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Part I

After reading Part 1 of Appy's book, the story told by George Watkins (p21-25), was nothing short of heartbreaking. Here's a good 'ol boy from Appalachia who 'knewed very little about Vietnam', telling his story. That's as raw as it gets. From his two-minute lesson on the M-60 machine gun through the moment he stepped on that mine, Watkins' story is not diluted or sugar-coated in any way. Of course he makes a comment (regarding the war) that it was a 'political mistake', but he holds no bitterness. How can it be that this man was drafted, sent to a country he knew nothing about, fought in a war that made little sense and crippled him, shows no hatred? Perhaps a twinge of survivors guilt as he traced his fingers over the names of men killed from his outfit during his visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall saying, "I guess that made me feel the worst that I have felt since I'd been home." This also tells the tale of how strong of an individual Mr. Watkins truly is. Many other soldiers came back from Vietnam not only with catastrophic combat injuries, but haunting flashbacks of what they went through over there. This man lost both his eyes, AND his legs, yet has found a way to keep going, while others simply can't deal, turning to drugs or alcohol to help them cope. In all too many cases, some just give up and commit suicide. George Watkins is a survivor, and his first-hand account of the Vietnam War is brutally honest and believable even though it's not fact-filled with history of the conflict. It's the war story of a simple-man that was just doing his job.

Part II

Many of these stories have a common viewpoint, that the Americans were arrogant, and it was an extension of power. Reading these stories makes you grind your teeth, because in essence, you can apply a comparison to the current events in Iraq/Afghanistan. We're supposedly helping these countries regain their independence. It's all bullshit and political handjobs. The truth about these conflicts eventually surfaces many years later, after most of the political key players are dead and buried. It's ironic that many of the Vietnamese interviewed now live or ;lived in the United States.

The whole Tom Dooley situation was another one that got under my skin. Dooley "self-promotes" his doings in Vietnam to a family friend; the Chief of Naval Medicine. Next thing you know he writes a book and becomes a poster child for a US soldier fighting Communism in Vietnam. Like the news reports, it was all sensationalized or

fabricated to give a specific view of the war that painted a grossly inaccurate, but acceptable picture of the war – in other words, American Propaganda.

A few things stood out in Henry Prunier's story. During a meeting with Ho Chi Minh, someone asks Ho if he is a Communist, to which he replies, "Yes...but there's no reason why can't we be friends, why can't we live together?" (p.40) This was in 1945, after fighting off the occupation of WWII, and before the American War. In such a time, all this man wanted was independence for his country and its government to be recognized. Also Prunier helped train General Giap's guerilla teams and some 50 years later at an OSS reunion, Prunier wondered if he would be remembered. His question was answered as Giap made a throwing motion, as if throwing a hand grenade. Fifty Years....

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