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HST 195

Assignment 1

George Watkins story about being trained to be an engineer and then suddenly forced to be infantry losing his sights and legs in the process caught my attention the most in part one. I cannot imagine how scary it would be to be thrown into combat like that with the wrong training. Spending his first night on a mounted machine gun that he had basically no idea how to operate. However I do not think any training could have saved him from stepping on that land mine, only the sand could have and did save Watkins. I think some of the facts have been embellished some to make for a better story. I believe they probably lost more than the fifty men Watkins mentions, and also rounded up much less than the four to five hundred to the camp. Other than that I think Watkins story about being forced to be infantry when he had engineering training, and loosing his legs and eyes from a mine are true.

The most disappointing story for me to read in part two was Paul Kattenburg's story about how he was a vietnam specialist and the president and others on the national security council had not really thought about the situation in Vietnam before starting the war. I did not like the vice presidents quote, "We haven't gone this far with this whole thing to give up now". Reading this story made me feel like all the council cared about was winning, and lost the lives of many americans to win for no reason at all. I am glad Kattenburgs left the council when he did not believe in the war anymore, but I wish he would have tried to convene others on the council that the Vietnam war was not necessary.

I did find some goodness in John Singlaub's story about kidnapping North Vietnamese and teaching them fair pay, treating there malnutrition and illness, and then sending them back home with care packages. I thought it was nice to start sending everyone with two packages so they could have one taken from them and still get one for themselves. I do not how nice this "Paradise Island" was but I can imagine it was better conditions than they currently lived in North Vietnam. He also mentioned having medics rotated through some small villages helping and doing civic actions. I found goodness or potential for good in this story mainly because it was about helping people and did not mention anyone being killed in the war.

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