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Part 1 In the first part of the Patriots book, it is filled with not just one, but several, moving accounts of the Vietnam War from a variety of different perspectives. Yet, none of those stories stuck out to me in the way that George Watkins' did. His account was one of a man who did not know very much about the war in Vietnam, but still found himself overseas fighting in the war that he was drafted for. While in military training, he believed that when he made it to Vietnam, he was going to be a combat engineer. That was what he was being trained for. Despite that, when he landed in Vietnam, he was sent to Chu Lai to become part of the infantry without any infantry training. In his account, he speaks of how the Vietnamese must have been good people, to withstand the American Army destroying their livelihoods and still having the courage to return to their homes and try to start over from nothing. One Sunday morning, while out with his platoon, he hit a pressure-detonated mine. It hit a boy in front of him and one to his immediate right. The boy to his right lost a left eye, his left ear, and some movement. He had just told him that he was standing too close and that he should move, which he did, saving him any further damage. The man in front was saved by the radio that he was carrying on his back. A huge piece of shrapnel was stuck in the radio. George Watkins lost both of his legs and his sight that morning, and somehow, when he tells his story he speaks of how he isn't bitter. He speaks of how he just wishes that it had never happened, for everybody's sake. It was just a political mistake that took far too many lives. His story is the most influential to me because even though he fought a war that he didn't understand, and lost so much of himself to it, he still isn't bitter. He doesn't want revenge; he just wishes he could change what had happened. I think that takes a very strong heart to feel that way about something that turned your life upside-down. I believe him to be a very reliable speaker, he was there and despite what happened to him, he doesn't talk of it in an angry tone. I think that he looks at it with such an unbiased perspective gives him a strong amount of credibility. His account is one that I believe to be objective and factual. I also believe that his story is one that should be read by anyone studying this particular event in history.

Part 2 Most of the stories I've read so far in this book left me with an almost overwhelming feeling of sadness. I feel bad for the things that these people, from both sides of the situation, went through. However, I think the most disappointing story that I read so far was the one of Richard Olsen. I did not find this story disappointing because of the events that happened, or the negative way in which it affected the person's life. Instead, I found this story disappointing because I feel as though he portrays the war as a highlight of his life. He speaks of how he was working with soldiers a great deal older than he was, and how it was a joy to be spending time with them. He tells the story of how they had

created a “Thunderbird Lounge”, a place for the pilots to drink and share stories. It doesn’t disappoint me that in a time of struggle American soldiers found a way to keep themselves happy. The aspect that disappoints me is that this particular soldier wishes that there hadn’t been an order only allowing them to fire after being fired upon. In such a horrible ordeal, I find it difficult to understand how anyone could welcome acts of violence on people they do not know or understand. I feel as though Richard Olsen’s view of the Vietnam War was very skewed, and that perhaps he only saw things the way he wanted to see them. I believe that it was the thinking like this that prevented us from finding peace with Vietnam any earlier. The story of Henry Prunier is one that I believe there to be a silver lining on a dark cloud. His story is not one of particular sadness. He spent some time in Vietnam, providing Vietnamese with American weapons and training them on how to use them. He was in Vietnam before America was at war with them. He even met and received a gift from Ho Chi Minh. At the end of his story, he speaks about how he doesn’t believe the war should have ever happened, and how he was a silent antiwar person. I find his story shows just how much potential there was for the Americans to not go into a war with Vietnam. He understands that the Vietnamese are people just like us, and that there truly was no reason for the U.S. to make them the enemy, when they could have just as easily been the allies. Ngo Vinh Long was an exceptional South Vietnamese student, who fully supported Ngo Dinh Diem’s government. That was until, working as a mapmaker for the American military he saw all the horrors that were currently being ignored by that government. He witnessed agrovilles and public executions, and eventually resigned from his position. After becoming involved in many protests, he had to flee to country to avoid prison. He applied to Harvard and was accepted, so he relocated to the United States. Though his story did not have the happy ending that most would hope for, I found what he did to be courageous. Most people will not change their lives and stand up for what they believe in. He did, and I think that goes to show that anyone is capable of seeing what is right. Even though, it took a quarter of a century for the Americans to change their stance on the war with Vietnam.

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