

Due date: Sunday, 9 October 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 9 October 2011, 08:42 PM (787 words)

The story that stood out the most from Part One was that of Tran Thi Gung. The main reason was because her stories related the mostly objective experiences of someone who was in the middle of many battles on the side of the Viet Cong. It was very interesting to read about what some of the Viet Cong soldiers went through during the war, and also, at least one soldier's reason for fighting. After her father was executed and she took up his cause, her reasons for fighting the Saigon government and the Americans were obviously very personal. Conversely, she referred to the Saigon soldiers as puppets and the Americans as errand boys. This revealed that she viewed the people she battled as not having a personal reason to fight. In spite of her labeling her antagonists, her stories mostly avoid demonizing her opposition, and aggrandizing her own cause. And even though she conceded that she couldn't remember every battle in which she fought, all of her stories were not only recounted in good detail, but also revealed her personal, and contradictory feelings. She states that she did not feel guilty regarding all the soldiers she had killed, and yet she felt bad for the American soldier that she helped capture. While that admission was somewhat contradictory, admissions like that lent an uncensored credibility to her stories. Because of the view into the ground level fighters of the Viet Cong and personal and unaltered feeling of the stories, the experiences of Tran Thi Gung left the most lasting impression.

The most disappointing story in Part Two was John Singlaub's account. A combination of the seemingly futile actions recounted and the personal prejudices of Singlaub crept into his version of events and called into question their validity and largely contributed to the sense of disappointment in his stories. Singlaub told of numerous events when officials above him did not acknowledge that the programs they were running were not effective. In one such story, Singlaub told of when he took command of SOG, and then he recommended to Secretary of Defense McNamara that the program was ineffective and

should have been shut down. Unfortunately, he was ordered by McNamara to continue with the program. Singlaub gave good personal insight into a handful of events like this which pointed to a seeming misunderstanding, or worse, disregard, by people who had more power over policy than he did. In addition, even more disappointing is when Singlaub let his own opinions and beliefs color his interpretation of past events. Perhaps most troubling was his labeling of American citizens like former Attorney General Ramsey Clark as complicit in a communist conspiracy to undermine the war effort. Because Singlaub didn't give any actual facts or proof to back up his allegations, it's hard to take his accusations seriously and as such, those accusations call into question the validity of the previous events which he provided such good personal insight into. While the events that Singlaub experienced are exasperating and his attitude was somewhat questionable, that attitude still revealed an interesting viewpoint into his experiences and reasons for participating in the war.

While the story of Luyen Nguyen was sometimes disheartening, ultimately, it was inspiring. During his participation in the war, Nguyen refused to leave a clandestine program that was possibly designed to fail. Even though the commando missions that Nguyen trained recruits for had overwhelmingly been unsuccessful, it was seemingly decided by those in command that the missions needed to continue to ensure that the commandos did not reveal any information about the secret war against North Vietnam. While the purposeful wasting of people who are no longer useful was repugnant, Ngyuen's character stood in stark contrast to those decisions when he stayed true to his duty and made a commitment to the people involved with the program and went above and beyond what was required of him. After the inevitable failure of his mission, Nguyen faced further challenges. He was imprisoned for decades, tortured, lost his wife and family who assumed he was dead, and all the while he refused to give into his captors and even declined to contact his wife so he could spare her the heartache of knowing he was alive but unable to be with her. He bore that alone. Ngyuen's personal honor and refusal to give into decades of physical and mental torture is a testament to the character of a rare few good people who manage to maintain their integrity while stuck in the middle of a terrible situation. The events of Nguyen's stories may have been saddening, but Nguyen himself rose above those events to be an inspiration.

Close this window

 [Moodle Docs for this page](#)