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George Watkins's interview immediately catches the eye due to his dialect, one that is often not correct English, such as "I knowed very little about Vietnam" (22). Who can say what Watkin's education was like, but nevertheless, we know that he was a "grunt" and not an officer, as Appy states at the outset (21). The combination of seemingly under-educated speech along with the knowledge that Watkins was a low-ranking soldier allows some basic reactions to spark. First, Watkins strikes an honest picture, the type that, when it came to war, cared more about having a fellow soldier's back rather than the politics. Being maleducated is not usually a good thing, but it can help reassure a listener that the speaker is not an elite, that he doesn't have millions of dollars riding on his words, and is a lot less likely to lie. Second, the statement of Watkin's status as "grunt" further places him on the metaphorical plane of "just your average Joe", far away from the inescapable circus of the political tight-wire act high-ranking officers must engage in, and where we have come to expect participants to bend the truth quite far in order to keep their balance. Now this is why Watkins seems trustworthy, but whether what he says is accurate or not, that is another matter. In general one might consider that as a "grunt" information may be a hundred percent accurate, but what percentage of ALL the information did he receive compared to an officer? In Watkins's situation though, a retelling of how he was injured by a mine seems to be something about which he would have all the information. Then we have take into account that during this experience moments were flying by and for many of them Watkins was likely unconscious. He himself says, "They," emphasis on the 'they', "tell me I hit a pressure-detonated mine" (23). Now, though we may find Watkins to be trustworthy and credible, we see that he also had to rely on others' honesty. In short, through his interview alone, we will never really know credible the whole story is, but it is reasonable to conclude that Watkins himself is giving us the straight goods. Rufus Phillips's account stirs a disappointment in what could have been. His story revolves primarily around his interactions with Edward G. Landsale. Though Landsale was reknown for being a "master" of psychological warfare, in the end his proposed plan to win over the Vietnamese was dismissed (50, 53). Based on Phillips' interview, Landsale was a gifted communicator, especially with the Vietnamese, and easily "established a bond of trust" (53). The emotional level of a the relationship with Vietnam was undoubtedly a crucial part that lead to war, or what could have helped us avoid war. Why? Throughout accounts and historical sources, it's clear that the Vietnamese people succeeded due to an indomitable spirit, not power or any real physical upperhand. Therefore, it was the emotional level at which the U.S. should have been directing its focus. Giving the Vietnamese a democratic, constitutional frameowrk as Landsale advised might have allowed the Vietnamese a

sense of independence, which we know they valued, and it might have shown enough faith in them that they would be open to U.S. assistance as the new system grew. According to Phillips, it was also a prime time to introduce democracy given that “Diem was still open to advice” (53). Would it have worked? Who knows. However, as a country that fought for our own freedom from a mother country and developed the same “checks and balances” structure, it has always been a disappointing part of history whenever the U.S. acts hypocritically and refuses to aid other countries in following its own footsteps. In light of all of that, Phillips’s story still holds some comfort. “At first the Vietnamese had very little self-confidence,” but through the partnership with Lansdale and his men, they were able to carry-out a reoccupation “extremely well” (53). Overall, there seems to be a general anti-U.S. view on the Vietnam war within our own country, including blame for poor choices and the backlash on veterans. Stories like this though, help balance the scales with an example of excellent leadership and more importantly, a successful relationship with the Vietnamese. Though it didn’t last, and perhaps was largely politically insignificant, the fact that it even existed still feels somewhat redemptive. Especially touching is Phillips description of civilians “coming out with bowls of water and greeting the troops” (53).

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