

Last edited: Thursday, 12 April 2012, 07:30 PM (510 words)

Part 1

George Watkins' story is perhaps the most interesting and influential in part one because of his clarity of vision. Unlike the United States' government, who clearly failed to understand Vietnamese culture, Watkins admitted that he "knewed very little about Vietnam" (22). Yet, he refused to allow his ignorance or position against Communism to blind him to the suffering caused by the war. Instead of viewing the Vietnamese as nameless, faceless enemies, Watkins respected them as human beings. When discussing the bombing of Vietnamese homesteads, he notes that "they had to be some good people to withstand all that... They's some of the most determined people I've ever run into. I don't hate them. They did what they had to do. It's the politicians that put everybody in that place" (23). Although he lost both eyes and legs in the war, a sacrifice which would justifiably make anyone bitter, he still sees the truth. When others were lost in the "them vs. us" or "democracy vs. communist" idea of the Cold War Era, he saw only human beings. Watkins' story becomes increasingly significant in current times, where wars are far off places such as Iraq with increasing amounts of impersonal technology. It is critical to remember that real, tangible, human people suffer because of war and politics.

Overall, the facts stated in the testimony are certainly plausible. His wounds prove that he was hit by a land mine. Furthermore, the fact that he received an impromptu infantry training is also quite possible. All personal stories are subjective to an extent, but Watkins appeared relatively objective because he did not subscribe to either Vietnam's or the U.S's ideas about the war. It sounded as if he was there only because he was drafted and did create personal investment in the war effort.

Part 2

Malcom Browne's story is definitely one of the most disturbing stories in Part 2 because it depicts the famous burning of the Buddhist monk. It is a sad comment on humanity when in order to draw attention to suffering, corruption, oppression, and the desires of the community, people must publicly sacrifice themselves. Furthermore, the fact that America, the legendary land of the free, was figuratively holding the reigns in South Vietnam when it occurred makes the tale more disgusting. In addition, the censorship and persecution which Browne suffered as a consequence of his photography and relationship with the Buddhists also leaves a bad taste in the reader's mouth. For instance, Browne says the police attacked him and his colleague, smashed their cameras, and then charged them with assaulting the police (69).

Yet, in its sadness, the story also holds a somewhat positive message: the people can never truly be silenced. Particularly with modern media, injustice and community voices may be heard or viewed internationally. The recent revolutions in Egypt are evidence of the empowerment people received through the media.

Last edited: Sunday, 15 April 2012, 10:26 PM (1352 words)

Assignment 1

Part 1

To ask which individual story regarding personal perspective on the Vietnam War impacted me the most was difficult to make a final choice or judgment about, as I found each account to be highly moving and equally relevant. The story which caught my attention and that I chose to write about was by antiwar movement activist Deirdre English for the simple reason that I related on a personal level to her story. We are both women, I too was seemingly ignorant about many serious issues that took place when I was a senior in high school, and like her, I wanted to be informed and take action in areas that mattered.

The fact that in 1966, when the United States was engaged in a war with Vietnam and English, a high school senior at that time, had not only “never heard of Vietnam” but was also one out of “most Americans” in the same boat at the time (p. 30). The fact that she showed a sincere interest in learning and knowing about the war was deeply inspiring. She chose to educate herself and become part of a hugely significant movement in our history. It is unbelievable that she recalled not being told anything about the war from her teachers. Not only did that raise questions for English, but that also raised questions for me as well. Why weren’t teachers informing their students about the war at which time was underway? That she was shocked and appalled by the questions which came up for her at demonstration she attended left me feeling the same way; as if I could have been in her shoes. The museum was glorifying and trivializing that there was an actual war going on by making light of the combat and killings taking place with their “game-like display of dominance,” (p. 30) referring to the helicopters visitors could get inside of and simulate war-like activities directed at Vietnamese communities, particularly peasants.

Like so many others, having seen and heard stories about the Vietnam War and feeling as if I only had a general idea of what it was about; not knowing any of the actual facts as to why we were there, how long we were there, or the numbers of humankind who were killed left me feeling appalled with myself. The fact that the Vietnam War, as English stated, “eventually made people start questioning everything” (p. 31) gave me goose bumps. What a significant time in history to be a part of, to be asking questions of a corrupt government, to be taking a stand for what you believe at many times in the face of adversity. It is amazing, the demonstrations and strikes she took part in. Being one of the first women at her college and barging into classrooms to invite professors and students alike in regards to

participating in the strike against the Vietnam War are both things I admire. Not only was she being an activist for a worthy cause, but the way in which she described the types of things she was a part of brings a thrill to the reader; in a time when “they didn’t even have phones in their dorm rooms.” This story was inspirational and Deirdre English is a woman we should all look up to.

Deirdre English seemed to be highly reliable, trustworthy, and believable in her personal accounts of her story regarding how she became a Vietnam War activist. She never glamorized her story, on the contrary, she openly acknowledged that in the beginning of her journey she had absolutely no idea what was going on. She speaks from a true place of unbiased experience, simply sharing her experiences during a time in history we all want to know more about. Because she was there at that specific moment in time it does give her more credibility. On that note, if I had been there and was telling my story of what I saw, heard, felt, and did; I would have more credibility than someone who had not been there because I would have been a part of it.

English’s accounts are both objective and factual. Objective because she is telling the part she played in history which makes it her experience, but she also speaks about factual accounts and backs up her statements with events we know to be true. As for not recollecting these stories correctly due to the passing of time, pivotal moments such as those that English explained do not get forgotten but instead tend to stay within us burning bright and constant as if no time had passed at all.

Part 2

Rufus Phillips story was a good read. A football player, graduate of Yale, and a member of the CIA eventually “ordered to report to Vietnam” (p. 50), Phillips perspective on the War intrigued me. When he talked about hearing the legendary Edward G. Lansdale speak at the Majestic Hotel, I felt sympathetic when he explained that the response to the clarification of their mission was “find out what the Vietnamese people want and then help them get it” (p. 51). No matter what your age, sex, pride, or qualifications; being in the midst of the Vietnam War without a clue had to be terrifying for anyone specifically when he says how confused he was even after reading the book assigned to him from Lansdale as well as several others. It was moving when he was experiencing so many opposing perspectives of what made Vietnam the way it was; so many contradictions really, and thought “my God, will I ever understand anything about this place” (p. 51)?

A positive lesson from this reading was when “Rufe” Phillips reflected on how, when during

his first assignment he went to retrieve medical kits which were to be distributed in the countryside, when the American official he went to for these supplies denied him saying that the place was already lost; Phillips didn't have that perspective. It was also positive to hear that when he went to speak to the Vietnamese down in Ca Mau that they were there to help them (p. 52). Really, who can be trusted at a time of war? But the Vietnamese trusted Phillips. He spoke of the Vietnamese people in a kind way, acknowledging how they didn't seem to have very much self-confidence due to the French putting them down and that part of their job there was to help build up their confidence; which they did. It was also a good feeling to hear that even though rape and pillaging were expected from the government troops that there was not a single incident among the army and civilians, and furthermore, Phillips said towards the end when the Vietnamese were greeting the troops with bowls of water and that he was moved, admittedly I was teary-eyed. At the end he voiced obvious regrets about pulling out when they did, but also seemed to feel strongly that their efforts made a huge difference in the strength of many areas in Southeast Asia. The examples I named were all displays of "potential for good," "hope," and "compassion."

Part 2 of 2

It was both a struggle and an inspiration to read Vo Nguyen Giap's story. Emotional and moving, the disappointment I felt came from the frustrating way in which he had been treated; serving three years in a French prison for anticolonial activism at the age of eighteen. His story was most probably the most moving to me in the book because he was so accomplished, had endured so much, and spoke with such eloquence, pride, and unwavering conviction. It was disappointing to hear how the Vietnamese people could have been spared from the war altogether had American leaders been wiser, as well as the "insane atrocities inflicted by Americans" including the My Lai massacre and the bombing of the Bach Mai hospital (p. 42). Vo Nguyen Giap's stories are an inspiration, deeply moving and exceptionally spoken. He is a truly great man.

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Last edited: Saturday, 14 April 2012, 11:52 PM (849 words)

Brandy Morales

HST 195

April 14, 2012

Assignment #1

The book *Patriots: The Vietnam War remembered from all sides* has many heart wrenching stories. The subject material is a volatile subject in American History and one would expect for the accounts of the countless individuals touched by this event to produce visceral emotion. In the first part of the book "Introductions" many stories conjure up powerful emotions. The account of George Watkins is particularly poignant despite its seemingly simple relation. The plight of a poor young man drafted and thrust into a war with little training demands empathy. He stated early in his story " I knowed very little about Vietnam... I just knowed that we was fighting over there against Communism" (Appy p.22) This blatant honesty about his confusion over the overall mission lends him credibility because he was not putting on airs, he was confused and has no qualms about admitting it which portrays him as honest. When referring to his enemy he stated "They's some of the most determined people I've ever run into. I don't hate them. They did what they had to do" (Appy p.23). His lack of animosity towards his enemy is commendable and makes his story stand out from the others in the section as did his simple, straight forward telling of an event that altered his entire being. It made one feel for this human being and his plight. It is Watkins simplicity that lends him credibility. Many other stories feel like they are being polished up to show the speaker in a better light. Watkins telling of the events that caused him to be blind and a double amputee for the rest of his life does not do this.

While many stories in the book are uplifting or sad, some don't inspire such noble emotions. Many of the stories portray a level of ignorance, cruelty, and greed that are foul in every sense of the word. For the most part many stories in the second part of the book

called

"Beginnings (1945-64)" are quite unacceptable. Particularly disappointing was the display of the profound ignorance and fool hardiness of many individuals in our government. Many if not all, recounts of President Johnson represent him as an badly informed, prideful man and nearly every account of Secretary McNamara was negative in nature. Two stories that seem the most credible and the most condemning of our government actions were actually written by individuals working for the government in some official capacity. Paul Kattenburg relayed events in his story that are very disappointing and have a ring of truth that is impossible to deny. He stated in his recollection of his fateful National Security Council meeting "What struck me more than anything was just the abysmal ignorance around the table of the particular facts of Vietnam... It was robot thinking about Communism"(Appy p. 82). Despite his familiarity with the Vietnam situation and his many reports on the true undeniable facts about the atmosphere in Vietnam he was ignored and despite his professional opinion to withdraw the National Security Council decided to proceed. Evelyn Colbert worked for the Southeast Asia Division of the Bureau of Intelligence Research related in her story that despite cold hard facts government officials continued to plow ahead with the Vietnam debacle. She stated " McNamara now says we didn't know anything about Vietnam and what was really happening was not understood. That's a lot of garbage. We would come out with papers showing that things were going very badly indeed." (Appy p.83). The blindness of our government to logic and statistical evidence that could have been used to prevent waste of lives and funds is by far the most disappointing aspect of Part two.

There is always a silver lining. Although many of the stories portray a negative side of the individuals involved in the war there are examples of good intentions and goodness. Henry Prunier was one of the first Americans to be involved in Vietnams. He was part of the teams that went into Vietnam near the end of World War II to train the Vietnamese including Ho Chi Minh. His portrayal of the initial interactions between America and Vietnam showed a possibility had once existed of peace between our two nations. Most profound was the recount was the way Ho Chi Minh was initially viewed. Prunier related " At one point someone asked him(Ho Chi Minh) directly if he was a Communist and he said, 'Yes, I'm a

Communist, but there's no reason why we can't be friends, why we can't live together.'"
(Appy p.40). This willingness to accept and desire to be accepted could have prevented many years of war, countless deaths, and billions of dollars wasted. The ability to live and let live would displayed in this recount of the early years shows the good intentions that failed to come to fruition.

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Last edited: Sunday, 15 April 2012, 10:54 PM (387 words)

Part 1-The story that really drew my attention most was from George Watkins. What shocked me the most is that I always hear these things about Vietnam veterans hating the Vietnamese, but this man, who lost so much, held very little contempt for them. He even had a good sense of humor about his situation, saying that he didn't hate the Vietnamese but that he would have liked to get ahold of the one that set the booby trap that caused him to lose both legs and eyes. Then it states that he laughed. This man had every reason to be subjective and to have his emotions wrecked by his experiences in Vietnam, including the men he knew that died there, yet he still has kept an incredibly level head and calmness about what happened there.

Par 2-The story that caused me so much disappointment in Part 2 was that of Ngo Vinh Long. It spoke of the terrible things that the French had done to the Vietnamese during their time occupying the country, but also how the United States occupation was no better. It made me disappointed to hear that our country would set up policies that caused hundreds of Vietnamese to starve to death and crammed them in to small living quarters. It shocked me to hear how these people were treated by a nation that claimed to be helping them. The thing that was most disappointing about by this story is the constitution that had been written BY American professors FOR the people of Vietnam. Not only is that extremely hypocritical, but then they continue to write in things that Britain tried to impose on the people of the American colonies, which eventually lead to the American Revolution. In what way does this reflect the values of democracy that we claim to uphold and value so greatly? It is sad to discover that these things happened due to the politics involved in the war.

The good that comes out of this situation is that we can learn from it. We can learn to never take liberty for granted and continue to spread it as our forefathers believed it should be spread. Democracy should be by the people, for the people.

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Last edited: Sunday, 15 April 2012, 02:19 PM (1052 words)

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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Last edited: Sunday, 15 April 2012, 10:59 PM (578 words)

Claire Adkins

4/15/12

History of Vietnam

Assignment #1

George Watkins

Though this is one of the smaller vignettes in this section, it packs a powerful wallop. Upon reading it, it is easy to see the need to scrape one's heart off the floor. How could one possibly imagine the environment by which these young men were surrounded? For days on end, they watched their buddies, their comrades, get shot down, or blown apart their lives destroyed before their very eyes. Maybe Mr. Watkins was unable to articulate the relief of his personal tragedy rather than the survival guilt that many other soldiers seem to wrestle with.

Perhaps the most striking part of Watkins' account, is his lack of anger. He stated on page 24, "I don't have much bitterness. Well, I don't think I do. I just wish that none of it ever happened-for everybody's sake." How can a person make a statement like that who couldn't see and couldn't walk? There are more questions than answers in his story and that is why his experience leaves the strong imprint that it does. He seemed like a gentle, simple, unassuming character who had dealt with unimaginable grief yet he sat in an interview claiming that he wasn't angry.

How could this story not be reliable? It is hard to imagine that the details of such a horrific event could ever be blurred. Usually the most poignant events in one's life remain crystal clear. In this instance, there is hope for blurred detail. Hope that more went into choosing who joined the infantry other than a line drawn through a list of names. Hope that maybe he got more infantry training than he remembered. Credibility is a tricky subject. Does it matter in this case? And in what capacity? A person can have a physical experience at one time and as he begins to process what happened, that experience changes as his emotions change. Maybe his perception can change as well. None of this should diminish his credibility because it was still his experience.

Richard Olsen

Mr. Olsen starts out star-struck about this war and working with war heroes. Is there anything to be star-struck about? One can be a patriot, a lover of this country, and proud to be an American without glorifying war. War happens. War is necessary, but isn't there a better way to express accomplishments rather than idolizing them? The way he spoke of flying over Vietnam as romantic is hard to grasp. He had a "let me show you how it's done"

sort of attitude which is a revolting part of any ego in most circumstances let alone "gunning down" another human being.

The last italicized paragraph in Mr. Olsen's account seems to come full circle. First he was struck with fear of drowning and his own mortality. On page 64 he made the comment, "I survived the war and here I am getting drowned as a tourist!" A different cord of fear struck again when the Vietnamese man showed up in front of him which was followed by immediate peace. They looked through each other's eyes into one another's souls. Beautiful! It shows that the most viscous and inexplicable tragedy can be overcome even without words. Even if it was just in the heart of a sole pilot.

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Last edited: Sunday, 15 April 2012, 11:48 PM (849 words)

Reading all of the stories that Appy included should have an impact on anyone that reads them. All of them have at least something that can influence people in one way or another. George Watkins story caught my attention from the rest primarily for the part in the story where Watkins said, "I knowed very little about Vietnam. I mean what I know now about it and what I knowed then is just from scary. I didn't really pay a whole lot of mind to it. I just knowed that we was fighting over there against Communism, so-called. I started doing more thinking about it after I got drafted, in basic training, trying to find out more, but in there it was hard to find out anything." This comment made by Watkins impacted me so much I had to stop reading to think about it. How could the U.S.A. send men and women to fight a war that they knew nothing about? How can you expect someone to give their life for a decision made by politicians and then not educate them about it? Does a doctor just go to school for a couple of years to learn the mechanics of a surgery or do they study countless years to become educated and know why they are performing it? Watkins said that even when drafted it was "hard to find out anything". It sounds like the leaders were purposely withholding the true reason for sending people to war, and scared of Americans turning on the war, they kept everything a secret. I feel Watkins to be a reliable speaker for a few reasons. First Watkins was there in person, to me this makes him more creditable because there is nothing like living an actual event. To see with your eyes the sights, to take in the smells, and sounds and use your senses is the ultimate way of being able to truly know what happened. Second Watkins said "I did not hate them", when talking about enemy forces. Watkins lost both his legs and eyes and still has the courage to say he, "did not hate them." Most experiences I have had with veterans have been negative when they refer to whom they were fighting. Watkins however was different he looked at it in a way taking in both sides. Time has passed since Watkins experience but I do not think what happened over in Vietnam will ever be forgotten no matter how much time has passed. In Henry Pruniers' story it is very frustrating the fact that America sent in troops to help train the very people they would eventually end up fighting against. In history books in high school they do not talk about how America supported the Viet Minh, supplying them with weapons and training, and even worse gaining the trust of the Vietnamese people that they would be supporting their fight against Japan. Henry talks about many years later seeing General Giap one of the most prominent surviving members of the North Vietnamese military, "grabbed an orange and made a motion like he was lobbing a hand grenade. Isn't that amazing? I actually did teach them how to throw hand grenades." This just shows how America dealt with war in Vietnam, they were not sure what they were fighting for, and even when they did, they felt that they could just

switch sides helping the Vietnamese and then in just a short time turn and fight against them. This gave America a bad name and made it seem like a traitor and untrustworthy country. Hearing accounts from the other side of the story is so refreshing. People always hear one side of the story and base their decisions on what they hear. Appy however includes accounts from both sides. Vo Nguyen Giap was a military leader for North Vietnam, who was connected to Henry Prunier when he was sent to train soldiers to fight anti-colonialism. When watching movies and reading books it seems that they always portray the enemy as almost being inhuman. Being able to read what Giap said and how he viewed the war makes the people being fought so much more real, and why they did what they did. Giap said, "Lessons are important. I agree (In response to McNamara's comment about the "lesson which will allow us to avoid such tragedies in the future"). However, you are wrong to call the war a 'tragedy'. Maybe it was a tragedy for you, but for us the war was a noble sacrifice. We did not want to fight the United States, but you gave us no choice." People need to see that the Vietnamese were not fighting us to take over our homes and freedom, just as Tran Thi Gung said, "Wouldn't you shoot me if you saw me holding a weapon and pointing it at you?" They were fighting because we came into their country. Appy does a beautiful job of exploiting both sides of the story so we can truly see what happened.

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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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Last edited: Sunday, 15 April 2012, 06:05 PM (1059 words)

Whether someone agrees with war or not, stories of war can have a lasting affect on a person. Acts of bravery are respected by all types of people. However, many people had trouble supporting the Vietnam war. Opposing a war has a time and a place. Once our troops are there fighting for their lives and their country, support and prayers for their return home safely is all we can do. Troops knowing that they have support from their country is important because if they feel like they have no support, they will second guess what they are fighting for. It is not to say that it is an easy task to let a loved one just go off to war. More times than not, you hear of how men come back from the war, and they are never the same. It takes a strong, courageous human being to be able to mentally survive the horrors of war. Two men whose stories from the Vietnam war that were both courageous and interesting were that of Roger Donlon and Malcolm Browne. Roger Donlon was a Green Beret captain during the Vietnam war. He was the commander for the Nom Dong Special Forces in South Vietnam, near the border of Laotian. The mission of Donlon's men was to train, and assist the Vietnamese in the fight against communism. Outposts were set up for the South Vietnamese. "They had set up strategic hamlets to give the people a sense of belonging to a program that came from the central government" (Appy: 12). Diem's brother, ordered the construction of these strategic hamlets. Donlon's men were sent to aid the Vietnamese, to be sure they were capable of defending these outposts. On the night of July 6th, 1964, the Viet Cong made an attack on the camp. The camp was all of a sudden under heavy mortar fire. Under these circumstances, Donlon had to go into command mode very quickly. It would be quite difficult to have a coherent mind when everything is going up in smoke around you. Donlon had to be quick on his feet to protect as many men as he could. One moment in the story that deeply struck a cord was when one of the Vietnamese interpreters, George Tuan, was trying to run to his mortar and was taken down. A 57-millimeter took off his legs and, "He just kept running on the stumps. Within about thirty seconds he was dead. That's one of the things you'd like to forget." (Appy: 14) Seeing this happen to someone would cause some major emotional distress. Under the situations Donlon and his men were under, they had to keep going for the sake of their lives. In one second disaster had struck. It is sometimes difficult to understand what it would be like to lose someone from war. This story is just one that intensely paints a picture of the hell that the soldiers went through. Another quote from Roger Donlon's story was, "The casualties of war go far beyond the immediate battlefield." (Appy: 15) This reflects his intense pain even years later. Roger Donlon's story was an emotional one. It was an example of bravery and he showed a true love for his men. "What keeps you going at times like that is the love you feel for your fellow teammates." (Appy: 15) Donlon proved his love

for his teammates when he made a strong effort to rescue a World War II veteran. While trying to save his friend, Donlon suffered immense shrapnel wounds to his, legs, stomach, shoulder, and even his face. Roger Donlon's accounts of his experience in the Vietnam are credible because he received the Medal of Honor. He was the first American to receive the United States highest honor in the Vietnam War. "His dynamic leadership, fortitude, and valiant efforts inspired not only the American personnel but the friendly Vietnamese as well and resulted in the successful defense of the camp." (Appy: 12) After reading Malcolm Browne's story, his attitude was a bit disappointing. His story was not disappointing, but heartbreaking. The story seemed to have no glint of hope. Although, after witnessing some of the things he had to witness, it would be most difficult to have a positive outlook. Browne's patriotism was a bit shallow. "Initially, I spent more time with South Vietnamese troops than with the Americans." (Appy: 65) He seemed to favor the Vietnamese. One quote from the story read, "An impressive number of journalists were killed or wounded and the danger added a certain spice of life." (Appy: 65) So many men were fighting for their lives during this war, and Browne's attitude made it seem as though it were some sort of game. Malcolm Browne was the only journalist who captured the moment of when the elderly monk, Thich Quang Duc, burned himself in protest to the policies of Ngo Dinh Diem. Browne's description of the event was saddening and heart-wrenching. Malcolm Browne witnessed many disheartening events. He also witnessed the aftermath of village massacres. Some good is found in the story of Malcolm Browne's Vietnam perspective. Although it is difficult to read, the first hand account of witnessing the Buddhist insurrection is quite eye-opening to the absolute turmoil that occurred during the Vietnam War. It is an example that freedom of religion is one of the most fundamentally important freedoms for humans. Forcing religion onto someone to believe in something they don't is like imprisoning their souls. Malcolm Browne can be appreciated for his efforts in immersing himself into the people of Vietnam. It is one of the jobs of a reporter to not be bias, but to report facts. His sympathy for the Buddhist's was admirable, especially because they are such peaceful people. The first hand accounts of being involved in a war is the most intense, and truly gives us the insight into what the war was like from all sides. Including not only American stories, but those of the Vietnamese makes the book by Appy one of more credibility. Although time has passed for those involved in the war, here and gone; the things they have witnessed, fought for, and lost, would forever be a part of their lives.

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Last edited: Sunday, 15 April 2012, 09:50 PM (435 words)

Part 1: Phan Xuan Sinh "All my ancestors are buried here."

I can only imagine how a soldier from the south felt having to take up arms against his brothers to the north. Typically, you can tell friendly from foe in a conflict yet here we have a very conflicted account of one soldier's tale. Now, I pictured this man's story about the fishermen along the river they slaughtered, a boat that was supposed to have been full of the enemy, and thought how those same events would have affected an American soldier presented with the exact same scenario. Would it have been as hard to come to terms with? Would there have been the same level of grief and guilt? That day, along that river must have changed this man's life forever. He speaks very fluidly about the events yet very detached and numb.

Part 2: Richard Olsen "It was like 'Terry and the Pirates'"

Having to put yourself in harm's way continuously, for another country's war must have been a hard pill to swallow. As helicopter pilots, tasked with flying South Vietnamese into battle zones, without the authority to use force unless they were attacked in a war we were not a part of yet had to have been extremely confusing. The Viet Cong did not have to live by these rules. It is one thing to risk life and liberty for a noble or official cause yet another for a very different country in comparison. I would imagine, early pilots being furious performing their duties yet this one, seems very serene about his, like he was oblivious to the war around him. It's almost like he is painting the picture of a vacation. I know each contributor will have a different viewpoint as to their involvement, but I was very put off with his descriptions about his time there.

Having served in the military, with part of basic training consisting of military history, the Vietnam conflict was always a hard one to figure out. Here we were, the greatest war machine on the planet, yet we couldn't produce an overall victory due to political, social and global reasons. Roughly 20 years earlier, we had won what was the greatest war this planet had ever seen. Defeated a very powerful and technologically advanced Germany and its Axis allies yet it took over 20 years against a poverty stricken, technologically inferior opponent to ultimately find failure. I guess for some, finding the lighter side of things, helps deal with the atrocities surrounding them, each and every day.

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Last edited: Sunday, 15 April 2012, 09:09 PM (1170 words)

History of Vietnam Assignment One

Jason McKay

In part 1 of the text *Patriots*, the narrative of Tran Thi Gung made an impact due to an honest portrayal of warfare, by a soldier in the field, specifically a female soldier, fighting for the Viet Cong near Chu Chi. A point-of-view many American's would not be aware of. Tran Thi Gung in her opening paragraph explains what initially motivated her to join the Viet Cong cause, the Vietnamese government, 'puppets of the American's as she described them executed her father, and she immediately swore revenge.

The narration is both believable and objective, as Tran Thi Gung didn't get wrapped up in ideology, explaining who is right or wrong, is Communism or Capitalism more important? She admits immediately why she joined the guerrillas, her father was killed and her people are dying, so she is fighting and killing to survive. She also gave the author visual confirmation of her combat experience with a photo dating back to 1966, by combat photographer Duong Thanh Phong. In the photo, she is lying on the ground aiming a rifle. It could be 'assumed' that despite the war being over three decades ago, her memories remain fresh as she admits that each time somebody asks about her experience as a soldier, she relives the traumatic event during the night in a nightmare.

Tran Thi Gung's account of the war reveals to the reader that those who fight (and kill or get killed) in the field, can have vastly different motivations than their leaders who start and control the war. The leaders want victory, demanding a certain prevailing outcome, whether the war is motivated by ideology, resources or prestige, the grunt or soldier is killing, just to stay alive. The war was justified because it was about defending yourself and your companions from an invading force, regardless of their reasons. She boldly admits she is justified in killing countless Americans, not because one side or the other is right or wrong, but because it's her home, and the Americans are invading, therefore she's going to kill

them until they're gone. Tran Thi Gung would expect no different, if she and her friends invaded America, it's your homeland and you have a duty to protect from foreign invasion.

In Part 2 of *Patriots*, the head of the State Department 's Vietnam Task Force (in 1963), Paul Kattenburg gives a disappointing account of one of many reasons why the war went so badly for the United States, pure ignorance of Vietnam and it's culture. Kattenburg gives short, but concise details explaining the problems he observed at a National Security Council executive meeting in August, 1963. His observation retold in the text informs the reader how oblivious to facts the American architects of the Vietnam War were being, having little or no knowledge of the enemy they assumed they could beat. The members of the Security Council were idealistically determined to win the war, believing they had the sheer firepower to win the war, not willing to lose regardless of the costs (of lives or money). Despite paperwork and reports from the field in Vietnam saying otherwise, individuals like Vice-President Johnson, Secretary of State Rusk and Deputy Special Assistant Rostow ignored Kattenburg, all refused to listen to any conversation that was remotely negative!

Unwilling to listen to an alternative answer for how to proceed in Vietnam (such as leaving, in Kattenburg's opinion), along with nobody in the room having any kind of cultural (or even language) expertise on Vietnam is one of the many reasons the war in Vietnam was so devastating for the United States. It was the longest war to date, many Americans were recorded not even knowing where Vietnam was on a global map, forcing President Johnson having to explain 'Why Vietnam' in the recorded video explaining to the public, why was it so important we had to fight and win in Vietnam. But we lost, for the first time ever, to a Third World country.

The conversation Kattenburg had, which eventually cost him his position, was one of the factors why we lost the war, going into a situation immediately after observing the French losing despite their resources and technology. The United States assumed Communist North Vietnam could be beaten in a matter of months, with no idea of who we were fighting, and how long they had been willing to resist invading forces, over and over again, China, France, Japan, France and the United States. As observers of history, we know that Kattenburg's story rings true, as similar stories could be read in *Patriots*, such as U.S. State

Department employee Evelyn Colbert's recollection, who knew first hand that the analysts and 'experts' were well aware that the U.S. was being far more optimistic about victory and Vietnamese enthusiasm then they led on.

The over estimation of U.S. power against a Third World country can't be underestimated, as similar problems can currently be observed with the current war in Afghanistan (another nation which has defended itself successfully against much larger world powers).

The testimony of Luyen Nguyen however, was an example that despite the countless lives lost in war and devastation, those who lived through the confrontation can eventually heal and find happiness. Luyen Nguyen was a South Vietnamese commando who was captured, tortured and a prisoner of North Vietnam for twenty-one years. In that time, the war ended and his wife eventually expecting he was dead, remarried. In 1987 Luyen Nguyen was released and found his family, including his wife (who immediately divorced her second husband) and began trying to recover the lost years of his life. The commando forces that Luyen Nguyen were compensated by the United States and he and his wife eventually moved to the U.S. and he became a professor of the University of Massachusetts.

Throughout his entire ordeal, one would have to ask who does Luyen Nguyen harbor hatred or resent for after so much of his life was stolen from him? The Communists who captured and stole over twenty years of his life? The United States for sending him into a disastrous situation, that he knew (and so did the U.S. agents that picked him) he was guaranteed to be killed or captured?

Instead Luyen Nguyen chose to make up for lost time, spending time with his family, and moved away from the painful memories in his own country to the United States. In the United States, despite how the country may have treated him earlier as an 'ally', not only did he move there, but became a professor of American studies, studying and teaching to the very country who probed him into losing so much of his life. Luyen Nguyen's story did show that despite the harm that can never be reversed in war, life can pick up and get better.

Last edited: Sunday, 15 April 2012, 05:22 PM (687 words)

PART 1

Of all the stories in the Patriot book by Christian G. Appy I found the account by Ta Quang Thinh, "Paying the Price" to be the one that grabbed and gripped my attention the most. It was astonishing to me that his last memory of the moment before he was hit at the makeshift hospital was that he remembered looking at his watch, and remembering that it was eleven o'clock. The other thing that I found interesting about this account was that of all the individuals in the building he was the only one that survived. The fact that he lay in the rubble of the building buried till the next morning with a broken back was inspirational and truly shows the strength and power the human body can withstand to survive. I found this story to have a lot of credibility for it is one man's account of an incident that happened to him. It contains no descriptions of specific battles and any other information that can be proved to be wrong by history and facts about the war. It was a bloody and messy war, many innocent victims were killed so the chances of a makeshift hospital being destroyed are pretty high, which makes this story not very subjective to dispute. Ta Quang Thinh provides a specific time that he remembers being hit with the bomb and provides exact dates and times of how long he remained hospitalized with his broken back and when he was transported home in 1971. The account by Ta Quang Thinh was very interesting and hit on the true nature of the war, in that it was messy. It's a miracle that after being hit with a bomb dropped from a B-52 that he was able to survive with a broken back, for many others' fate was not as lucky.

PART 2

The story in Part 2 that I found to be the most disappointing to read was that of Ngo Vinh Long, the now 58 year old college professor in Maine. Although the account told a very interesting and diverse story about Ngo's life and various experiences during the war, I found it to be a bit self-centered. Therefore I am most disappointed with the speaker of this story and how he addressed his time enduring the American occupation in Vietnam. I found that he went to great lengths to exclaim his own personal accomplishment during the story. For example that he was one of the smartest individuals in South Vietnam and was invited to hang out with the wealthy higher class. He states that the American girls, "thought I was cute," and that "people liked me." Personally I found these statements to be a bit much. There were certain parts of the story that were too centered around his own life and own accomplishments. I feel as if had they been left out the story would not have seemed to drag on and would in turn be more stronger to the reader.

Although the first half of the story seemed to be a bit self-centered, the second half describing Ngo's role as a map maker has some good insight and proves to be of

much interest. His opinion on the American policies taking place in Vietnam at the time brought much thought into my mind as he describes the once love and admiration he had for America to be slipping away as he sees many suffer. I found the detailed account of the “agrovilles,” or later named “strategic hamlet,” to provide a good insight into the ghettos that were formed in Vietnam. It was very interesting to me that Ngo resigned from his position as a map maker in which he had once supported the South Vietnam forces and the Americans to become a protester and leader in the antiwar movement. The disgust that he expressed with Diem and the American policies, just goes to show how the war began to slip into a downward spiral, and for Ngo the only way to escape was to denounce the war.

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Last edited: Sunday, 15 April 2012, 10:29 PM (1007 words)

Assignment One

Part One: Bernard Trainor

The personal account from Part One that stood out to me most was that of Bernard Trainor, the 70 year-old retired lieutenant governor from the United States Marine Corps. Initially, before even getting to the story, I was intrigued by the quote “It turned out the Mayor of Danang was a double agent” because of a film I watched in Intercultural Communications, Daughter from Danang. As I got into his story though, I found myself drawing many parallels to our current “war on terror”. As he made comparisons to the Revolutionaries fighting against Britain for independence, I was able to see the similarities in Iraq and Afghanistan. The optimism towards the war that is prevalent in the beginning begins to fade as time drags on, casualties accumulate and no discernable benefits are found. The lack of drive and personal connection of British troops to the fight, as they bide their time until being pulled out; the same can be said of Americans, both in Vietnam and the Middle East. Kennedy’s philosophy of the U.S. bearing any burden and paying the price for liberty, has an eerily familiar tone to Bush’s commitment against terrorists. I found Trainor to be a reliable, trustworthy and believable speaker. Not only was he well-educated, he was in a position of power. Though some may argue that his authority would be a reason to doubt his reliability, his accounts were not only objective, but also constructively critical. He was not blindly in support or opposition to the events of the war. He was able to take a step back and see what tactics were beneficial, and which were hindering the objective. In addition to his education and experience as a military analyst, I found that his story had merit. From my own personal experience with Vietnam Veterans and what I have read or seen, his sentiment seems to be shared. Although quite a bit of time has passed, thirty two years to be precise, he seems to recall events at though they happened only yesterday. The fact that he was there, first hand, gives him a sense of credibility, as does his post military career as an analyst and military strategist. Most strikingly, though, his account of Father Joe Curran, the Jesuit professor from Holy Cross, questioning his answers and requiring

him to justify his thinking; that is what allows me to put into perspective his accounts. Not only was he there, but he dared to ask “why?”

Part Two: Richard Olsen and Evelyn Colbert

In Part Two of the Appy book, I found myself most disappointed with the accounts of Richard Olsen and Evelyn Colbert. As Olsen described the differences between the North Vietnam and South Vietnam cultures, I was not only astonished, but also angered. The notion that South Vietnamese soldiers took siestas from 12-3 everyday, and didn't really seem to want to be there, upset me for the Americans who were over there to help them. Flying in to pick up a fallen soldier and to have the rest of the troop jump on the plane under the false pretense of going to the funeral, it is a very different military motivation than that of our United States Armed Forces. As one of the other stories mentioned, the philosophy of the South Vietnamese often included leaving room for the enemy to escape, where Americans want to kick butt and take names. Colbert's accounts seemed to sum up many of the frustrations in part two for me. As in the Herring book, regarding the Franco-American Partnership, there seemed to be intentional ignorance concerning the progress in Vietnam. People chosen to go to Vietnam had little in qualifications beside being single and speaking French. It was said to get information about Vietnam you would need to speak to the French. Many had never been to Asia and could not even point out Vietnam on a map. The facts favoring the Viet Minh or Viet Cong were swept under the rug. The people in charge did not want to be told that they weren't succeeding, or that they needed to change their plan of attack. Our own government was willing to turn a blind eye, and McNamara even went so far as to threaten those who did not produce facts favoring his actions. Then he tries to play dumb afterwards as though our failure was a total surprise and there was no way that anybody could've seen it coming. The heavy club of Westmoreland was ineffective, but nobody was allowed to point that out. Besides being ignored, people who spoke out against the war were labeled communist sympathizers.

Although, I found some of the policies and procedures to be frustrating to say the least, I feel that we can learn from them. Olsen's comparison of the cultural differences between North Vietnam and South Vietnam are key to understanding the situation. In current and

future endeavors, it is crucial that we attempt to understand the cultures that we are implanting ourselves into expecting change. We cannot simply go to a place and expect the entire world to think like Americans, when most of the population of the world is NOT American. I was especially hopeful of the accounts in the Appy book by Henry Prunier, when the Vietnamese General recalled being taught how to throw hand grenades shortly after World War II. Another story recalls being saved from a riptide by a former member of the Viet Minh. When Ho Chi Minh was asked if he was a Communist and he replied, “Yes, I’m a Communist, but there’s no reason why we can’t be friends. Why we can’t live together” that is the hope I will cling to. We are not going to be able to get everyone to agree, but if we are willing to learn from each other, there is a chance we can get most people to co-exist.

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Last edited: Sunday, 15 April 2012, 11:18 PM (420 words)

Part I

The story that had the greatest impact on me was the account of Bernard Trainor who was in command of a Special Forces unit in Vietnam. I found his account to be incredibly fascinating and while he talked about his experiences in the war, he was able to look at the war from an outside perspective. He openly discusses his problems with the way the United States was fighting the war. Vietnam wasn't a war in which Americans were fighting for America, we were fighting against communism. Trainor respects the enemy he is fighting and understands the faults in the strategy being used by the US army. His story has seemed to stay fresh in his mind and still carries weight in the overall conflict that was the Vietnam War.

Part II

The account of Daniel Redmond was the most disappointing story because he seemed to be stuck on the idea that the US needed to be there to fight against the rise of communism. Instead of being an invader he viewed US involvement as necessary to fight the growth of communism in the Far East. After reading accounts from the Vietnamese (both north and south) it is plain to see that communism was not the reason for the war. They wanted to be a sovereign nation and while the US attempted to create a free and sovereign nation in the South with President Diem the fact of the matter is Diem was a horribly correct official. His policies were that of oppression and intimidation and were catalysts to many South Vietnamese joining the North to fight for independence.

I found the story of Ngo Vinh Long to be an incredible account in the conflict. He was a Vietnamese citizen who grew up in Vietnam but then went to Harvard. He was able to see the War in two different universes. I found hope in his father's words about how they shouldn't hate the French people, only French colonial policy. It is so easy to blame the people for what a government decides is correct, after all they are only the few compared to the many. Going to Harvard he did not give up on the cause of his home country and continued his 'fight' against the war in Vietnam through protest. It was not just about stopping the killing, it was also about the fact that the US was stepping in on a matter of independence that we had no business being part of.

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Last edited: Friday, 13 April 2012, 11:47 AM (614 words)

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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Last edited: Sunday, 15 April 2012, 10:39 PM (770 words)

Part 1:

I found myself greatly impacted by Roger Donlon's story. Being the first American to receive a Medal of Honor immediately caught my attention. I have always stood in awe at the strength of the human spirit, and the ability to overcome even the greatest of obstacles, and I believe Roger Donlon exemplifies this in every way. I was particularly moved by the fact that while he was being interviewed by Appy he would, "take time-outs to entertain his baby granddaughter and to point out his red white and blue bird house in the yard." The fact that he witnessed and experienced the horror and despair of war, and still is able to be a man of family, love and happiness is reason enough to respect Donlon. Then when I add his sacrifice to our country, as well as to his fellow soldiers, it is hard for me not to be in complete admiration of the man. As for his credibility and reliability, I do feel that his recollections are probably very subjective, but I don't believe that this in any way discredits his story. If anything it adds the necessary humanity to the Vietnam War. Too often we are filled with facts and statistics to the point that we forget that the men fighting and dying on the battlefields had left someone behind who loves them, misses them, and was desperate for their safe return home. Roger's story reminds me of the sacrifice of war. It also reminds me that there are people who are capable of truly remarkable and courageous things, and no matter what hell we endure, we have the ability to overcome.

Part 2:

In part 2 of "Patriots" I found myself frustrated a lot. In Paul Hare's story, he talks about how at the age of 23 he was sent to Vietnam, en route he "picked up a TIME magazine...hoping to learn something about Vietnam." I have noticed a common theme among the stories of the soldiers of high up commands dropping the ball in ways that cost many people their lives. I think that Hare's story shows the naivety and ignorance that a lot of the young men, drafted or not, when faced with the reality of Vietnam. Hare's recalls the dislocation and uncertainty that he felt the entire four and a half years he was stationed there. Our country sent inexperienced young men into a war torn, highly traditional nation without any education or understanding of the culture they were about to enter. Hare's explained how he "never felt sure about (his) understanding of the Vietnamese or where they stood with respect to this conflict." He felt conflicted over his purpose for being there. He was told America's plan was to rebuild schools and clinics, as well as help improve agriculture in the area by improving seeds and fertilizers. Instead, Hare's remembers their helicopter base in Soc Trang that would "sometimes shoot up the wrong territory." Hare's and his fellow men would be sent out to the local towns to do damage control and offer the Vietnamese people money for their loss. After reading his story I was left with a haunting feeling, it to me is a clear example of the dehumanization that takes place during war.

After reading Paul Kattenburg's story I felt angry and really frustrated with our Nation's stubborn arrogance surrounding cultures outside of our own. We are too eager to label and define people especially groups of people. This strips them of their individual humanity, and allows us to feel alright about intruding on them. As enraged as all of this makes me, I still can't help but feel hopeful, because there are people like Paul Kattenburg in the world. He is a person who chose to stand for what he believes in, even if it didn't fit in with the "popular" way of thinking. His courageous speaking out of turn, at a National Security Council, on the idea of withdrawing from Vietnam, or as he put it, "get out while the getting

is good.” Unfortunately the council was not willing to budge on the issue. They chose instead to start supporting an alternate group of “rebellious generals to launch a coup to overthrow (Dien).”, and eventually to go to war with a Nation of people they knew nothing about. I don’t think this in any way takes away from the audacity and determination of one man who was willing to speak out for what is right no matter the cost.

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Last edited: Sunday, 15 April 2012, 07:33 PM (940 words)

Michael Stockdale

Writing assignment 1

Hst 195

Part 1

The most catching story was Roger Donlon "We were babes in arms in every way." This story was such an attention getter before it was read purely for the fact of the subtitle in part one, War Heroes. Once the stories had been read, Roger Donlon's story stuck out the most still. The ability to go above and beyond the call of duty in this world seems to have faded in so many people's minds; it is remarkable the world still moves forward. I was lucky to have many people instill a sense of need to work beyond my abilities, when you cannot go any further, take the next step. Roger Donlon showed so many of these characteristics and more.

There are few people today that would actually take a bullet for someone. Life is precious to humans. More importantly, a human's own life outweighs the life of another's in most cases. Roger was injured, yet he took his next step forward when all could have been lost, to save his friends lives. The ability to put another's life before your own is the mark of a true hero.

Roger seems to be a very reliable source. He tells the facts truthful. If he was going to make up the story, or lie, there would be no point in divulging information such as the comment about being able to trust the Nung mercenaries, but only hoping they could trust the Vietnamese. This comment may be seen as negative having no faith in the people under him, yet he still

says it. Both sides of the facts are given, not just one. As well, he uses a few comments in his story to bash the lack of communication between the “higher headquarters” and his camp. These facts that he discloses are vivid, not targeting the VC directly, and not just supporting his country.

Being there in the battle, in the war could easily persuade, or put thoughts into soldier’s minds to be bias. He shows none. Roger clearly states points of his story that he is unsure of. For example, he is unsure how long he was unconscious for, but he knows it was long enough for his friend to die in his arms. As well, he tells the story of George Tuan, a Vietnamese interpreter. He explains how the 57 mm shell took of his legs, and how that is something he wishes he could forget. This leads to the conclusion he still recalls the events very well.

Part 2

The most disappointing story was that of Evelyn Colbert. From the start the story was a disappointment. The main reason it is a disappointment is for the fact that facts were twisted by the government, as well as, the threat by McNamara in the note. The saying that starts with “the emperor has no clothes” seems to be very fitting. It is hard to believe in your country when you read how facts are twisted. Moving toward the note from McNamara, dislike for the events intensified. Not only were the facts shushed, or glorified to show optimism, but the shush came with almost a blackmailing. If you can promise such, we will let the incident go, but if you don’t... As a human of the world today, looking back, and forward, honestly I would rather know how horribly a war or situation is going, then have a veil of illusions pulled over my eyes. If the war in Vietnam was going horrible for anyone on our side of the war directly or indirectly because of

the United States, then how can you consciously be ok with the war? With this being said, I realize events are not always the way we want them, but if it is going bad enough that you have to hide the facts, something is wrong.

Henry Prunier's "these were not ragtag farmers" was absolutely revealing. He tells a different side of Ho Chi Minh that I had no clue about. He tells this story of Ho Chi Minh being a "man of the people." He tells how well liked "loved" by his men that he was. The biggest point to be made here is the comment of how he believes the biggest disappointment of Ho had to be that the U.S. sided with the French and then South Vietnam, and then says "this should have never happened." If his recounts of his time over there are accurate, it begs the question of if we are helping him, and he seemed to be a good leader, then why wouldn't we follow him. Ho makes the comment that he is a communist, but why can't we still be friends? With this account alone to go on, if not to back Ho, then maybe we should have just abstained from the war. It seems to be that we stuck our noses into business that was not ours. This story sticks out so much because it makes the reader think what if we wouldn't have interfered. Vietnam may not have lost so many people do to a shorter war, as well as, other's lives such as Americans. As well as, at the same time shows that Ho was not just a horrible person. He loved his troops and they loved him.

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Last edited: Sunday, 15 April 2012, 10:46 PM (719 words)

The story from Part 1 that had the greatest impact on me was that of Ta Quang Thinh, from the section *Paying the Price*. It was so impactful because it really shows that we are all human and gives us an idea about the "enemy" that Americans do not often hear from their own side. Thinh was paralyzed from the waist down while simply trying to help a wounded soldier when a bomb was dropped on the building he was in. He wasn't even a soldier fighting the Americans, he was just a doctor's assistant. After a period of healing he was literally carried all the way back to North Vietnam from South Vietnam by interchanging groups of men. It seems that people only really hear those stories from their own side and therefore think that their own people are so extraordinarily heroic and brave, but really those things happen on all sides. Thinh was being a healer for the country that he wanted to see grow and prosper and for that he was given a life in a wheelchair. I feel that Ta Quang Thinh's story is reliable and I do not have a problem trusting it. He was not there to hurt the Americans in the first place, he just wanted them out. He never even said anything bad about Americans so I don't believe that he would have any reason to be dishonest about his experiences. Also his story comes from a place of subjective emotion, but obviously he is going to be emotional about it with all that he lost. At the end of the story we find out that his wife only visits him once a year, so it is understandable to me that he would be coming from an emotional place. He was a victim of the Vietnam war just as many other Vietnamese people and Americans were.

The story from Part 2 that I found most disappointing was the one from Evelyn Colbert in the section *"The Emperor Has No Clothes On"*. This story addressed the fact that stories telling the Americans how bad things were in Vietnam really were being published even though the secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, said in his memoirs that today we can see that while the war was happening we did not really know how bad things were in Vietnam. Colbert says, "that dissent which contradicted the public optimism was ignored." I found this story disappointing because it is really frustrating to see how hard some must have worked to try to convince the American government that we were not up to the war

and to find out that they were just ignored and that the public blindly followed the politicians words of optimism. Another story that I found disappointing was Richard Olsen's story in the section "*Kick the Tires and Light the Fires*". His attitude about himself and the other Americans he was with in the beginning of the war was very off putting. While the Vietnamese were struggling with their own war, all that Olsen was really concerned with was how cool he looked to the older Pilots he was working with. Also, he expresses disappointment at the fact that he was not allowed to shoot random North Vietnamese people without being shot at first. He had no compassion and did not care to have any sympathetic feelings.

Paul Hare's story from the section "*Kick the Tires and Light the Fires*" gave me hope. Paul talks about how the entire time he was in Vietnam, he was never convinced that what he and the other Americans were doing there was actually helping the Vietnamese people. While there, he treated the Vietnamese with respect, and even "rubbed elbows" with them while enjoying the local life of the small town he lived in. He recalls that even though he had experienced encounters with seemingly nice Vietnamese men that ended up being Viet Cong spies, he still kept a faith in the Vietnamese people and refused to assume the ideal that they were all evil and out to get America. Paul Hare exhibited compassion and a true goodness that people like Richard Olsen did not.

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Last edited: Sunday, 15 April 2012, 11:23 PM (913 words)

Part One: George Watkins A father who was a coal miner for thirty-six years was just trying to save his sons from danger by telling the man who ran his division of Westmoreland Coal, "that if he hired any one of his sons, that'd be the day he'd walk out of the mines." But this father who simply was trying to save his son's life, did not know what was to come of his son, George Watkins. On June 19, 1967 George Watkins was drafted into the Vietnam War. George Watkins knew he was fighting against Communism, nothing more. His military specialty was combat engineer but when he got to Vietnam they sent him to infantry. In April 1968 George Watkins stepped on a land mine near Camp Evans in Quang Tri Province. "I knowed something was wrong with my eyes, but was telling myself that my sight wasn't gone, that it was just sand or powder burn." George Watkins had lost both eyes and had to get both of his legs amputated just a few inches below his pelvis. George Watkins' father had no idea what kind of future his son was going to have but he knew for sure that the mines were just too dangerous. The coal miners risked the dangers of the explosion of methane gas but if his father knew about the explosive booby traps in Vietnam would he have changed his mind? This is the question that grabbed my attention that made me want to know more. By this accident of getting caught in a booby trap I find George Watkins to be an extremely credible source. The Vietnamese would set up numerous amounts of different traps to kill the Americans, and vice versa. Even after being hit by a Vietnamese booby trap George Watkins does not dislike the Vietnamese he states, "They's some of the most determined people I've ever run into. I don't hate them. They did what they had to do. It's the politicians that put everybody in that place. Although I would like to get ahold of that one that set the booby trap. [Laughs.]" This quote says a lot about George Watkins' personality, even though he got sent to Vietnam to fight the war on Communism he did not take his anger out on the people living in Communism. The only part about George Watkins' story that sparked some attention to him telling the complete truth and not over-exaggerating was when he told Christian Appy too "Fancy it up." This story was very real, booby traps were set up to kill Americans and the chances of George Watkins getting hit by one was very likely. Part Two: Nog Vinh Long As Americans we were extremely smart and completely stupid to hire Nog Vinh Long to draw out maps. The United States hired Nog Vinh Long to travel the length and breadth of South Vietnam making maps for the military. Nog Vinh Long, yes was able to communicate and new more about South Vietnam than any American would ever know but at some point we had to know he was going to turn on the United States. Growing up his father told Nog Vinh Long that the United States was a "beautiful country" and a "racially harmonious country", so after the United States hired two filipinos and two filipinos

had died, Nog Vinh Long had convinced the American general to hire him. I have said before it was a very good idea for the United States to hire him but no one is going to turn on their own country. While helping the United States get a detailed map of the country of Vietnam, Nog Vinh Long thought he was overall helping the people because he states, “ Well, maybe, but if they have good, detailed maps then they’re not going to bomb or shell innocent civilians so what’s wrong with that?” When Nog Vinh Long found out that the United States was not treating the Vietnamese with the respect that he had wanted them to do then he resigned in disgust and became involved in the Saigon Student Union. After Nog Vinh Long resigned from helping the United States map out the Vietnam territory he protested strongly against the U.S. intervention and the Saigon government. When Nog Vinh Long did not agree with the constitution that the United States had written for Vietnam he started burning copies of the constitution in the streets of Saigon. I know this does not sound good, he turned his back on the United States but in return one of his American friends got him a one-way ticket to Boston. Nog Vinh Long got accepted into Harvard and became involved in the antiwar movement but also studied with professors who came to play important roles in the formulation of the U.S. policy in Vietnam. Nog Vinh Long had a choice, get arrested in Saigon or go to the United States, it was very dangerous for Nog Vinh Long to come to the United States. Nog Vinh Long had numerous threats made to him, the Vietnamese felt that he betrayed his country. Nog Vinh Long is now a college professor in Main, and I feel that he has received goodness for helping out the United States with the mapping of Vietnam considering it was the maps that the U.S. Military used in Vietnam.

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Last edited: Sunday, 15 April 2012, 12:53 PM (619 words)

PART ONE.

Malcolm Browne had an interesting story to tell. I have seen the photograph of the Burning Monk before, and had always wondered what the person behind the camera was thinking at the very second of taking the photograph. I studied the Buddhist religion for a few years, a little while back, and found it a beautiful and loving way of life.

What the Monk Thich Quang Duc did has got to be one of the most heartbreaking form of protest I have ever heard about. Even more so knowing more about the protest. For example, Thich Quang Duc had experimented with gasoline and diesel-fuel to find the longest and hottest burning mixture, or how he extended his arms. As if he knew they wouldn't be able to close the casket, which in turn probably led to more people seeing his remains.

When Malcolm Browne said "you could see the agony in his expression, but he never cried out. His eyes closed, his lips tightened, and the flames enveloped him. You could smell the burning flesh." I was, for lack of a better word, in awe.

I feel that Malcolm Browne's story is one I will always remember. I found it very real and somewhat raw. Malcolm Browne was able to recall dates, and the names of people, guns, boats, and bombs, and much more. As for the credibility of his story, for him being there, I feel he has a fair amount. He was there and I was not. While on the other hand people do tend to block out horrific events.

I do wish I was able to have even more insight from his point of view.

PART TWO.

There were two stories that I found disappointing. One more than the other. The story of Ta Quang Thinh. He was obvious and repetitive: "because I don't like war. I don't think anyone liked the war." Most people probably didn't like the war, that is just kind of a given feeling. Not only that, but he was more whiny than the others.

The other story was that of Deirdre English. Simply because her account was not long enough for my liking. In her last paragraph she spoke about Kent State and says "and a whole new atmosphere of seriousness took hold." Yet she really just stops with a cliff hanger. She doesn't go on to explain *how* they defied Nixon, or what they did to "raise the social stakes of the war to an intolerable level."

She seemed to have done interesting things but I would like to hear even more.

While reading these stories, I've noticed some things that I had never really noticed while studying the Vietnam War in high school. One thing that I did notice was that the men in the American Platoons became friends, some even closer than family.

They aided each other when someone got hurt, and they carried they're comrades dead bodies back to camp. But, what I had never really taking the time to think about was that the Vietnamese did the same things. This showed me some compassion. I also found some hope in learning that some people were able to find love on the other side, and pursue it, no matter the costs.

One thing that actually made me smile while reading was in Malcolm Browne's story on the night of Christmas Eve. He talked about how the American solders shot out into the nights sky, and moments later the Viet Cong did it as well, "as if to participate in the celebration."

-Noah Rene Matthew-McCleod

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Last edited: Sunday, 15 April 2012, 11:17 PM (434 words)

Ricky Fisher
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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Last edited: Sunday, 15 April 2012, 01:05 PM (531 words)

Steve Quatier

Assignment 1

April 13th, 2012

Part 1

The story Bernard Trainor tells was particularly interesting to me. The way he tells his story almost has movie like qualities. For instance, the way he was being interrogated at one point for his so called “non-aggressive campaigning”, and in the middle of that interrogation he is called out to join his unit who were in a firefight in the Que Son Mountains. Of course the firefight was a success and led to the capture of a high ranking Viet Cong intelligence officer. This intelligence officer fingers a general vicinity of an underground Vietcong headquarters. The ironic part of this story was that it wasn’t tirelessly beating the brush that led to the discovery of this cave network. It was the Snuffies that had taken a break from beating the brush for two days, and were throwing a Frisbee around. Of course a poorly thrown Frisbee lands next to a hole that is soon discovered to be one of the many entrances to this underground headquarters they were looking for. The discovery of the headquarters led to the biggest intelligence find I Corps had during the war. He doesn’t go on to say but I’m assuming this find led to the dissipation of and previous allegations against Bernard Trainor and eventually led to his promotion to General.

I said that this story had almost movie like qualities and to me personally it

does. Does that mean it's not believable or too subjective? Absolutely not. Bernard Trainor specifically commanded units that led to the discovery of massive amounts of intelligence. To me that in itself gives him all the credibility he needs.

Part 2

The story that was the most disappointing to read was the one told by Nguyen Giap. It was disappointing because it reemphasized to me that this was a war where a lot of Americans and Vietnamese lost their lives over unclear reasons. The Vietnamese wanted to be rid of outside rule and become their own country. American leaders told the American people that this was a war against communism and it was America's duty to liberate an oppressed people. Nguyen went on to say that the Vietnamese didn't want to fight the Americans but we left them no choice. I was not alive when all of this was happening but it saddens me to hear about so much loss of life on both sides and no one really knows why.

It feels almost awkward for me to say but the positive lesson that I learned came from the Vietnamese perseverance. Nguyen went on to state that the Vietnamese knew how to use their intelligence against steel but that alone was not enough. The Vietnamese people knew that they would rather die than live in slavery. If you put the deaths aside the lesson I get from the story is that if you truly believe in something and you stand up for what you believe in, other people might see something as insurmountable but you will see it as a bump in the road on the path to your goals.

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Part 1

Roger Donlon - War Heroes

Captain Roger Donlon's account of his experience in Vietnam and earning the Metal of Honor was captivating. Donlon's early comment about how a third of the Strike Force was enemy sympathizers drew my attention. Captain Donlon states "the people we thought would be shooting outward were now shooting inward." As with many of my fathers own accounts of Vietnam, sympathizers were not uncommon and extremely dangerous. The desire to not remember how George Tuan was killed gruesomely in front of him made my stomach ache. These images seem to be as clear as yesterday to Donlon. Credibility was never issue as a read this story. Donlon never claims to be a hero nor describes the experience that way, it was just his duty.

Part 2

John Singlaub - Paradise Island

John Singlaub's account is similar in tone to many veteran stories I've heard. He has an underlying tone of discontent for the people he is suppose to be helping. Singlaub say he was part of a sham resistance, which leaves a unfavorable taste in my mouth. His duties included capturing prisoners, feeding and tending to their health all while ingratiating them with the beliefs of the sham resistance. He says these people were sent off with care packages and radios to help spread the word of the sham resistance. At least the sick prisoners where treated for their conditions. As with all wars there is a place for every story and I'm sure this one does as well although disappointing to read.

Luyen Nguyen -Paradise Island

Luyen Nguyen had a very heart wrenching experience and life in the war. Unimaginable to me, Nguyen spent twenty one years as POW. His wife and family believed him to be dead and although offered the opportunity to write home Nguyen declined as not to bring grief to his family all over again. The spirit which has to live inside this man is incredible, I had to pause while reading to imagine the desire to live as he fought daily. POWs are treated with respect and compassion but I didn't find that in this story. I believe his twenty one years for torture and loyalty to worth much more than Congress award him.

Last edited: Sunday, 15 April 2012, 04:10 PM (764 words)

Part 1 The single story in part one of the Patriots book that affected me the most (other than the Tran Thi-Gung story) was that on page 12 of Roger Donlon, the first American to receive the Medal of Honor on Vietnam. Reading his account of why he received the Medal of Honor really made it clear that war is tragic. Throughout the whole account of the time leading up to the action in which he received the Medal of Honor a picture of the confusing and uncertain nature of the situation Roger Donlon was in became more and more clear to me. In most wars before Vietnam such as the two world wars, it is at least clear who the enemy is. In world war two, there was very little chance that the guy in the fox hole next to you would suddenly turn out to be fighting for the other side, and shoot you. Not so in Roger Donlon's account. Everything was very uncertain. All of the Vietnamese men who turned out to be fighting for the Viet Cong "slit the throat or broke the neck of the man next to them." Donlon estimates this number to be about a third of all the Vietnamese soldiers in the compound. Also the accounts of some of his fellow Americans dying in the action were depressing. The one that affected me the most out of these was the story of Pop Alamo the world war two and Korea veteran that died. For Pop to have survived those two wars (especially ww2) only to die in Vietnam during a conflict that is now commonly believed to have been a misguided effort at best is extremely unjust. Donlon's account of the whole thing doesn't give me any reason to doubt his credibility. It sounds to me to be a fairly objective account of a very unhappy memory. Although there has been a lot of time passed since Vietnam, I don't think that Donlon's experience is the type that is easily forgotten.

Part 2 The single story that was most disappointing for me to read from part two of the Patriots book was that of Henry Prunier one of the American men who was air dropped into Vietnam in July 1945. The team Prunier was on had the mission to support an anti-Japanese resistance movement called the Viet Minh led by none other than Ho Chi Minh. Prunier's team trained the Viet Minh in the use of modern weapons. While they were there, relations were excellent, and it was clear that Ho Chi Minh wanted US political support. It also sounds to me (and I'm reading between the lines here a bit) that during the relatively short time that Prunier spent with the Viet Minh, they gained his respect, and possibly even his liking. I would say that it would have been much preferable that the Americans would have lent their support to Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh, and that the Vietnam War never happened. I think there was a great opportunity lost when the Americans supported the French in their efforts to regain their colonies in Asia. I think that this decision by the American leaders of the time was very flawed, and not well in keeping with American values. It sounds to me so far doing the reading for this class that the Viet Minh were not the Communist puppets

they were made out to be, but rather more like American revolutionaries in the 1700's. They just wanted their own free government after thousands of years of being overrun and governed by outside forces. Out of all the stories in part two of the book, the only one that I could really divine any positive outcome was that of Le Lieu Brown. It isn't too hard to imagine a movie being made out of her story. Upon further consideration I would have to say that the story of Malcolm Brown also has some positive elements to it, since I think that Malcolm's work in Vietnam was highly important in revealing the truth about the whole Vietnam War. However that aside, I really got a kick out of the fact that Malcolm and Le Lieu who was supposed to be censoring him ended up getting married! I think this aspect of the story shows that although war is horrible, life does go on. PS- this doesn't look great when I paste it into moodle.

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