in human existence, because war is our legacy. Boys are taught to fight in some form from their earliest interactions. When they become adults, we send them to war. In war, life boils down to its most basic essence: life and death. How can a person make this stark transition from preserver of life to destroyer of it?

The theme that stands out to me in these stories is the high emotional cost that war exacts on its survivors years after they come home. War compromises our most basic human principle, the preservation of human life. Of course this dichotomy of ideals is nothing new to war, for centuries nations have given their soldiers powerful reasons to kill. Without an ideal driving the soldiers, the soldiers will not fight effectively. The difference in the Vietnam war is that, when they got home there was no national recognition of valor. There was a lot of antiwar sentiment by the war's end, and many felt that it was not a war we could claim as a victory. In a time in American history where we were seen as the "Shining city on a hill," an example for all nations to emulate, we found ourselves bogged down in a war that did not have an international commitment and support. We fought on our own. We thought we were still fighting a monstrous global enemy bent on world domination, yet the Vietnam War was fought in small villages against a faceless, often unseen opponent. The disparity between the two realities is hard to reconcile and later in life it seems as if the subjects were looking back on a different person. They had to survive by any means necessary. The benefit of history and of these accounts, is that we see the event after it has happened as a whole and we know the outcomes.

The most basic thing that soldiers are taught in the military is chain of command. It is their commander that gets them through the day and dedicates himself to sending as many of his soldiers home alive

as possible. The strength of this bond and the chain of command is the most important under times of extreme stress. The fact is that if you wanted to survive, you followed orders. Jim Soular, Luu Huy Chao and Larry Heineman learned to follow orders to take part in a war that lead to the devastation of countless lives.

Jim Soular was a flight engineer on a Chinook helicopter with the 1st Cavalry Division in Vietnam. Like most Americans, Jim was proud of his country and willing to defend it with his life. Our country was in war and it was his duty to protect it. Jim was a young patriot. He was no stranger to hard work and perseverance and his story began similarly to many of his generation. He joined the airborne cavalry and loved feeling the power of the machines. Like most young men, "...I loved war. I can't deny that. I loved it. I hate it now, but at the time, as a kid, I loved it"(Appy, 157). Jim was taught, as I was, that Americans fight for what we believe in, we fight for what is right. We are taught to fight for those principles at all costs.

Jim's exhilaration for flying was tarnished with experiences of seeing those principles trounced on by his superiors. During operations in which American soldiers relocated the Vietnamese from their homes for the impending free-fire zones, Jim began to realize that the Vietnamese had very strong principles and beliefs themselves. Time and time again the refugees would return to their homes, heedless of warnings, just to be close to the bones of their ancestors. Jim saw first-hand that the Vietnamese were second-class citizens in their own country when a refugee was thrown out of his helicopter from 60 feet up and there was never any investigation or follow-up. Things began to not add up in Jim's mind. The things Jim went there to fight for were not so evident anymore. Like a good soldier though, Jim pressed on and followed orders, with the hope that things would make sense later.

Unfortunately things only got worse for Jim and his best friend was murdered by a fellow soldier. During the trial, Jim was the only one to testify and to his disbelief the man was sentenced to only five years of hard labor. The man on trial before was sentenced to fifteen for moving a helicopter. In Jim's mind it was clear that for all of the military's rhetoric about principles, the potential loss of a helicopter was worth more than his friend's life. To his disbelief, the murdered man's parents were never told the true story of what happened or even that he was murdered. He felt that everything he thought he had known was false, "...the government had absolutely no compunction about lying to her (the man's mother), just as it had lied to us constantly during the war" (161).

The experience of the many North Vietnamese Army soldiers was

similar those of our soldiers. Like our soldiers, the NVA was convinced that they were in the right. They felt like they were fighting for their country and we were the aggressors. They felt it was their patriotic duty to defend their country, just as Jim did. Both sides felt like they were in the right, this is always true in war. Unfortunately, for our purposes, the Vietnamese are less vocal in the book about events that they regret. The general theme however, is the same: they follow orders , but ultimately regret the war itself and its countless deaths. Pilot, Luu Huy Chao is one such NVA soldier.

Luu originally wanted to be an infantryman. However, his country needed pilots so he did his patriotic duty and applied and was accepted. Luu became an ace pilot and personally met Ho Chi Minh on three occasions in appreciation for his valor and skills. Luu followed his orders and rose in the ranks, eventually shooting down six American planes. In air to air combat, every second counts and one second could be the difference between life and death. He was doing his duty to rid his country of foreign invaders and he was willing to kill for his country. Not everything that Luu saw in the war fit with his beliefs.

Luu repeatedly had to speak out against fellow soldiers doing things that he felt was not right. Often pilots would try to shoot down the American pilots after they ejected, Luu ordered them to stop. He said, "He won't attack us again. Let him alone." When a pilot argued that, "Why not? They do it to us?" Luu said, "Well, we're different" (215). Both sides felt they were right and killed each other under orders. Killing bred more killing and eventually both sides didn't need any moral excuse to fight each other.

Larry Heineman summed up how I imagine many soldiers in the Vietnam war felt in just one sentence, "You're driving around with your asshole puckered the whole fucking time" (245). It was a type of warfare that we had never seen before. The soldiers had awesome firepower, amazing technology and dedicated soldiers, however when these factors were combined with guerilla tactics, the casualties were horrendous. Larry points out that as an APC driver, he was sitting on ninety gallons of gasoline and any false move could kill him. All of the technology and innovation poured into that APC, was not enough to save the lives of the men inside against an RPG or landmine.

Although this is less of a combat role than Luu or Jim, Larry did his part in ensuring his friends and fellow soldiers lived. In his case, his fearless driving and willingness to give his life for his friends surely saved many lives. Larry had to fight his desire to preserve his own life, in order to help ensure the deaths of his enemies. This role is

clearly contradictory to what our bodies tell us, so Larry relied on orders and training to get through it. Despite his best efforts, Larry lost a lot of friends and has to live with that fact.

The mentality of Larry to bear down and get it done, is the natural one when faced with life and death. You do what you have to do, you get it done and hope for the best. Unfortunately each of these soldiers had to live with their choices for the rest of their lives. They can be proud of their valor and their ability to follow meticulous orders, but the fact that so many lives were lost weighs heavily on all of their minds.

When Jim Soular thought about the toll that was paid in Vietnam, he said, "'I've always considered myself a good soldier, whatever that means. I did what I was told to do. But everything I'd been raised to believe in was contrary to what I saw in Vietnam. All kinds of questions went through my head and there were no answers... All I have is this deep, deep sense of sorrow that this whole thing happened" (Appy, 161). In the moment, each moment of adversity, he had to rely on authority and courage to guide him. Regardless of the reason, taking life is inherently traumatic. Ideology can only get us so far, at some point the question of whether or not the right to take someone else's life for ideals must be addressed by each individual.

Pilot Luu Huy Chao articulated a very similar feeling of loss with his experience in the war. As Luu pointed out, the men he killed did not suffer alone, "The suffering caused by war is immeasurable. The dead are only a small part of the whole. A dead soldier causes suffering to so many other people...As a fighter pilot I'm not sorry to have shot down American jets, and American pilots shouldn't be sorry if they shot down Vietnamese aircraft. That's what we were supposed to do. Now my only wish is that there be no war" (Appy, 215). Luu followed his orders and followed them well, unfortunately there is so much pain and loss that comes from war.

Larry Heineman expressed an even deeper sorrow about the war, "The war was devastatingly brutal...After living in this wallow, how do you come out and reconnect with your own humanity? Is it possible to love someone knowing that you have done all these things, and are capable of all these things, and have seen all these things... It becomes like a bruise and turns dark. The dark places on my heart are not going away" (Appy, 247). Larry looked back on his experiences almost as if they cost him his humanity. The actions that he did for his country and its ideals went against all of the things that he held dear to his heart.

Regardless of the motivations, war takes us out of our natural state

and forces us to make decisions that go against our most basic tenets. Our ideology transforms such that preservation of life comes second to taking the life of our enemies. On the individual level however, it is clear that war most often boils down to kill or be killed. Although each of the people we have learned about have their own narrative, they all experienced the gambit of potential death. Whether they had to make decisions about who was saved or to save their own lives with deadly force, they have to ultimately take responsibility for those actions. Years later, the excuse of following orders seems to leave a bad taste in their mouths and the men in these stories only wish that the war never happened.

Who knows what fate could have held for these men. These men would have been allowed to pursue their economic, scholarly, or religious dreams, if their nations had not pressed them into service for god and country. Regardless of their uniform, these men share the same ties with humanity. They have wives, kids and parents. All of those who have fought in a war have experienced some level of detachment from these ties as a result of following orders. The solution to reconciling those two sides of mankind are still elusive. We are still carrying on our curious legacy of preserving life on the one hand, while taking it away with another.

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Jesse Rowe

History 195

Assignment 2

28 April, 2011

Sense of Purpose:

A Soldiers Motivation

One theme that stuck out to me throughout the sections “Morale Boosters”, “Prisoners of War”, and “Central Highlands”, was the soldiers' sense of purpose. Whether it was a sense of obligation to use personal talents in service of their country, to tend to another man’s wounds, or feeling duty bound to keep the men in their platoon alive, these soldiers felt a sense of purpose that helped positively motivate them enough to get through the extraordinary experiences they had to endure. During the Vietnam War, morale was extremely important on both sides, but there are not very many reasons a soldier has to be upbeat when he is in combat. For most people, when they think of a morale booster for soldiers, they think of a USO show, or special food being served before they are sent into the field. In reality, a soldier has to find motivation in what some would think are very simplistic aspects, especially in extremely difficult situations. Something as simple as a leaf being taken as a sign from God, or as important as having a sense of purpose, can provide positive motivation and a boost to a soldier’s morale. However trivial this may seem to some, it is not. It is a selfless, and non-materialistic trait. Sometimes having a sense of purpose when the situation is extremely bleak, is enough motivation to stay the course, or survive against remarkable odds..

A sense of purpose may be the only light in an otherwise pitch black tunnel, so to speak. While these stories are all from Section 3: Escalations, they are not in sequence. This sequence is essential to the explanation of the theme.

- **Morale Boosters:**

Vu Hy Thieu’s Story

First, I would like to discuss a story from the section “Morale Boosters”. It is the story of Vu Hy Thieu. Vu was an artist who had studied at the School of Fine Arts in Hanoi, and he was also an NVA soldier during the Vietnam War. Vu had made a very long journey to South Vietnam in November 1966 in service to his country and cause. He used his talents to draw propaganda posters and promote Communist literature. Vu was even tasked with drawing anatomical posters for the education of field medics in the North Vietnamese Army as well as the NLF (Viet Cong). His talents did not just give him a sense purpose by feeling needed, it also helped to keep his mind occupied when it otherwise would have been difficult. When he talked of his art, and how he even used it in conjunction with booby traps to kill enemy soldiers, he seemed extremely proud. But also thankful. I believe he was thankful that he had something to focus on to help get through. Also, reading his story gave me a different perspective on how Americans were viewed by the Vietnamese soldiers they fought. Vu held a lot of animosity towards his enemy, most likely due to the carnage he had seen on the Ho Chi Minh trail when in route to South Vietnam in 1966. I think this fueled his motivation to use his art as a weapon. When I think about it from Vu’s perspective, it makes sense that he would want to destroy the ones who had caused so much pain and suffering to his people, on his land. Feeling needed for retribution for such acts certainly would have been motivation enough for me.

- **Prisoners of War**

Porter Halyburton’s Story

To further validate the idea of a soldier’s necessity for a sense of purpose as motivation is the story of Porter Halyburton from the section “Prisoners of War”. Porter was a pilot in the U.S. Navy, he flew an F-4 Phantom in 75 combat missions before being shot down over North Vietnam in October 1965. He was captured and held captive until 1973. While he was being housed in the “Zoo” facility he states that, “One day I heard a noise up near the vent. I put my bed board against the wall and climbed up to look. A tree had forced a leaf up between the shutters—a green leaf. I took that as a sign that no matter how isolated I was, God was somehow going to send me a sign”. This is exactly what I was referring to when I had stated “something as simple as a leaf” being motivation enough to keep going, to survive what I’m sure can only be described as hell. While in captivity, Porter was also given a job. His job was to take care of Fred Cherry, another pilot who was injured when he ejected at a high rate of speed (600 knots) from his F-105. Porter had raised hell with the authorities at the POW camp for antibiotics when Fred’s injuries had become badly infected. Porter later stated that, “Taking care of Fred gave me a sense of purpose outside my own survival. It was very liberating. It was really the beginning of the idea that we were all in a brotherhood. We would do anything for each other”. There are many different reasons a soldier is motivated. But having a sense of purpose is one of the most important types of motivation.

- **Central Highlands:**

Dennis Deal's Story

Another kind of motivation comes out of necessity for leadership, and it is directly related to having a sense of purpose. This motivation was demonstrated Dennis Deal in the Ia Drang Valley in November 1965. This is a very well known story. The novel *We Were Soldiers and Young* was written by Lt. Gen. Hal Moore, quite possibly one of the greatest combat leaders ever, and Joe Galloway a journalist who was there in the Ia Drang Valley that November. Their story was even the subject of a Hollywood movie production. When reading Mr. Deal's story I felt that he was highly motivated by his sense of duty and obligation to keep his men, his brothers alive. Mr. Deal states in his story that "what you have to do when you're a leader and everybody is looking at you, is to figure out a way to pull out that extra millimeter of courage. All you need is one more millimeter than the guys around you and they're ok. But if you show failure, they will stampede." In most platoons, a soldier is instructed to learn the job of the man above him, and teach their job to the man below them.

Final thoughts,

It is often portrayed in the media that our soldiers fight for freedom, country, liberty, or to defeat terrorism. In reality, after the "Great Cause" of the American Revolution in the mid-late 1770's and the Civil War that ultimately led to the freeing of slaves in the U.S., the causes to go to war became much more vague to the infantryman. A soldier will fight and die when he is asked to, that's what makes them a soldier. But most American soldiers have fought and died for a reason that is nowhere near as complex as politics, or religion. Ask any soldier why he fights, and 99% of them will tell you they fight for the man next to him. It's as simple as that. In a war that is as complicated and multi-angled as the Vietnam War, the only thing that is clear to a soldier, is that they are fighting for the man next to them. So that he might make it home. Believing and knowing in their own heart, that the man next to him is doing the same. I believe this to be the greatest sense of purpose felt by the soldiers who fought and died in Vietnam, it continues to be on the battlefield today, and will always be whenever and whenever soldiers are called upon to serve. Of course this is only my opinion. I hold the soldiers of all sides who answered the call of country and cause, in the highest regards. On either side they fought for their own way of life, Communist and Capitalist.

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Kate Kendrick

An important theme that was constantly in my mind while reading Part Three is discovery. The discovery I am talking about is not that of physical or land-based discovery, but personal discovery of belief. I am always enlightened when a person's opinion is altered and changed in a way that brings them self-revelation. With war, so many different ideas of the truth are held by each individual person. Not until the end of the war is the outcome and "truth" known, and even then the area is grey. It takes a strong man or woman to admit that their entire way of thinking was wrong, and they usually had to endure much heartache and struggle to reach that place in their mind.

Jim Soular is a man who went through the exact process of discovery that I described. Soular was born into a working-class family and was drafted into the Vietnam War, which he says did not upset him. Soular's exact quote was, "...I was a patriot. I believed in the flag. I believed in serving my country." (Appy 157). Soular's opinion of how credible the war and the military was changed during his tour. His best friend was killed by another American soldier and when Soular testified against the killer, the military sentenced the man to five years of hard labor. Soular said, "To the military, a goddamn chopper was worth three times more than David. That's when the war started unraveling for me." (Appy 161). Soular went into the war as a steadfast soldier who loved his country and thought serving was simply part of his patriotic duty. When he left, his feelings were much different. It is a powerful thing when your entire way of life and belief system is turned around after experiencing something tragic and mind-altering. Soular was like many American men during his time who believed that our country was right in this war, and that the military would make a man out of them. Soular goes on to say, "...everything I'd been raised to believe in was contrary to what I saw in Vietnam." (Appy 161). He discovered a different side to the war and to himself. Soular no longer gave complete faith to the military and its actions.

Jonathan Schell is another example of a man who went into Vietnam (as a member of the press and not a soldier however) with one idea of what the war stood for, and came home with an idea that was the opposite. Schell was a young, prospective reporter who claimed to not have much of an opinion about Vietnam, or politics in general. Schell was quoted, "I didn't see how we could pull out and I suppose I bought into the domino theory." (Appy 203). While Schell was in Vietnam he witnessed such atrocities, and he set himself aside from other reporters. It was in Vietnam that Schell discovered that most other members of the press were

willing to write hard-hitting articles that contained less truth than falsehood. He recounted, "In Vietnam I learned about the capacity of the human mind to build a model of experience that screens out even very dramatic and obvious realities." (Appy 205). When Schell was invited along with other members of the press to a false election campaign, he opted to take a helicopter out of the area instead of sit through the "campaign" and report lies back to his country. Schell went from being neutral on his view of the war, with a slight emphasis on believing what he was told about the Viet Cong starting a domino effect with Communism in the area, to someone who strongly opposed what was going on in the war on America's part. Schell believed, "It was hard to maintain that we were fighting for freedom or democracy in South Vietnam since the government we were defending was so obviously corrupt and dictatorial. Even the domino theory seemed to fall apart in the face of intense nationalism.." (Appy 208). Through his own personal experiences and occurrences that he witnessed with his own eyes, Schell discovered that he had an entirely new way of believing, and tried to open others' eyes to the same ideas.

The story that Duong Thanh Phong told of his experiences during Vietnam were considerably different than the previous stories I described. Phong was a photographer for the North Vietnamese and had no prior knowledge of the Americans his side was fighting against. While Phong's job in the war was to increase anti-American propaganda, he hadn't ever met an American. He recalls his first time seeing an American soldier, "For the first time I witnessed an American crying and it occurred to me that the Americans are like the Vietnamese. Suffering is universal. I realized they were human beings, not aliens, that they were like us." (Appy 248). Phong was like many Vietnamese fighting for their freedom who only thought of Americans as alien-like enemies who they couldn't relate to. They were simply told to kill them, and not think about the people living inside the bodies. It was a revelation when Phong saw the emotion coming from his enemy. Although it didn't stop him from wanting the Americans to lose the war, Phong discovered that his enemy was his equal in life.

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The theme I have chosen is courage in the face of insurmountable odds. I picked a soldier, and two pilots' tales to illustrate my theme. Christians Appy's book part III escalations contained many stories that I could have used, but the three below were very compelling stories. Most people could not have gone through their trials and tribulations and survived.

Dennis Deal was a Lieutenant on his first combat mission in Vietnam. His story was in the chapter about the Central Highlands. He described how he was completely terrified while the battle was raging. "It was Terrifying. I was terrified almost to the point of insanity." Somehow he was able to get past that fear and acted courageously during the fighting. "All you need is one more millimeter than the guys around you and they're okay."

Later during the battle he was sent to try and recover Lieutenant Henry's lost platoon. He was on the extreme right of his platoon with no other American units to his right. While crawling to reach the objective he was flanked by six NVA soldiers and somehow he managed to kill all six of them without receiving a scratch. The odds of him killing six soldiers that are shooting at him without being wounded are almost impossible.

Porter Halyburton was a prisoner of war from 1965 to 1973. What is remarkable about Halyburton is that he was able to endure isolation, interrogation, indoctrination, and torture for eight years. He showed great courage by functioning after receiving wounds, when his plane was hit by enemy fire. He calmly and coolly removed shrapnel from his hand, assessed his situation, and ejected the aircraft.

Once he was captured he was forced into isolation with no contact from other prisoners. "A tree had forced a leaf up between the shutters—a green leaf. I took that as a sign that no matter how isolated I was, God was somehow going to send me a sign." It took an internal courage to want to stay alive. The Vietnamese would place his bowl of rice outside his cell so it would become infested with ants making it inedible.

Halyburton was tortured in an attempt to get him to divulge information or to sign confessions. At first the guards beat him to soften him up. After that the torture began. The torture he described was called max – cuffs. "Your arms were pulled up behind your back and then they put these handcuffs on the upper part of your arm. Then they tied a rope on your wrists and pulled it up; I could actually see my fingertips over the top of my head when they did that. It pressed the nerves against the bone. It was like molten metal flowing through your veins just indescribable pain."

I can't imagine how awful his experience as a prisoner of the NVA was like, but he had an inner courage that was his saving grace. When we describe our servicemen as America's best that is true, and I would say that Porter Halyburton was one of our best.

Luu Huy Chao was a pilot for the North Vietnamese Air Force during the war. He had an unfathomable courage, and is one of only three to attain Ace status. He flew the Mig 17 which was an aircraft that came out of the Korean War. It was slower and did not carry missiles or rockets for armament, and didn't have as sophisticated electronics. He is credited with 6 American aircraft kills.

On one occasion he had to fight four F-105s. He shot down one and the wingman went to low and crashed into a mountain. "I did not hesitate for a moment because I realized I was in a very serious situation." Later he was in a fight with an F-4 and he shot it down. "Once I shot down an F-4 I was no longer scared of any type of American plane." He gained confidence from the fact that if he was shot down it was in his own country unlike the American pilots.

What I liked best about Luu Huy Chao is that he had moral courage. When other pilots from his squadron would try to shoot American pilots that had parachuted he would stop them. He would say, "He won't attack us again. Let him alone." When the other pilots argued he would tell them, "Well we're different." It is easy to kill someone when the adrenaline is pumping, it takes courage not to.

Each one of these men had courage that was tested to the extreme. They also had moral courage which helped them to avoid becoming savages. That is the big difference between professional soldiers and a terrorist.

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The Vietnam War was far from a "black and white" conflict. So far, this term, we have looked at the Vietnam War with different resources with their own perspectives. In Christian G. Appy's narrative "*Patriots*" the Vietnam War is portrayed through the experiences of individuals that "participated" in the conflict. While reading this, in my opinion, I felt that the Vietnam War was a conflict that created unrest and even a feeling of discontent for some of the individuals involved. While reading Appy's narrative I felt that some of the "participants" were unhappy with the war and the overall outcome. The Vietnam War created a lot of tension throughout the world but especially in America and Vietnam. American and Vietnamese citizens, alike, even felt compelled to make a life changing "stand" in regards to the war. Overall, in my opinion, "*Patriots*" showed the true nature of the war and when those who were involved "looked back" at the war it seemed that it was remembered with resentment and confusion.

Sylvia Lutz Holland recalled her experience as a nurse in Vietnam during the war. Holland worked as a nurse and witnessed many horrific events. She recalled taking Librium because of a lack of sleep due to her depression. She even recalled a Vietnamese woman going into labor and dying and the doctor then throwing the baby in the garbage. In "*Patriots*" Christian Appy states, "Like many Vietnam veterans, she doesn't want her children or anyone else, "to experience what I experienced."" (175). Holland seemed to have a depressing view of war and her experience in Vietnam is probably the reason for this. Sylvia Holland witnessed some of the greatest tragedies of the war and gave her best effort to help those wounded by the "fighting." In my opinion, Holland has a truly horrific memory of the war because she was a nurse. A nurse in Vietnam witnessed those wounded by war most and this is probably not a "pleasant" experience. When she remembers the Vietnam War she remembers death, missing limbs, and the gruesomeness of fighting a "modern war." With these memories, in my opinion, it seems nearly impossible to support an armed struggle as "justifiable" because she has the knowledge of the impact of war created for the people involved. In 1991 she told her children that they were "conscientious objectors" because she does not want anyone to experience war. In my opinion, Holland's account is remembered with a lot of resentment because she focuses her story on the tragedies she experienced. When retelling her "story" it seemed that she really wanted to put an emphasis on the horrors of the war.

Luu Huy Chao was a pilot in North Vietnam and fought against American planes bombing the north. He recalled his success as a fighter pilot and never even flew a plane when he was made a pilot.

At the end of his story he reflected on the war and concluded that "we were only soldiers, we didn't cause the war...The suffering caused by war is immeasurable. The dead are only a small part of a whole." (215). In my opinion, Chao did not see the American pilots as an enemy but as soldiers obeying orders. He does not seem proud of the "killing" he did and even ordered soldiers not to shoot at parachuting G.I.'s. He saw the conflict between soldiers as "obeying orders" and concludes that he wishes, "that there be no war." In my opinion, when Chao reflected on his experience it seemed as though he is resentful towards the conflict. It seemed that he felt that war is an awful circumstance to be placed in and that it should be avoided. When he talked about the suffering created by war it gives testimony too this because he analyzed the whole impact of a person dying. It seems that to analyze death like this is a realization of the value in human life and this could create an uneasy feeling towards the war. His memory as a pilot also could be the reason why he wished for "no more war" because he remembers the war and the tragedies it created.

Paul Warnke traveled to Vietnam with three different secretaries of defense and has a political insight on the conflict. Warnke seems to remember the Vietnam War as a mistake and even admits, "I think most of our friends have concluded it was a mistake and everyone makes mistakes." (281). In Warnke's account he seemed to remember the war as an "error" and even called it a "civilian misadventure." In my opinion, Warnke remembered the war as a mistake and this memory could be politically skewed. He probably remembers the political situation as a mistake because that is what he felt, personally. However, the fact that a member of the general counsel for the secretary of defense felt this way implies that there was confusion in the head of the government. This confusion, in my opinion, is what created so much division in our society. If the people most involved were displaying these feelings and seemed divided then it seems that Vietnam truly was a mistake. Warnke's feelings towards the war, in my opinion, proved that we had uneasy feelings about Vietnam and there was great confusion on different aspects of the war. This could be the reason that some people view the Vietnam War and America's participation with resentment and confusion because if the people creating the policy displayed these beliefs then maybe Vietnam was a bitter, unjust conflict.

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Michael Tieman
05/01/11
History of Vietnam
Escobar
Online Class

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 you country, service, or cause.

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I chose to write about Le Cao Dai, Julian Bond, and Porter Halyburton. I picked these because they all show the sickness created by the war. I do not necessarily mean a viral or bacterial sickness but illness medically, mentally, and politically which impacted these peoples' lives and the way they treated others because of it.

Le Cao Dai was part of a "jungle hospital" crew and he saw a lot of death from disease resulting from wartime. Dai helped care for the people who were injured in the war and also people who'd suffered from malaria and other noncombat related diseases, "The most common, by far, was malaria. Almost everyone got it, including the doctors and staff. I was no exception." The most thought provoking idea for me in Dai's story was the links he had referenced between Agent Orange used and Malaria. Although Dai was unsure if "...weakening of our immune systems caused by exposure to Agent Orange. In any case, there was a much higher incidence of malaria after the heavy spraying of chemical defoliants." Either way the destruction of vegetation through the use of chemicals could have aided the illnesses progression. Vegetation helps create an environment that is habitable but without plants and trees to cleanse the air and water, it created a breeding ground for diseases. Diseases were not the only hurdle that Dai talked about, he explained that the hospital workers made substitute medical supplies that were needed desperately to treat the patients because they lacked materials, "...didn't even have scalpels or other surgical instruments." Dai also talks about the risks for infection people faced after surgery. Whether because of the hand-made tools, the sanitation of the supplies and facilities, or weakness of their immune systems due to malnutrition and chemicals used in the war efforts, he did not say directly. I believe they were people who fought a war against starvation and illness as a result of the war in their country.

In the story about Julian Bond, I am talking about a different kind of sickness. The sickness of humanity with regards to the color of one's skin and the treatment they had received on that basis. The Julian Bond story tells about a man named Sammy Younge. Regardless of being a "...navy veteran who had lost the use of a kidney during his service," Sammy Younge was killed for using a white restroom because of his black skin. A man who had stood and fought for his country, and other peoples' rights, and was killed

because of racial in-differences shows how mentally ill peoples' perceptions were at the time. They forced people to go to a world they had never seen and kill people they had never met, to fight for someone else's "freedom" and "democracy", then they were sent home to a country that treated them worse than those they were forced to fight for; this is sick, "The irony of this guy having lost his kidneys in the military and then not being able to use the bathroom in his own hometown was so stark."

The torment people were put through as P.O.W. made people mentally ill, and the people doing the tormenting possibly mentally ill with revenge and desperation at the time. In the story of Porter Halyburton, he talks of the terrible places he stayed while being a prisoner and the threats of increasing torment they would make if he didn't cooperate with them. The ill will between Vietnamese people and Americans was intense in these "prisons" to where they would try to weaken the prisoners moral. They strategically tried to play a prisoners against one another and break them down emotionally and mentally by doing so, "I think they thought that would be the worst thing they could do-order a white guy to be a servant to this black guy." The Vietnamese took the time to understand what they could to use against the American's and I think this is one of the things they seen as being important to Americans at the time, racial segregation and white supremacy. The use of mental games per-say could be part of the reason they were successful with some but shows the way used it to create mental illness.

As the situation deteriorated so did the people involved, the war over all infected the people who had participated just like any illness.

The war like any illness affected people mentally, physically, and politically in ways they could not see but could be felt from the inside.

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The story of Vietnam is one of tenacity. Homer once wrote that "men grow tired of sleep, love, singing, and dancing sooner than war." Rarely is this statement better defended than in Vu Hy Theiu's story. His matter-of-fact account of a near decade of jungle warfare regales more hardships than sanity should permit. The tale traces a trend of rising militarism, beginning the war as an artist, and moving into booby-traps. By the war's end, he was engaged in full-on jungle warfare against American and "puppet" troops. The story champions resourcefulness and determination to no small degree. It inspires wonder that a person could endure in such a lifestyle for nine years, though Vu is clearly a convicted man. The source of such tenacity is clear in Vu's story, but a less sober account is found in Dennis Deal's account. He recounts not only with his tenacity, and that of those around him, but he explains what it is that he draws courage from. His men drew on one another for strength, looking to commanders and heroes to show more courage than they. The true story of determination, however, comes in the last paragraph, when a mortally wounded Viet Cong soldier booby trapped his own corpse in the hopes of killing an American soldier in the aftermath of the battle.

Both of these stories depict cases of titanic perseverance. In Sylvia Lutz Holland's account, more (or less, depending) mortal resolves are shown. She describes two scenes of doctors hitting their breaking points. In neither case do their breakdowns manifest as failures to kill their enemies, but refusals to save them. Yet again, the greatest display of determination was shown near the end, by a wounded Viet Cong soldier. In this case, his show of insurmountable spite was less impressive, but in line with the more muted scale of the tale.

While not skulking through villages, nor engaging in jungle warfare, nor facing down half a dozen enemies in a firefight, Holland's account shows determination nonetheless, specifically because she is not of immense moral fortitude, and recognizes her terror. In the words of Georges St. Pierre, "courage isn't about not being scared, it's about being scared and still doing it."

Vu Hy Theiu "Nothing was more essential than our sandals." 190

Sylvia Lutz Holland "We saved their lives, but what life?" 170

Dennis Deal "Man, if we're up against this, it's gonna be a long-ass year." 130

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Rachel Regelbrugge
Assignment 2

Both sides of the war were more than willing to fight for their cause, even knowing a large amount of them would die trying. My theme is that in the face of war humans will fight to the death to support their cause. I chose this theme because I was moved by the amount of perseverance kept throughout times that were unbearable. In all the accounts I've read there was a common theme of death, torture and hope; after the amount of horrible things that have happened humans hold onto hope and that is a miracle in itself.

In support of her country Vu Thi Vinh volunteered to clear trails of bombs and trees. To leave your home at 15 by your own choice to risk your life on deadly trails shows bravery and a dedication to ones country, this to me is an honorable trait. In our society girls at 15 are spending long hours wandering the mall or trying to get a date to a school dance not disarming bombs. Vietnam had its country up in arms to fight for their freedom, in comparison many US boys fled to Canada to avoid being drafted. Vinh recalls the "dare to die" team that would defuse bombs; she stated that everyone wanted to get voted onto the team. Vietnamese youth were more than willing to fight for their country in any way they could, even knowing that they could die in the process.

Dennis Deal recalls his friend Henry, a leader in combat, who made a fatal error ending in the death of himself and seven others. His dying words were " I'm glad I died for my country." This is no movie quote where a director yells "cut" and the cast goes home; Henry would never go home again. He is a prime example that even in his dying moments he had no regret of dying in support of his country. What's even more surprising is that Dennis returned to the fight just moments after witnessing the death of his 8 mates, craving revenge more than ever. Deal was heroic in that even after seeing how easily life can be taken away, he continued fighting. The jungles in which they were fighting were covered in bombs and Vietnamese guerillas hoping for a chance to maim and destroy. To be brave enough to venture on that ground takes something words cannot describe.

Sylvia Holland was an army nurse who agreed to go to Vietnam

knowing how many lives both civilians and soldiers were being lost. The TV's were all showing graphic images of one of the most horrific wars and yet she still went. What you would expect to instill fear only made some want to help their country more. Sylvia recalled seeing men dying or near death and having to make the choice of whom would be treated first. She not only had to experience death on a day-to-day basis, but she had to fear for her own life, with guerillas randomly bombing the compound. To exist in a state of constant fear, hearing the explosions and the sirens blaring, knowing someone you knew is now dead would be horrid. Sylvia was courageous in every sense and because she chose to help her country she always helped saved lives.

In all three of the stories I've presented you can see common theme that even in the worst of times humans will stand together to protect what they believe in. To me what these soldiers, nurses and children did surpasses nearly all examples of bravery I have read of to this day, and illustrates that even in the face of death some will keep going.

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“Our resistance will be long and painful, but whatever the sacrifices, however long the struggle, we shall fight to the end, until Vietnam is fully independent and reunified.”

HO CHI MINH, statement, Dec. 19, 1946

“If I left [the war in Vietnam] and let the Communists take over South Vietnam, then I would be seen as a coward and my nation would be seen as an appeaser, and we would both find it impossible to accomplish anything for anybody anywhere on the entire globe”

President Lyndon B. Johnson, 1964

Difficult Decisions

I recently spent some time trying to account for every decision I make during the course of a single day. Geez! Not only was that a waste of time, but it was also impossible! Thinking over the memorable decisions I’ve made as an adult, though, I realized that no one is immune to making difficult decisions. Minimalist case study: I remember being the last one sitting at the dinner table staring at a pile of Del Monte faded green peas. My moment of decision was: eat the green peas and enjoy some unremembered dessert, or sit at the table (the pile of peas eyeing me as viciously as I glared at it) until my mother tired of monitoring me or bedtime arrived, whichever event came first. At that time in my young life, this was a very difficult, stomach-churning decision.

Aging and experience broaden the decisions we face and the stakes become higher, and concurrently, there is more to gain or lose. Of the 350 interviews Christian Appy conducted for his book Patriots, 135 were included and the majority involved difficult decisions. After I read portions from Patriots, I noted a distinct pattern emerge from three individuals whose only shared experience was the Vietnam War. The decisions they made were difficult, the kind that haunts a person at night, raising answerless questions and leaving behind the tormenting query *what if?*

Contrary to what some people *may* believe, I’ve never been elected to the office of the President of the United States nor do I even know anyone who has even met a president. I know there are presidents whose names few people outside of historians remember and some presidents whose names few could forget. Lyndon Baines Johnson falls into the second category. Charles

Cooper, a person interviewed for Patriots, had this to say of our 36th president: “He used the f-word more freely than a marine in boot camp.” [Note: the infamous f-word will hereafter be referred to as the F-bomb – a term somehow more fitting to the subject at hand.] Cooper, an aide to Admiral David L McDonald who was a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff [paraphrased pg. 121], prepared a map to take in to President Johnson for a briefing regarding Vietnam. General Wheeler presented a plan which involved using U.S. strength to suppress the North Vietnamese. The North Vietnamese, it was believed, would “sue for peace” if the U.S. castigated enough.

Johnson’s roaring response: “So you’re going to cut them off, keep them from being reinforced, and then you’re going to bomb them into the Stone Age.” While this was not specifically said, it seemed Johnson did hear the unspoken words. The Army and Marine chiefs fully supported the plan. This is where the President of the United States memorably unleashed, at full volume, dropping multiple F-bombs which were supported by a cast of colorful words designed to leave ears at the receiving end yearning to sprint out the door. At the end of Johnson’s harangue, he calmly stated: “Imagine that you’re me.....and five incompetents come into your office and try to talk you into starting World War 3....let’s see what kind of guts you have with the whole damn world to worry about.” Cooper’s memory recalled in sharp detail Johnson’s words that day and the words of General Wheeler: “Well, Mr. President, we fully realize that what we’re going to present to you today requires a very **difficult decision** on your part.”

“A goddamn chopper was worth three times more than David.” This is the opening to the interview between Appy and Jim Soular. David is dead and is one of Soular’s “...greatest sorrows.” As a 19-year-old flight engineer during Vietnam, Soular admits he loved the war and he loved the flying [Paraphrased pg. 157]. The turning point for him came when his best friend, David, was killed in front of him by another GI. Harris, a drunken, out-of-control GI, picked a fight with David and, with no provocation, shot him in the face. Twenty years after the war, Soular went to Minnesota to talk with David’s mom. She said that her husband was dead and never had gotten over the death of his only child. During their conversation, David’s mom referred to her son’s death as an “accident in the barracks” and Soular understood that, after twenty years, she did not know the truth. I believe it must have been an incredibly **difficult decision** Soular had to make, weighing the consequences of giving knowledge to the woman who had given birth to David. Often, consequences are bittersweet. David’s mother was “crushed” when she learned the truth yet “comforted” that David did not die alone.

“We amputated the limbs of men who even expressed relief. For them the war was finally over.” This is the last sentence of the interview between Appy and Chi Nguyen. The interview was short and difficult for me to read. Nguyen worked in the Vietnamese military’s largest hospital, located in Saigon. As an

orthopedic surgeon, he saw horrific wounds that most people cannot even imagine. Nguyen recalls a procedure he performed for a young man who'd had a grenade explode in his hands. The young man lost his eyes and his hands. Nguyen took skin from the young man's forearms and wrapped it around bones to create two big fingers. The young man cried when he was able to hold a cup of tea. Were these tears of joy because he could hold a cup, or tears of heartache at what his future would hold? The **difficult decisions** Nguyen made every day were endless. He shared with Appy that he felt as if he'd held the destiny of those soldiers in his hands. Nguyen chose who would receive treatment first. I cannot envision ever being in that situation. It's not within my capabilities to make a choice whether someone may live or die. Chi Nguyen retired from a Veterans Administration hospital in Boston, having caught one of the last flights out when Saigon fell.

From those who sat in the highest positions within their governments to the frontline soldier crawling on his belly in a trench while the enemy rained down death in the form of munitions, each person made **difficult decisions**. Literature is filled with plots and references concerning **difficult decisions** but sometimes truth does outdo fiction and the choices faced during times of war may prove to be the most difficult, and ultimately most controversial, decisions of all.

"No event in American history is more misunderstood than the Vietnam War. It was misreported then, and it is misremembered now."

RICHARD NIXON, New York Times, Mar. 28, 1985

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Webster's dictionary defines courage as "mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty." Part three of Christian G. Appy's book "Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides" is full of amazing stories told by people who lived through the Vietnam War. I felt there was a lot of anger, pain, and bewilderment conveyed in the stories over the things these people experienced, but the theme that impressed me the most was the courage of their actions. Whether they volunteered to serve or were sent to Vietnam unwillingly, these people had to be brave or they wouldn't have survived. To illustrate this theme, I have chosen the stories of three women who I felt shared incredible stories of hardship and courage: Nguyen Thi Kim Chuy, Sylvia Lutz Holland, and Truong My Hoa.

Nguyen Thi Kim Chuy began her courageous journey as a teen by volunteering to work on the Truong Son, or the Ho Chi Minh Trail. This was her contribution to the war. She endured bombing, loss of sleep, witnessing the deaths of her fellow workers, and malaria. She worked hard for the benefit of the Viet Cong soldiers that traveled over that trail, and at the same time, trying to care for herself and the other girls around her. These young girls were very brave because they willingly put themselves in harm's way. They filled holes and rebuilt sections of the trail every time they were bombed, to ensure safe passage for the soldiers. They gave up their homes and their lives for the chance to help the war movement without knowing that they would be permanently changed and scarred for their volunteerism. Nguyen thought nothing of her sacrifice, thinking of others instead of herself, and saw no reward for her work. She gave up so much for her country at such a young age because she believed that what Ho Chi Minh and the North were fighting for was right.

Sylvia Lutz Holland enlisted in the Army Nurse Corps and was sent to Vietnam to serve in an Army hospital. Sylvia worked long hours and saw the kind of horrible injuries and atrocities that only war can bring. She was charged with triaging injured soldiers and deciding who might live or die, a daunting task for anyone, but especially a young nurse. She also had to help Vietnamese villagers and soldiers, and had compassion and consideration for what they lost even when they treated her poorly. Sylvia saw things during her tour that most of us will never see in our lifetime, but also commented on the fact that she would go to war again if she was asked. She spoke with regret over some of her

experiences, and admitted that her actions may have been different if she wasn't being directed to do the things she did. Sylvia seemed to carry her time in Vietnam like a badge of honor and accepted responsibility for the things she did, even though she was critical of the American policies that put her there.

Truong My Hoa was born a revolutionary, and began participating actively at the age of 15. She was arrested in 1964 and sentenced to 18 months, but she ended up being imprisoned for eleven years under the Diem government's rule. Truong was interrogated and tortured repeatedly, and confined to a tiger cage with four other women. She kept her resolve throughout her time of imprisonment, and would not betray the regime to which she was so loyal. She endured shame and indescribable physical and mental pain while struggling to protect her integrity, because she believed that the cause was a worthy one. She was even instrumental in bringing the devastating conditions of the prisoners to light to an American delegation and subsequently, the world. Truong was particularly moved and encouraged by some of the things she was hearing about the Americans that demonstrated against the war, and this gave her strength in her struggle. She was incredibly brave for eleven long years, and never gave up hope that she would be released.

It was very hard to choose just three stories, but these are examples of how courageous the human spirit can be regardless of their beliefs, nationalities, or affiliations. Just the fact that these three women survived, and were able to tell their stories, was a testament to their will. I was amazed by their stories and impressed by their courage even though I may not have believed in some of their reasons for being involved in the Vietnam War. I cannot say that I would have been so fortunate if I was faced with any of their situations.

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"PATRIOTISM

In a war that was so long and vicious, one thing was very clear to me, the patriotism of the people whether they were Vietnamese or American. It seems that all parties involved had a deep connection for their cause. Even children were ready to die for their country. The willingness of the people to support what they believed in was tremendous. Normal everyday people laid their lives on the line for what they believed in.

"The Truong Son jungle gave us life." It just amazes me that thousands of North Vietnamese girls volunteered to help their country. They were said to have gone willingly into battle zones, battle zones that grown men could barely stay alive in. To me this is a good example of patriotism in North Vietnam. This story gives a new meaning of what it means to die for your country, to believe in something or someone to the extent that you would voluntarily go on a death mission.

"It approached the vicinity of the spiritual." Anyone who respects the people who are fighting for a common goal is a patriot in my book. I am amazed at the sheer connection that one person can make with a situation such as war. If Just was not against communism when he first departed to cover these events, then it is very clear that he made an internal decision to fully support Americas actions in this particular war. Just reading his encounter gave me my own personal sense of the connection he found with the soldiers as well as the war.

"The Knife man." It takes a lot of heart to work under extreme conditions, especially when people are wounded so badly. It is very patriotic to strive to save each and every persons life, even if you are not sure what kind of life the person would really have. Not only is this extremely ethical of a medical professional but it is also very compassionate.

Many people in the Vietnam War served their country with pride, from Vietnamese women and children to United States reporters and troops. In any case these people were patriots. It just goes to show how strong a bond a single person can have to their country.

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As I read part three of "PATRIOTS" by Christian Appy which are stories from 1964-1967 I began to notice the underlining theme that the war starts to seem like a job or business that some things are acceptable or excusable if it serves to better the majority. It appears regard less of your poison in the war. Weather you are Vietnamese, North or South, American, Pro-war or Anti-war. The people who told the stories sound as if there was not a choice in how things are done that this is just the way war works. That war is just part of daily life and you did your best to get though the day. Looked to find whatever you could to comfort yourself during this business of war. That if you had a schedule, regardless of what it was that somehow made the confusion of this war seem more acceptable and worth while. Like a pay check to a bad job.

In Trails To War I have chosen the story by Vu Thi Vinh. A young North Vietnamese girl, who joined The Volunteer Youth Corps that worked on the "Truong Son" known to us as the "Ho Chi Minh Trail." She tells of ten of thousands of volunteers. Volunteers to very harsh conditions, little food and defusing bombs. Filling in craters and rebuilding bridges. Risking their lives daily. Yet, they would volunteer even lie about their age. Why? At least as they worked on the trail everyday they could control some circumstance in the war, that continued work with or without them, putting their lives at risk. The bombs would be dropped by the Americans and they would repair the damage. It was part of the cycle in this business of war, they needed each other to do their jobs. But, at the end of the day she and the other volunteers would sing and put on plays to keep their spirits high. Not so different from us today unwinding after work.

Next I have chosen from "You Want Me to Start World War 3" the story told by Charles Cooper. He was an aide to Admiral David L. McDonald, a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He tells of a meeting with President Johnson and JCS. They were to present a quick conclusion to the war. However, President Johnson did not except nor appreciate their offer. He degraded and cursed at them while in the meeting. Like a boss who thinks that your idea to improve productivity is absolutely absurd. They thought of resignation. Just as many would if it were a job in the work world. They did not resign, being concerned with what others would think of them and continued on with the business of war. As in the work world if you quit every time someone disagreed with your ideas or said harsh words to you, others would start to question your value to the business.

Last I have chosen from "Free-Fire Zone" the story told by Jim Soular. He was a fight engineer and states that he loved war at the time. Now he hates war. I am certain that most of us can relate to this, what seemed to great at the time in hind sight maybe not be quite as good as we thought. The free-fire zones, were areas which it was declared acceptable to fire and kill anyone you see. In any other situation other than the business of war this would never be accepted. He tells us of his friend David being killed by another GI, this is

absolutely not acceptable to him nor most people. It's murder. Yet, the person who committed this murder receives less time than that of a man who crashes a helicopter. His behavior is excused do to the situation. Not unlike the worker how is always later or has some other bad habits that are excused because there work benefits the business as a whole. He twenty years later speaks with David's mother and learns that the military had not told her the truth about David's death. He had assumed that they had. But, at the time of David's death it would not have been good for business to give her all the facts. It would have been bad for morale as well as bad for support of the war. This is similar to not giving all the facts to other employee when someone is "let go" from their position. Giving all the facts are just not in the best interest of the business.

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Throughout reading part three of the book, Patriots, the theme that stuck out to me was that the American soldiers went in with a sense that they were fighting for their country but came back with heavy hearts and regrets as well as the inability to show any emotion due to their pride. The Vietnamese soldiers however, seemed to believe they were fighting for something worthwhile and while it was heart wrenching to think back to their time spent battling and the good, honest, innocent people who were killed in the line of duty, it seems as though they understand the reason for the war and their minds don't seem to be altered no matter what tragedies took place. In plain terms, the Americans seem to be convincing themselves they were over there fighting for freedom while the Vietnamese don't need any convincing. They knew what they were fighting for and believed in their country and their people.

The story of Jim Soular, Free-Fire Zone, was one of the stories that were a good example of my chosen theme. Jim was a patriot as he states in the beginning of his story. He had always believed in the flag and serving his country and was someone the military could definitely count on. He went to Vietnam willingly as a flight engineer and made his helicopter his ultimate priority. He remembered accounts of pilots who would lose confidence in their helicopters but he would always be there to tell them it would be okay and instill the confidence back into them to allow everyone to safely arrive at their destination. He always stood behind the decisions of his fellow soldiers as well as the military until his best friend David was shot by another GI, Harris, who decided to take his drunken rage to the next level and shot David in the face. David died right in front of Jim and from that point on Jim's thoughts of serving his country and doing the right thing was slightly altered. The military sentenced Harris to five years of hard labor because Harris admitted he had been drunk when he shot David however, for another GI that was unauthorized to fly helicopters but did so in an attempt to try to save the chopper and failed ended up getting a sentence of fifteen years. Jim could not get a grasp on the fact that a machine was worth more than a soldier serving his country. He expressed his deep sorrow for going into Vietnam and doing so much damage to a country that we could have learned from rather than going in and destroying so much of it over circumstances that were out of his control. He left me with a sense of regret and extreme sadness because deep down I know he

wishes he could take it all back yet, he's stuck reliving it every day of his life.

The story of Vu Thi Vinh, *Trails to War*, was a good example of the hardships and risks the people of Vietnam were willing to face in order to win the war against the Americans. She was a teenager who volunteered for four years of her life to work in the jungles of Truong Son clearing the path of trees, damming up streams and filling bomb craters as quickly as possible to ensure their troops could make it through the Ho Chi Minh trail during the night. She explained that they would work all through the night to ensure their soldiers could make it safely through and without causing any traffic jams or that could allow the Americans a perfect opportunity to bomb and cause a massive amount of deaths. She doesn't express a lot of sadness or regret in her tone, she more just goes through the notions of what it took to be a youth volunteer and the environment that she subjected to because of her willingness to be part of the war because it meant fighting for her country. She focuses on her experience and their ability to find the pride in what they were doing for their country rather than dwelling on the war itself and the tragedies that came with it. She never put her country down or expresses any type of hostility towards Vietnam which left to believe that she has pure love for her country and will stand behind it no matter what the cost which does not seem the case for many American soldiers.

The story of Charles Cooper, "You want me to start World War III," showed how much LBJ was set in his ways about continuing the war the way he wanted to rather than attempting alternative approaches to possibly get the American troops out of Vietnam and end it altogether. Charles did not go back to a memory of being in Vietnam, but rather a memory of being in Lyndon B Johnson's Oval Office and realizing the President of the United States of America invited his five senior military advisers to come to a briefing only to ridicule any thoughts or ideas they had to end the war. Charles remembered the President cursing at them and treating them like they knew nothing and had no ground for their ideas. This really made me think that if the President who everyone had so much respect for could not even show respect to people who served under him and were the men responsible for following his commands and answering to his soldiers, how were the American soldiers out there fighting for their country supposed to feel? It seems as though the President could not admit defeat. This ultimately caused many of the American soldiers in Vietnam to be haunted by their actions and cut off from their emotions while not feeling pride at all, but sorrow instead for what they had done, leaving them to relive their memories of who they were and what they did while they were over there.

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I'm no military strategist, but it seems to me that if you are involved in the civil war of another nation that what you are fighting for is the hearts and minds of the populace first and traditional military targets second. The trend that stands out to me in this section of Appy's book is that while we clearly recognized the threat from enemy sympathy amongst the locals, we failed to react to it in a thoughtful way. The American method for dealing with locals grew increasingly hostile as our sense of unease from the locals increased. Consequently we inflamed any dislike they may have had and created our own enemy. The cliché about putting a fire out with gasoline could be well used here. This negative feedback model was sure to foster increased sympathy for both the enemy and eventually for their cause. If we ever had a chance to motivate the people of South Vietnam to stand with us against a communist movement we squandered it with our callousness towards their people, property and their customs.

Jonathan Schell spells out the problem wonderfully in his interview. He refers to operation Cedar Falls, in which we attempted to completely clear out an area call the Iron triangle. While he states that the operation was considered a success we can read his doubt about the long-term consequences. "But they left out what I believed was fundamental---that we were destroying villages and throwing people off their land. The unmistakable fact was that the general population despised the United States and that if they hadn't despised it before we arrived, they soon did after we destroyed their villages." Throughout the interview with Schell he expresses his amazement that this was happening. It was clear to him that this kind of approach to the war was counter-productive. How much of this kind of treatment was happening can be judged by how unaffected some of the American soldiers were by it. Jim Soular recounts another village depopulation in which helicopters were used to transport the locals out of a village. It's important to remember that these very simple people were being forcibly removed from their homes in a very loud, very intimidating way. "There were only four of us with sixty of them.... We started lifting off and one of the Vietnamese in the back stood up and freaked out....We were probably sixty feet off the ground, maybe more. The crew chief just thought, fuck it, your out of here, and pitched the man out the back end....when he hit the ground. He just laid there." Later Jim Soular remembers asking the crew chief what happened and is answered with what seems like an off handed explanation about making a point by throwing "...his ass out of there." Jim says

that he might have done the same thing. Fifty-nine South Vietnamese people watched as an American soldier simply threw one of their own to his death because the poor man was panicked. While Jim seems to have considered the event as noteworthy, it seems that his fellow soldier did not.

Another poignant example of this can be found in Philip Jones Griffiths' recount of an interrogation of a terrified boy that he guessed to be about fourteen. "The American was yelling to the interpreter. 'tell him we're gonna kill his father unless he tells us where the VC are hiding.' And the kid was shouting, 'I don't know, I don't know...' Finally the American said, 'Okay, kill the father.' They dragged the father off to the side and they shot. The kid was totally shattered. Then the American said, 'Okey, he doesn't know anything.' So they brought the father back and this kid looks up and couldn't believe his father wasn't dead because he'd heard the shots....They weren't doing anything they hadn't done many times before." When I put myself in this kid's head I feel a deep rage. I cannot imagine that this young man didn't become a Vietcong. It's hard to make allies out of a population that you don't treat with a sense of human dignity.

There are consequences to such inhuman treatment of the locals in their actions. Fred Branfman recalls the words of his friend Ngeun, a former Pathet Lao soldier for us. Fred was asking if it was hard to get volunteers to sacrifice themselves by falling on the barbed wire and acting as a human bridge so that their comrades could attack an American emplacement. Ngeun said "No, no. You don't understand. Everybody volunteered. They killed my mother, I want to go first, I want to be the one." We were creating our own enemies. Each time we treated one of the population unfairly we fostered sympathy for the Northern cause, each time we dislocated a family we created resentment to ourselves and each time we maimed or killed a civilian we bolstered the ranks of the Vietcong. The resulting collusion between the guerillas and the locals can be seen in Vu Hy Thieu's recollections of his war experience.

"Sometimes, at sunset, near our jungle base, we'd move close to the edge of the rice fields to watch the people working. We could do that safely because the puppet troops didn't dare stay in the fields after dark. We often played with the buffalo boys and they leaked tidbits of information about the puppet soldiers...." The relationship between the NVA and the locals could be described as non-threatening, maybe even friendly. The idea that a 'foreign invader' would "play with" the local herders is telling about the loyalties of the common population in the South.

The interrelation between the threat that we felt from the locals and the threat that they felt from us was much like a chicken and egg scenario. Unfortunately for the Americans the damage we did to our own cause was slow healing, and seemingly only considered important by the press and the antiwar movement.

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