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Assignment #1

The single story that caught my attention was Roger Donlons. The reason it caught my attention is because I felt that was the truest form of actually being in the war. This story had everything betrayal, surprise, love and death. I really like his comment on why he helped Pop Alamo and others. He thought by saving people he was doing it for the respect of man but later realized he loved all his men like brothers. I believe this story to be very accurate because of his statement about one of the Vietnamese interpreters getting his legs blown off. Describing a short story like that goes a long way for me. That was the most intense thing I read in part one of this book. I think he wasn't telling me everything but he was telling me enough to believe he was very factual. I think he gets more credibility because he is a medal of honor recipient and a commander. Another part of this story that had a impact on me was the Vietnamese strike force turning on its own infantry men. He didn't sound bitter he just knew it was a part of war. "They thought I was dead", I imagine some infantry hearing that and actually got put in a bag. I came away with the feeling that he was proud for what he accomplished but also very lucky.

The most disappointing story was Luyen Nguyens. He lost 21 years of his life because he happened to be on a mission that was doomed to fail. As he tells the story he knew it would fail, but felt like he had a chance to get them back. I feel like he didn't deserve the treatment he got while a prisoner. He states "no

one with my rank went north”, how stupid you can be to go in the first place. I feel that there was a lot of ignorance on Nguyens part. He tells the story as if he wishes he could have gone back and made a better decision. I was astonished how he described his comrades, as if they were on a playground. They had no combat experience, which was a easy decision to send them up there because they were likely very anxious to get the battlefield. Malcolm Browne’s story also was very disappointing to me. Diem prohibition of flying a simple Buddhist flag caused a monk to kill himself by lighting himself on fire. I was disappointed by the way the monks were treated and that they had to go to something that extreme to make a point. I also think this paints a vivid picture on how the Viet Cong were. Luyen was brave enough to walk up to Dam Doi and really see firsthand of how brutal it was. His attitude toward the seriousness of the war really changed when he saw the 13 men slaughtered, hands tied behind their backs around the Viet Cong flag.

I feel there was some positive that did come from these stories. The fact that after Luyen did get out as a prisoner he got his wife back. He did accomplish something with his life by achieving the master’s degree and sending the compensation money to his kids still living in Vietnam. Malcolm Browne had a positive story when he recalled his experience in 1961 spending time in a Vietnamese ranger camp. It was Christmas Eve and being that close to the Viet Cong he acted like it was no big deal. For that one night, it was a celebration and there was peace on both sides of the war. He tells this part of the story because I think he was very surprised they did not get ambushed. I feel Ngo Vinh Long’s story was very positive. He did so much for the South Vietnam people by helping them get education. I feel he understood America and what we stood for. I believe he stood for much hope in the South Vietnam culture. I

feel he helped shaped some of the views of America in South Vietnam. The Montagnards can certainly vouch for that. In most of the stories, I felt that Vietnamese had more hatred for the French in the beginning of the war. Towards the end of the war, I wondered why we stayed in there for as long as we did. There were some positives but the big impression I got from these stories is they mostly the potential for evil.

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