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Part 1

The story in Part 1 of Patriots that most caught my attention was that of Tran Thi Gung. I thought it was fascinating that she was the only female in her entire unit, but that it wasn't even something that mattered to her. And not only was she part of the unit, but she became an important part and gained rank and responsibility. I found Tran Thi Gung to be very believable and her story seemed credible to me. The way she so bluntly tells the American Christian Appy about how many American GIs she has killed makes me believe that she is giving a very honest account of what happened and not holding anything back. I feel that being there gives her even more credibility because she reflects back on the specific events she witnessed. I also feel that Tran was very objective in recounting her story and even ends it by explaining how she did nothing wrong in defending her land and beliefs, even if it was against Americans and that fighting in a war is different than murder.

Part 2

The story that disappointed me most was that of Ngo Vinh Long. He grew up believing America was some beautiful place where everything is better, only to learn that our foreign policy was no better than that of the French people he grew up despising. Ngo comes across to me as someone who really enjoyed the attention and respect that came with being better educated and more worldly than most Vietnamese citizens and he soon made many connections with important Americans in Vietnam. Unfortunately as he grew closer with the Americans he got a job as a map maker, which sent him all across Vietnam, where he became extremely disenfranchised with America's foreign policies in Vietnam. It's also disappointing to hear how easily he explains the flaws in the agrovilles or "strategic

hamlets” as it clearly shows how little the people deciding on these policies knew about the way village society worked in Vietnam. The most disappointing part of all though was the story about the village they came across in which “two hundred people had starved to death in the past month.” Even though Long told officials in Saigon how bad the starvation problem was, they never actually did anything to help. They sent in doctors to say nothing was wrong so they could continue to ignore the problem. The one encouraging note was that he stayed there with his mapping crew to personally nurse the village back to health, but with that he lost what little hope he had left that the American's were actually going to help.

Even though it ended on a somewhat negative note, I really took some positive lessons from Daniel Redmond's accounts of his time spent in Vietnam with Operation Passage to Freedom. I really appreciated how he started the account by talking about how the Vietnamese people he was helping felt and how “terrified, absolutely terrified” they were. He then goes on to describe some of the scenes of despair and misery these people came from, which really shows how much he recognized what they were going through and tried to empathize with them so he could help them better. I was also impressed when he expressed frustration at “these goddamn French legionnaires” who were “shoving people on like they were cattle.” So often we get the impression that all the people involved in a war, especially Vietnam, are cruel, heartless men who have no regard for local people, but Redmond saw them as people, just like him, and tried to treat them that way, even when others wouldn't. I also found it very encouraging that even though he disagreed with the war, he found a job he could take pride in and feel good about and did it to the best of his ability.

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