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Last edited: Friday, 7 October 2011, 11:33 AM (677 words)

Adam Reid

10/7/2011

Assignment 1

Part 1

The story I chose for part one is a recollection of the early offensives between the United States and the North Vietnamese by Dang Vu Hiep. I chose this for particular story for a couple reasons. First, I must admit, I hadn't really looked ahead prior to the reading assignments nor had I examined the book closely at all. I was not expecting accounts from the North Vietnamese. I was intrigued and my interest was definitely piqued as I began to read. The second reason is Hiep's nonchalant attitude towards claims made by American personnel after the war was over. He recounts McNamara as claiming that without the attack on Pleiku the United States never would have begun the systematic bombing of North Korea and asserts that they find this claim to be "groundless." His entire attitude towards the war isn't one of malice but more one that is born of necessity based in the views that he had a job to do and regardless of what the job entailed he would do it. I do find Hiep to be credible, however, not necessarily the most accurate of sources. His subjectivity is clear and his dismissal attitude towards information given by the opposition after the war is evidence of that. He also continues to refer to the North Vietnamese as

“we.” Even when recounting events that occurred after the war he still says “we,” despite the fact that there was no more “we.” This immediately makes me wary of his ability to succumb to facts and reason and makes him appear steadfast in his view that “we” were right and “they” were wrong. Such unwavering viewpoints make me apprehensive of how slanted his views on actual occurrences probably are. I don’t believe that time and forgetfulness are a factor but I do believe the more time that passes the more people will only remember what they want to remember. All in all I greatly appreciated his recollections of events and the perspective he provided as throughout my lifetime most perspective I have heard is from American soldiers.

Part 2

The story that disappointed me the most was Rufus Phillips’. His attitude was completely machismo and there was a feeling of arrogance running throughout. To assert that not only did he and his cohorts present a plan that would have worked in Vietnam but also that his work in the region was impeccable and his interactions with the Vietnamese army were so effective that had America not pulled out they eventually would have been victorious, rubs me the wrong way. His egotism is rampant and, while I have no other information on Phillips, I find it very hard to believe that his role in this war was so paramount that an entire victory in a region could have been catalyzed by his actions. He also had a very dismissive tone towards all interactions with the Vietnamese population which only fed more into my beliefs that he is an egomaniac.

I found Richard Olsen's account of being a pilot during the war to have many positive aspects. It reminded me that not everyone in Vietnam was shivering in the jungle scared for their lives. It also showed me that many soldiers had indeed volunteered for service and viewed the war as a rite of passage just as WWII and Korea had been for the generation before them. I hadn't read, or heard of, too many accounts of soldiers who were willing participants in the conflict. It reminded me of the benefits of being an enlisted man, the camaraderie with the fellow soldiers and the ability to see parts of the world, which prior to the war, never really seemed to exist to them. While the undertones of the story were rife with accounts of mistreatment of South Vietnamese the overall feeling was reminiscent of stories from WWII, or wars that lack the negative connotations that immediately come to mind when I think of Vietnam.

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Part 1:

Phan Xuan Sinh's story titled "All my ancestors are buried here" caught my attention especially because of the kind of observations and details he included in his account. Whether intentional or not, the way in which Sinh used particular vocabulary produced a certain kind of irony. For instance, right at the start of his story he says "One time intelligence told us a company of Viet Cong would be landing by boat... we were ordered to set up an ambush near the beach..." (25). As his story continues it is revealed that the people they fire upon are a group of fishermen, not Viet Cong. The irony I saw in this part of his story was how despite the orders coming from "intelligence" and the constant checking in they did with the higher-ups, his platoon still managed to kill and wound innocent civilians – and that kind of incident, that kind of accident, wasn't uncommon. Sinh concluded that part of his story by saying "It's clear that common people on all sides bore the brunt of the killing and suffering" (26). Though he never made any inferences or suggestions as to why that was the case, he went on to tell another story about his time in Vietnam that, together with the first part of his story, is why his story stood out to me.

In the second part of his story, Sinh told about an old couple he found living in a little "thatched house" in a very dangerous area. He told about "helping" them pack some things and get onto a helicopter so he could take them to a refugee camp and then burning their house down so they wouldn't come back. A few weeks later, he found them again back in the same place, having rebuilt their house. He talked to the man and told him it wasn't safe and the man tells him that the land is their home and all of his ancestors are buried there and that they won't leave (26). This part of his story made it even more clear to me than the first part how little the American "intelligence" understood about the Vietnamese people and how little interest they had in understanding. Of course, our other text and the video series speaks to the same lack of understanding that had such a large effect on the war in many respects.

In terms of Sinh's reliability and trustworthiness, I don't think there is too much to be questioned. He doesn't make any sweeping generalizations about the war or any of the parties involved except for his last few comments about the hatred the Viet Cong had for the "enemy." While I generally think it's an oversimplification of the Viet Cong's sentiments, he reached his conclusion in a valid, albeit emotional, way and thus I don't think it's really too fair to question it. He was in the throes of a very emotional, frightening time in which his actions were having a visible impact on the lives around him – lives he didn't seem to think were worth taking or messing with.

Part 2:

I was most disappointed by Richard Olsen's story titled "It was like 'Terry and the Pirates.'" I suppose it's only fair to start out by saying that all people process traumatic situations differently and it's their right to do so, but I found myself seriously frustrated with the way Olsen recounted his experience – like he had edited it before hand to make himself come across as cooler or less affected by the experience. For example, he presented his experience as "romantic." He said: "I was in a romantic mode in that part of my life. I was with the best men in the world flying over rice paddies, canals, serpentine rivers, and savannas of elephant grass... It was all exciting, a rite of passage into manhood" (63). I was particularly curious after reading the last italicized portion of his segment that talked about how Olsen was now a painter whose work thematically recounted his experiences in Vietnam. I looked his paintings up; They're not cool or upbeat like he presented himself in his story. They're dark and nightmarish in many ways, suggesting there is much more to his analysis and experience than a "rite of passage into manhood." That being said, maybe he doesn't need to say anything truthful or deep about his experience in Vietnam; he certainly paints something deeper than what he offers in his story.

Among the Vietnamese people that share their stories in part two, there was an overwhelming sense of devotion to family that is seen in many recounts of war-torn nations around the world and throughout history. Of course the story that stood out the most on that front was that of Luyen Nguyen, titled "She divorced her second husband and waited for me." In his story, he told about being held prisoner for 11 years in North Vietnam. His wife was told he was dead and then remarried many years after his capture. When she found out he was alive, she divorced her second husband and waited for him (97). What stayed with me even more so was the fact that, when given the opportunity to write to his family, he chose not to so that their lives would not be disturbed. Though the people of Vietnam were played and discarded like pawns throughout the war, their devotion to family and ancestors allowed them a tiny bit of control that no foreign power could take away from them. Though I don't feel terribly satisfied identifying family solidarity as the little bit of positivity I was able to glean from part two, I really didn't sense much more – anyone that might have been able to turn the war in a more positive direction, even in the tiniest of ways was dismissed, ignored, imprisoned, or killed.

In retrospect, it seems that there are a lot of positive lessons that one might be able to glean in terms of decisions made that should not be made again – but I don't think I even need to say it – even that potential bright side has been offensively disregarded as we charge forth in the Middle East.

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The story in Part 1 of the Patriots book that caught my attention was the story of George Watkins entitled "The sand was probably the only thing that saved me." I emotionally connected to this story because George seemed so candid about his feelings and thoughts which seemed simple when I first read the story but upon further reflection it became complex. During the war his thoughts weren't for something grand or grandiose it was for camping days at a time, little sleep, lack of any real objective while still being told they were making a difference in Vietnam. I do believe the speaker is trustworthy; he still comes across as a person who bears no ill will (for the most part) for people who were considered his enemy. He sounds like he is a live and let live type of person, it is a purely emotional reaction to what he says and the cadence of his voice I hear in my head when he's telling his story. As far as his credibility goes I think that anyone who witnessed an event in Vietnam during The Vietnam War has credibility. People always have different perspectives on the same event and emotional feelings about that event that may or may not differ from others. His story is so simple but also rings with points or truth, and again, it is an emotional reaction but I believe that we often judge others based at times on little fact and purely on gut feeling. His experiences resonate with what I have heard countless others tell me in person and I choose to believe in him although he is just words on a page to me. I think it's hard to be emotional objective about events, especially the events that he experienced. There is always some sort of preset bias that shines through your words that the person you are talking to may or may not be aware of. To fully experience what Mr. Watkins biases are I would have to know more about him and what type of person he is. In my mind I can picture a man who is physically ruined but still has time to thank his sister for dinner with a smile on his face. Maybe when he was growing up his Dad taught him to appreciate what he had instead of lamenting what couldn't be. I just don't know his biases and never can fully know them. I can guess about his feelings and how they might influence his thoughts. He obviously exhibits feelings of remorse (for looking down at his watch when the bomb went off), he states that he didn't feel he was very bitter, but expresses how he

could have it and not be aware of it, happiness that he is still alive, and sadness combined with questioning about why it had to happen, not just to him but to anyone. I think perhaps all these emotions came to him later in life when he had more time to reflect because of his condition. I don't think that if he had retained his eyesight and legs he would be the person he is today because he wouldn't have had to live with a daily reminder of a price he paid and to ask himself why he and others had to pay that price.

I was very disappointed in the attitude of Rufus Phillips. I think his story entitled "Tell'em I'm not French before they lynch me." was one of the worst examples I've seen of arrogance and flippant disregard for human life and ethical way of living. His arrogance shines through especially at the end of his narrative where he espouses his remorse that the United States didn't continue the Vietnam War, and then he goes on to commiserate how we could have run rough shod over all of South-East Asia. It leads me to believe he hasn't grown at all as a person and would have been much happier as a legate in ancient Rome. His disregard of human life relates to his comments about how we shouldn't have pulled out of Vietnam. I don't understand how he could have wanted the United States of America to be a part of such an enormous loss of life that ultimately was because of political and economical matters that could have been resolved with a more isolationist policy on world politics. I think that his arrogance and ethical standards sharply align with how the U.S.A. political system operates and acts and it is appalling.

I think that the lesson I can learn from this story is that people will always have their own opinions and voice them to others. I also have my own opinion and should voice it as well. Edmond Burke said "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing. Do not allow evil to triumph. Do not sit by and do nothing. Stand up." I know his quote is used to justify many points of view and many events in life and history that transpire but there is good to be taken from that lesson. I think that if I heard someone telling me this story I might be compelled to agree with them because he comes across as the type of person who feels very strongly about his opinion of events. When people feel such passion they display a certain conviction in their tone of voice and body language but seeing this story laid out in black and white really illustrates how I should listen more to content than tone of voice and other body cues. Still days later I am aghast at how matter of fact he seems about many of his points. I also didn't really see at first how he wasn't really

telling a story about himself but a story about the man he worked for and the admiration he felt. If any good can come out of this narrative it is the good that comes from more self awareness on my part of how and what is said by those I hear and see every day.

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Assignment 1: Patriots - The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides by Christian Appy

Tran Thi Gung's story caught my attention because she was a woman fighting in a very dangerous war. Americans did not have many active women in the military, and they certainly weren't on the frontlines. Gung's courage and commitment to her country allowed her to fight alongside men, all fighting for one cause. This showed how badly the Vietnamese wanted to win their independence. So much so, they were allowing anyone to fight for their country that wanted to. I believe Gung's accounts of the war were true. Her matter fact way of telling her story reveals a sense of confidence and commitment to her country. Plus there is a photograph of her with her rifle in hand and lying in the trenches, taken by combat photographer Duong Thanh Phong. Her accounts of the war come across reliable and believable. She tells of the different war tactics they used and how easy it was to kill the Americans. The intricate details of the underground tunnels gave a clear picture at how the Vietnamese fought the war. I think too often we only hear one side of the story of war, our side. Often the media will share heroic American stories in order to gain support for a war. This story shows the opposing side of the war that most Americans did not hear about during and after the war. Being thrown in the middle of war does not mean you have a better understanding of it, but a different view on why and who you are fighting. This woman was a credible witness to what it was like for her, in her country, fighting her war. Her story was very factual and told she told it in a very matter-of-fact way, which I respected. But there was also an underlying

sadness and you knew she had been through and seen a lot of horrific things.

I wouldn't call my feelings for Malcolm Browne's *story* disappointing, but the actions of the South Vietnam government, police, Catholics and the anti-Buddhist's was disappointing. I have read many books and studied Buddhism extensively, it is a very peaceful and non-violent religion. And Browne portrayed them as such with his accounts. And they were being forced to switch to Catholicism and to follow a ruler they did not believe in. How could we expect a nation to do that when America was founded because we didn't want to follow British rule and religion? Then Browne went back to visit Vietnam in 1994 and met with some of the monks he knew, and they said that they were being treated as poorly under Communist rule as they were under Diem's rule. So the Communists and Ho Chi Minh supporters got their independence, a lot of the Catholic Vietnamese got to escape to America, and the Buddhists stayed in an anti-Buddhist country and continued to be persecuted. Here is one group of people that got cheated out of their freedom of religion and way of life before, during, and after the Vietnam War.

I liked Richard Olson's story because he didn't just talk about destruction and mayhem. He was hopeful and optimistic; and described that his mindset was in "romantic mode" and that he was "enthusiastic". Up until this point in the book, most of the people's outlooks on the war were grim and they expressed mostly dissatisfaction with foreign policy and had negative attitudes about wartime. So this was an uplifting story on a young man's journey as a pilot and living in a war torn country. I looked up some of his artwork, and some of it is pretty dark and abstract. But I like that he used painting as an outlet for his emotions, it seemed like a good way for him to express his thoughts and feelings about the war.

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Part 1

It is hard to choose just one person's memories that caught my attention more than others. Several of the South Vietnamese mentioned that they felt the war to be not their own, that they were forced to fight. Phan Xuan Sinh said that he would have rather lived under the North's authority than to continue the war. But the one passage that sticks in my mind is that of Tran Thi Gung. She seemed almost proud of how many GI's that she killed, and the awards that she received because of them. But I felt that at the end, she had a valid point: America had invaded her home; her land and she had to protect it. She was doing her duty and she does not feel guilty for that. I think a part of me admires her for that actually. I find that I believe her account of what happened, because she is not as emotional about it as most. Ms. Gung obviously misses her comrades but she has learned to deal and move on, something that not everyone was able to do. I especially enjoyed her account of the mass funeral for the living, and I wonder how often it was performed.

Part 2

For me, the situation as a whole is disappointing. We (Americans) went in to do one thing, and ended up doing the complete opposite. But one thing bugs me more than most, and that is something that Daniel Redmond talks about toward the end of his passage, and that I have been reading about in other books about this war. And that is the use of media to further one's agenda. He talks about Tom Dooley and the book *Deliver Us from Evil*. From what I could understand, Dooley uses pictures of a Vietnam beggar to portray a victim of torture. Redmond also says that Dooley exaggerated events to suit his own wants and needs. This feels very wrong to me, as the war was a horrific event to those that live through it. There are many other aspects from that passage that bother me, but the part about Dooley is at the top. However, Redmond had a lot of good to say about Dooley as well, such as his concern for the Vietnamese and their well-being.

Although the very last passage of part 2 is extremely horrifying and sad, I found a lot of hope and even peace in Luyen Nguyen's words. He speaks of the injustice that he endures at the ways in his camp, where recruits had more money, more freedom and better food; and then he talks of his capture and torture as a POW. But the peace and hope I discovered in this event was the way he deals with it. Nguyen made peace with his situation. He refuses to go against his beliefs even though it costs him dearly physically and mentally. I also was in awe that he put his family's emotions above his own and refused to tell them he was alive so they wouldn't cry over him. It was also because his wife loved him so much that she left her second husband and waited for him to come home when she found out he was still alive. I realize that she remarried out of necessity, but I don't believe anyone would have faulted her for not leaving him later. And lastly, because after everything was over, he moved with his wife, worked hard for his masters and became a student counselor.

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Billy Mann

HST195 Vietnam

10/9/11

Assignment 1

Part 1

Which single story, other than that of Jo Collins, in Part 1 of the Patriots book caught your attention? Why? How reliable, trustworthy, believable do you believe that speaker to be? After all, unlike you or me, they were there, at that specific point in time. Does that give them more or less credibility? Are they objective and factual or do they suffer from too much subjectivity, too much time having passed, too much forgotten? (These are not easy questions... please take some time to analyze what I'm asking for here.)

When multiple people experience the same event, each and every one has a different experience related to that event. This is where it can be most helpful to hear the collective story in order to more accurately understand what happened. Although all of the stories in Part 1 of Appy's Patriots were touching in some way, I had a difficult time deciding between Roger Donlon's (p.12) and Tran Thu Gung's (p.15) stories as the single story that most caught my attention. I have decided upon Donlon's for the way he succinctly captures both the factual and emotional aspects of some extremely heart wrenching aspects of the war. I believe Donlon to be a reliable, trustworthy, believable speaker on the subjects which he describes because he really doesn't make many personal judgments, but rather tells exactly what happened during the five-hour defense of his Special Forces camp in the mountains of northern South Vietnam. He does remark about feelings related to the events, but I believe the fact that he was there himself, living through the horrors as well as seeing some victory, gives him more credibility overall. It is easy for those of us who hear about wartime details to make judgments about them without actually experiencing the truth for ourselves. It is true that there will always be some subjectivity involved when recalling an event from the past, but memories such as Donlon's are so horrific that it is difficult not to believe he remembers the details well. As I read his recollection of the Vietnamese interpreter who continued running on his stumps for 30 seconds before dying, I felt like I was there watching, and it was terrible. His explanation of not being able to raise a U.S. flag at camp and how that affected morale also was quite telling. Although his story evokes strong emotions and is told from his vantage point, it is incredibly valuable toward helping us understand the realities of the Vietnam War.

Part 2

Which story or stories (definitely one, but not more than two) were the most disappointing for you to read and why? You may have been disappointed with the speaker him/herself (with their attitude, for example) or disappointed by the events in their story (with the frustrating way in which they were treated or in the negative situations in which they had to interact with others). Start your answer to Part 2 with this negative, critical point of view first.

It is always disappointing to read about someone in power using that power to destroy innocent lives. Ngo Vinh Long's story (p.54) created deep feelings of disappointment in me for several reasons. First, here was a South Vietnamese young man who idolized the United States, seeing our country as the beacon of light we claimed to be to the world. His father was a Christian idealist who spoke highly of Americans, but who was then horribly tortured by the French when he joined the Viet Minh cause. When America began supporting the French, his father became quite worried about the Americans replacing the French in Vietnam, because all along he was a nationalist who just wanted independence for his country. He wisely foresaw the dangers of too much American involvement there. Sadly, Vinh Long's opinions of the U.S. (actually, for their policies, but not for the people) changed dramatically for the worse. Second, here was a mapmaker who traveled the country extensively and saw firsthand the way U.S. "strategic hamlet" policies negatively affected the thousands of Vietnamese peasants who were touched by them. I cannot imagine having my only source of livelihood burned down as so many of the peasants' rice fields were, or being held a political prisoner on my own land as many of them were, or being starved to death by my own government as many of them were. Third, Vinh Long grew up with Diem as president and looked up to him, thinking he was a "good guy." Yet again, as he witnessed the numerous public executions that Diem flaunted, his positive opinion of what was supposed to be a good government turned negative. I find it sad when a young person looks up to leaders, only to have those same leaders fill him with utter disgust and disappointment as he witnesses the truth. If anything, I am learning that the conflict in Vietnam was very complicated, and it was not clear what the U.S. should or should not have done at the time. However, in retrospect, it is disappointing that we lost the support of such a brilliant young mind as Vinh Long's.

In the second half of Part 2, address any positive lesson(s) you may have learned from one or more of the accounts in Part 2 of the book. Is there any "hope", "compassion", "goodness" or the "potential for good" that comes out of any of these stories?

Although Vinh Long's story was disappointing in many regards, I definitely see hope in his story as well. I greatly respect his father's beliefs that you shouldn't hate the people of a nation, just the policies. It seems this teaching stayed with Vinh Long. He lives and works in the United States, which tells me he must not harbor resentment toward this nation. It is possible to disagree strongly with the policies of a government without internalizing lasting hatred toward that regime. Another part of a story that offers goodness is that of Richard Olsen (p.62). He tells of when he almost drowned in

Vietnam years after the war, but was rescued by a young Vietnamese lifeguard who represented the Viet Cong to him. What a wonderful depiction of the bridging of a gap between two people groups who were sworn enemies years before. Finally, it is amazing to me the overall resilience and good-nature of the Vietnam people. A local man I know of was only ten years old living in Saigon when it was taken in the final days of the war. He was there the day it was overthrown but left for America only hours before it would have been too late. His father, who was a military official for the South Vietnamese, was held as a prisoner of war by the North for many years afterward. It was almost thirty years before the family was reunited. However, this man says, "I have no flashbacks, and no regrets."

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Part 1:

The story from Roger Donlon (the Medal of Honor recipient) really hit home for me.

His detail on the accounts leading to, during and after were so graphic, yet vivid in detail that it made me feel as if I was right there in the thick of things with him. The sadness I felt was so real, when he mentioned the marine that had just received a letter from his wife about them having twins, and then him subsequently dying, with one of his twins dying of a premature death. Being of a premature birth as well, that story was especially sad and touching at the same time. I think that having received the medal of honor constitutes believability as there were obvious witnesses to his actions. In the end, I believe him to be very factual with his recollections.

Part 2:

The story from Ngo Vinh Long was very frustrating to me because of the fact that he was constantly ignored by U.S. officials when he warned them about what was taking place in South Vietnam (the corruption, starvation, etc). Even though I was very frustrated in our lack of the "right" decisions, I was more so disappointed with the way things were handled with people that were accused of Communist acts (the beheadings mainly). With these people never getting a chance to defend themselves, no one will really know their true intentions. As stated in the passage, many people denied the beheadings ever happening, but as we've seen from our footage of the war, they did in fact happen, giving Ngo Vinh Long at least some credit. Of course there is reason for doubt for his recollections (what was the proof that he really had these conversations?), but it'd be hard to prove not. After all, you'd have to ask yourself, why would he lie?

The one story I liked the most was from Paul Hare, a "mostly retired" diplomat that didn't really come off as a diplomat from his exploits. He came off almost as someone neutral to the entire war, but filled with a feeling of hope. The want to help rebuild parts of South Vietnam that had been previously destroyed. He didn't have the feel of a military man (any of the officers, or militarily involved) or the reports (or anyone closely involved with either party). His interaction with the two elderly fisherman that later caused the attack on his position was a very interesting point in his segment, just for the fact that it really showed how even the people who you

thought were the least likely to cause any problems, in fact did. I believe this really showed the mistaken trust (maybe even a sense of naivety) when it came to not only soldiers (IE those that were actual spies from the north in the south ranks) but also, to civilians as well. In the end though, this segment came to as an honest recollection, with no real one-sided feeling as the other stories seemed to possess. The small recollection of his “cock fighting days” couldn’t help but bring a smile to your face even though there was a war going on around him, he was still able to make some time to have some “fun”.

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Cameron Williams

History of the Vietnam War

Joe Escobar

October 8th 2011

Assignment 1

Recalling my readings of part 1 of *Patriots* Bernard Trainor's recollection of the war "Commanders" caught my attention the most. I think a lot of it had to do with the fact that I had never read a book on the Vietnam war or heard anyones first hand recollection of the war. I thoroughly enjoyed all the accounts in part 1 because the Vietnam war has been something I have always found interesting but never got around to learning about it and with my little knowledge and high interest everything in this book thus far has expand what I knew previously ten fold. I also kept my interest at a high level throughout the my reading. I think it interested me so much because it seemed so real. I felt very connected to his account and experiences in the war. I felt that he was a very trustworthy person and so was reflected in his writings. I found that it was very interesting that his unit stumbled upon the entrance to the cave simply by playing frisbee to pass the time, it made me think of how it must feel to accomplish something so important just by chance. Bernard's account of the war although not incredibly detailed was still very intriguing to me and definitely something I that I valued reading.

After reading part 2 of *Patriots* I was rather disappointed after reading Vo Nguyen Giap's account of the war. I felt that his attitude was rather arrogant. I felt that he felt that his

Vietnamese army was far superior to that of the United States. I didn't like the way that he recounted the events. One thing he said that particularly disappointed me was when he said "we know how to use our intelligence against the power of steel" It gave me the impression that the United States lacked intelligence and all we had were our "guns". Previous to reading this segment I had very high hopes of this book, I'm not saying that one disappointing story ruins the whole book but I was very turned off while reading it. It did however offer a point of view that was different then what I'm used to reading about when reading about the Vietnam War, especially how he referred to it as the American war. The thought simply never crossed my mind of Vietnamese people would refer to the war.

Although I had many negative things to say about Vo Nguyen Giap's recollection of the war I also found some positives in his writings. One thing he said really showed me how the Vietnamese people felt about this situation and the heart that they had to keep fighting. Giap says "Don't worry, if we have the people, we have the weapons" pg 43. To me this shows the sense of unity that the Vietnamese had when fighting the war. It also shows that they weren't going to back down to anyone and they were fighting for pride and honor. He also stated that "Americans should understand more about Vietnamese history and culture" pg 43 I found this statement to be very true and powerful. I as well as many other people don't have much knowledge of what happened in this war what it was for or anything about the culture. I feel like it is definitely something we should all be educated about it was a major part of American history and the people need to educate themselves properly on what really happened.

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Chris Peake

HST 195 F11

Escobar

ASSIGNMENT 1

The story in Part 1 that particularly drew me in was Tran Thi Gung's account of guerilla warfare against the South, because of its firsthand narrative of a young person's struggle against yet another foreign power in her country. She tells matter-of-factly of her father's murder by the "puppet" soldiers, her subsequent enlistment with the guerillas at the age of seventeen, and her various engagements with the enemy. Talk of nationalist pride or the egotistical chest-thumping of a victorious soldier is refreshingly missing. She tells a simple story that illuminates the experience of fighting a technologically superior enemy with scant resources, using tactics that often confounded the South's conventional approach to combat, and living conditions in the cramped tunnels. I especially liked the part where she tells of capturing a man she knew from her own area. Admittedly, what little I knew about the Viet Cong came from Hollywood, and there was much to doubt about how they were depicted, but the fact that she wouldn't shoot the soldier because he was unarmed and had surrendered somehow surprised me. I know there is good and bad on both sides of war, but I discovered a latent feeling that the Viet Cong were not exactly cruel but less compassionate than us. Maybe even less human. Growing up with "Deer Hunter" and the like where the physical and psychological suffering of a generation of Americans is all too apparent, it's amazing to only now see objectively that such humanity and pain is not exclusively ours. I also appreciated the end when she expresses no guilt but a tremendous sadness at so much loss.

I can't pick a particular story that most disappointed me in Part 2, but what pervades most of the stories is the arrogance of American policy and its nearly complete ignorance of the people and cultures of Vietnam. Chester Cooper tells how no one in the American embassy spoke Vietnamese. Malcolm Browne says that, despite having a large Buddhist population, their insurrection came as a complete surprise. His wife, Le Lieu Browne, a civil servant, speaks of censorship of "politically sensitive" material from battlefield reports to dictionaries that included the word Communism, as well as describing the Diem government as corrupt and growing increasingly despotic. Paul Kattenburg relates how William Rostow, a special assistant for national security affairs, saw no difference between one country or another and treated them similarly. I find it difficult to believe anyone would believe these attitudes could win "hearts and minds", let alone how so many could espouse such views.

One thing that I found positive in this was the Brownes. I'm an incurable romantic, and I

liked that they met because it was her job to chastise him when he wrote something the government found objectionable, how they lived together even though it was illegal, and how they eventually married. Even in such an atmosphere as war, they, at least, can say something wonderful like love can come out of it.

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

Last edited: Sunday, 9 October 2011, 08:23 PM (190 words)

Evelyn Colbert

I've learned in my lifetime that if you don't accept the facts and just sweep them under the rug, nothing will ever be solved. In the Vietnam War we thought we were going to walk in there and just take over. Secretary of Defense McNamara says "we didn't know what was going on in Vietnam". He knew what was going on he just didn't want to accept the fact that this small country could hang with the United States of America. Instead of facing his problems he just swept it under the rug. If we had been more prepared going into Vietnam we mite of gone out a totally different way.

Ta Quang Thinh

What is a hero? Someone that helps makes things better. In this situation he put his life on the line to heal soldiers that fought in Vietnam. Ta Quang Thinh was a nurse during the war and was paralyzed from a B-52 bomber. He stayed for four years after his injury to help the victims of the war. He hated war but he knew that he had to help his country.

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

Last edited: Saturday, 8 October 2011, 09:43 PM (313 words)

Assignment 1

Part 1. A story in particular caught my attention it was of Tran Thi Gung. It caught my attention, because from my perspective Tran was a poor women, and innocent. It's sad when it came down to people dying and tears shed to turn a lady like Tran into a war veteran. She had to teach herself how to use American weapons, but that came after running out into middle of gun fire in order to acquire them. Her story was very truthful; Tran would probably be a trustworthy person if you were on opposite sides in the war. Tran also states facts and personal encounters in her story. It was life or death and I would give Tran all the credit she deserves. She was sincere, and she fought for her country just like any average person would do.

Part2. The most disappointing story that I read was yet again of Tran Thi Gung, because in her story she was treated unfairly. Tran was also forced into fighting, she saw her friends dying next to her right and left just like everyone else. It came down to teaching herself how to be a killer, while learning how to use American weapons. Sacrificing everything, Tran saved a lot of lives. There are many positive lessons to learn from fighting, and war.

The most important being that war is like a disease. There is no need for war, yet again it's in our bloods, and has been in our history for decades. Nothing good will ever come out of war, because people will still be dying. Not only reducing the population, war destroys friendships, and tears countries apart; After the Vietnam War, the greatest out come by far was the freedom of the country's people.

-Cody Collins Haley

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

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Cody Patterson

Oct-09-11

Assignment #1

The single story that caught my eye in Part 1 was the story of a man named Roger Donlon (Appy, pg. 12). Donlon's story first caught my eyes when I read that he was the first American in the Vietnam War to receive a Medal of Honor. The Medal of Honor, the highest military decoration the United States can confer, is earned by making heroic acts. Which is nothing short of what Donlon did on July 6, 1964. The story is like something out of a movie, for example Donlon witnessed a Vietnamese interpreter get hit in the knees with a 57-millimeter round, which took his legs off. Donlon then explains the man just kept running on the stumps until he died. Things like that are impossible to imagine unless you have been in war. Although hard to imagine, I find Donlon's remarkable story to very believable, and factual. Sometimes in life you encounter things you will never forget, and the day, or moment replays through your mind. Roger Donlon remembered names, details, and presents a story where all you can do is believe what he says. Near the end of the story Donlon states that, "What keeps you going at times like that is the love you feel for your fellow teammates. At the time you called it respect, but as the years go on you realize it was really a deep, deep, love. (Appy, pg. 15)"

When reading Part 2, I came across a story that kind of put things in perspective for me. Paul Hare's story gave me an insight to the thoughts of these men who had no clue what was going on, but were selected to go overseas. He was sent over in 1964, due to his ability to speak French, and stayed until early 1969. Hare mentions his sense of dislocation, and uncertainty that never left him for the four and a half years he was there. The most disappointing aspect of his story, besides being lonely, was Hare talking about the "miss fires". These "miss fires" happened often killing innocent people, the one in which he talks about in particular is when they got the wrong grid coordinates and bombed a hospital. It

puts in perspective that not only troops are getting killed but innocent people in the wrong place at the wrong time. Life is a valuable thing, and should not be taken granted for.

Not a lot of good come from these stories, but Hare presents a side that not many other stories had. No matter how bad things are it's always good to find a "silver lining", or something to keep you going. Hare explains a hobby that he picked up while there, which is cockfighting. He goes on to tell a story where he gambled five hundred dollars on the fight, but ends up losing. It was nice to see a little segment of a story where an American embraces the culture, and tries to have a good time, where much was needed. "This is what we need, Americans who are really out there rubbing elbows with the Vietnamese! (Appy, pg. 78).

- Appy, Christian G. *Patriots: the Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides*. New York: Viking, 2003. Print.

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

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Part 1

The story that captured my attention the most in Part 1 of the Patriots/Appy book was the story of Tran Thi Gung. The summary is what first made me sit up and take notice, both because so far the book had been without female storytellers and because they described her as such a petite woman it instantly made me wonder what her role was that her size would need to be called attention to. I believe her account was very credible in the fact that she didn't seem to spice up matters, she makes no boasts of how many men she killed as some would do, nor does she try and play upon the fact that she's female and claim she really had no choice, the deaths weren't her fault. She simply states that she was in many battles, probably killed many men, some she knew personally, and feels no guilt in her actions because she was fighting for her home land, in her home land. I know that some people on both sides of the war are consumed with doubt and guilt over their actions but I think it is actually inspiring that she can admit she has nightmares over the horror of war, yet doesn't feel the need to lie and claim to feel any politically correct remorse over her contributions to a fight she believed in.

Part 2

When I started reading the story of Henry Prunier I enjoyed it, it was interesting to read about his non-violent interaction with the Viet Minh and how he admits to being terrified at first, then his pride in training such exceptional people. It wasn't until the final couple of paragraphs that I felt deep shame and disappointment with Prunier. Before the war escalated into a full blown bloodbath he had a chance to speak up, he had the authority to say that he was there, that he wasn't just protesting the idea; that he was protesting from personal experience. Prunier knew what we were doing was wrong, yet he stayed silent. How can someone not feel great disappointment and shame with him? It makes me want to ask his daughters if the hundreds of thousands of dead were worth them not getting teased in high school. If a few years of their happiness in school was worth all the death and hatred the United States participated in. Yes he could have spoken up, and nothing could have come of it. In fact it's likely that nothing would have come of his not speaking up. But staying quiet so you can have a pleasant relationship with your neighbors is what leads to children being abused for years in their home, that lets slavery continue for years unchecked, and what leads to war's that should never have happened. I am disappointed with this story because it is the embodiment of everything I hate, shutting up and agreeing blindly because you're afraid of what someone will think of you is quite frankly, disgusting.

On the flip side of the coin there is Ngo Vinh Long whom I feel nothing but pride for. This was a man who grew up in South Vietnam, who at first believed in the government, and the Americans. This was a man who even worked for the government to make maps, and believed that with accurate maps fewer civilians would die. Yet all those years of belief this

man still had the courage and honor to refuse to leave people to die. To stay put in villages to feed those who were starving to death when no one else would do anything. And to then quit when he became disgusted by the policies he had unwittingly supported with his efforts to truly help his people. It is people like Ngo Vinh Long who put hope into this world, because how can you be hopeless when there are people who will risk their own lives to speak against cruelty from anyone, foreign or domestic in origin.

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

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Cori Oyler

Assignment #1/History 195

The story that really caught my attention was the one of George Watkins (pg 21-25 Patriots book). I believe this story is reliable and trustworthy to the best of the story teller's ability. As I have learned in History 201 and 203, our own personal bias plays a big role in our life lessons and how we learn. It isn't fair, in my opinion, to judge a person if they are "telling the truth" or not. I am sure there are facts that may not be accurate, but are thought to be factual from George. George lost his legs and sight, but he didn't lose his memory, compassion or his heroism. There were a lot of almosts, and changes at the last minute for George. For example, he almost didn't qualify for the draft because of his high blood pressure (pg 22, Patriots book). Had he not been drafted, his physical outcome may have been a lot different. He also was not even supposed to be in the infantry. He trained to be a combat engineer and was going to be with an Engineer Battalion at Pleiku. When he got there he was sent to Chu Lai. He hadn't had any infantry training and was put behind a M-60 machine gun with a two minute lesson. In my opinion, this is where his bias might come in and the weapon of time that has passed. Who is to say he didn't have longer training and this weapon lesson may be George's "puppy story" (History 201 lecture, Joe Escobar). It may seem very real and accurate to him. Another reason George's story impacted me so much is because it is alot like a very special Vietnam Vet, Alan Nielsen, my dad. I realize my bias is highly influenced because he is my dad. Their stories are similar, Alan could have gone on the professional golf tour, but got drafted instead. He was told he was going to one place and ended up in Parrot's beak and Cu-Chi as a combat medic. He was also very injured

and escaped death. George was toward the back of his platoon with many people moving over the mine he happened to hit. He remembers looking at his watch and that is why the impact was to his eyes. George's heroism comes in because a young boy was also walking with him and he remembers telling him to move over because he was too close. This saved the boy from death and George was thanked for that later. I feel that when something impacts someone's life so much as the Vietnam War did to so many, no matter the injury, you cannot erase the vivid memory from these people.

Part 2-

My story is about Henry Prunier (pg 38 Patriots book). My first negative thought was this man is really racist. He said "These Orientals came up" (pg 38 Patriots book). I realize that when he was interviewed it may not have been so important to be politically correct. I found this article both disappointing and enlightening. This article was filled with friendship, teaching and celebrations. On page 39 of the book they said "They brought us into a village and there was a big decorated archway that said "Welcome to our American Friends." They even had a feast, complete with a slaughtered calf and beer. I am just very confused as to why we be -friended these folks, taught them how to use weapons and then down the road fight with them and even kill "them". That is why this article jumped out at me.

The same negative reasons I was disappointed by this article are some of the same reasons I found as the positive points. The biggest one, at the end of the article when Mr. Prunier went to a reunion and encountered General Giap and Mr. Giap gestured with an orange like he was throwing a hand grenade just like Mr. Prunier had taught him. (pg 41, Patriots book) and Mr. Prunier originally thought he didn't recognize him. The other positive point that struck me was on page 40 of the book when someone asked the Governor if he was a communist and he said "Yes, I'm a Communist, but there is no reason why we can't be friends, why we can't live together. " This is how I feel we live today with our neighbors. I mean , they aren't communists (that I know of), but they may be atheists, Catholics, Mormons, Black, White, Asian, Gay, Lesbian, or whatever.

This was a powerful article for me. As I read through the rest of the stories I was struck by the mention that “they were boring” (how assignments are graded-moodle page). I haven't found any articles that have bored me. I find each one unique. I do find some more cruel and disgusting than some.

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

Last edited: Sunday, 9 October 2011, 04:22 PM (548 words)

History 195, Assignment 1

The story that caught my attention most was Tran Thi Gung's story "*I was stuck in a tunnel for seven days.*" The story instantly had my attention at the line "...I killed an American. After he fell some of his friends came rushing to his aid." Honestly I was mortified at the reality of that line. I felt sorry for the GIs that had been drafted into the war, more than anything. The next line where she talks about how she could shoot one GI and another few would try to save the fallen one struck me at how hard it would have been for an 18 year old to watch his friends die. I think that she doesn't know or doesn't accept that some Americans were drafted into the war and didn't want to be there. I have no reason to doubt that her story is true, I can't see anything she would gain from outright changing the telling of her experiences, her story is already very revealing, and paints her as a ruthless warrior. The only skewing, and unintentional at that would be of her disdain for the U.S. and Southern Vietnamese soldiers. It's mentioned by another speaker, from South Vietnam how much disdain was displayed by Northern soldiers. For Tran Thi Gung the war was extremely personal, both in the people she lost and the feeling of being invaded by a foreign power.

I saw two stories that disappointed me, they also relate to each other. The first is Daniel Redmond's story "*The doctor who won the war in Indochina.*", and Paul Hare and his story "*My cock lost the fight.*" They are both about two lower level military men who were confused by their own country's decision to be

directly involved in the Vietnam conflict. Both also interacted directly with the Vietnamese people, which I think gives more credibility to their opinions on direct U.S. intervention. Throughout these two specific stories and a lot of the American stories there is a sense of a series of mistakes being made by the Americans in handling the Vietnamese people. It's disappointing to see that there were people who saw the folly of the intervention policies early on, but were not heard. Although Redmond says he thought what he was doing was correct by helping Catholics flee the north, he also felt like a war criminal. There is a sense of conflict that what is happening isn't quite right. Daniel Redmond says "The situation was such a debacle for the French, I couldn't believe the United States would get involved in a similar thing."

I was happy with the fact that the two story tellers where able to connect with the Vietnamese in some way and maybe even understand them. It's impossible to tell from these two stories how the majority of people that made connections with the Vietnamese felt about the U.S. involvement but it does make me wonder. If the leaders in the U.S. had a better understanding of the Vietnamese culture and what the people wanted, and not just what Diem wanted, how would that have affected our involvement in Vietnam?

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

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In Part 1 of the Patriots book, Tran Thi Gung's story of her experience as a guerrilla soldier was very interesting. After the death of her father she decided to join the guerillas at the age of seventeen where she talks about killing countless American soldiers with no remorse. I found it hard to believe that this women had no feelings of guilt for all of the American lives she took during the war, but I guess when your in her situation its hard to feel sorry for someone who is trying to kill you. I found her story to be extremely credible. This is a first hand story of a guerilla soldier who actually experienced combat in Vietnam. Her stories also reflect on other stories I've heard from the war in Vietnam when it comes to the brutality of their conflicts like when she describes, "They cried a lot. This made them sitting ducks. Very easy to shoot..." referring to the American soldiers.

In Part 2 by, Le Lieu Browne, I was really disappointed with the actions of the Diem government and how poorly they handled the Buddhist protests. With officers harassing demonstrators and arresting monks, it brought a lot of bad attention on Diem in a time where he really needed to gain the support of the local people. I believe if the situation was handled appropriately there was still hope for establishing a stable government in Vietnam but this, along with other factors, ultimately put an end to Diem.

When reading these stories its hard to find a lot of good in them because the war in Vietnam was so destructive but Richard Olsen's story in part two showed a brighter side. He served in the air force as a helicopter pilot and he talks about all the great times he shared with his fellow pilots. He talks about when they were given breaks they were able to shower, eat, and go to the bars and have good times. Although he does mention the hard times he faced like when he was shot or when he was sometimes a "sitting duck" when bringing in more troops, the overall tone of the story was positive.

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

Last edited: Sunday, 9 October 2011, 11:20 PM (167 words)

TA Quang Tainh:

Being through so much, so much pain, disbelief, and all the horrible tragitys there experiences they thought were never going to end. I've been to a place that i never want to go again. But it did end I did get to come home. There was afeeling so overwhelming I didn't know what to do. The war ended, he was set free. My war ended I was set free.

Vu Thi Ving:

It makes me think a lot about being a father, young children, young teenagers with all to live still. Going through all those shocking, scarry times. Dying one by one every single day. No longer being able to live there unknown life.

Another way that I see it is the loyalty, the strength, the courage, and most importantly the heart. To want to fight for our country being filled with that much patrism. All the knowledge learned while in this terrible time. The recognition feeling the greatfulness of our willingness.

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

Last edited: Sunday, 9 October 2011, 08:21 PM (241 words)

Guy Yeager

The story of Tran Thi Gung really caught my attention because she was the only female represented so far in the reading. I would imagine after so many years the memory to be a little hazy. This being such a traumatic event the details may also stay clearer. Her story does not try to give too intricate of details so it would seem to be on the up and up. And her being a female soldier! I thought that was great. At a point in America where women still were not being given the same chances as males this young woman was fighting for the freedom of her country.

There were parts of Henry Prunier's story that disappointed me. Mainly the fact that at this point in time he could not talk about his anti-war feelings without being labeled a "communist" and his daughters would be harassed because he wanted to speak his mind.

In the story of Rufus Philips I was impressed by the attempts made to build up the confidence of the Vietnamese people. I did not realize before the role of the French in the whole story of the war. There was a trust and bond between the US and the people of Vietnam until it all went bad. He re-accounts the people coming to work for them and how they were there to help the people, not just serve the US interests.

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

Last edited: Sunday, 9 October 2011, 08:00 PM (399 words)

Part 1: I chose George Watkins "The sand was probably the only thing that saved me." This one really caught my attention while reading it because I almost felt like I was there. I could picture almost everything he explained. I don't know if he explained it so well because of him losing his sight and is picturing it or if he just explained it that way because that's how he remembers and can explain such good detail. I personally felt that he is a reliable, trustworthy speaker because of the details he expressed and the way he sounded so sincere. I would like to believe he has more credibility even though I do believe everyone who was involved in the Vietnam War is going to be objective and factual from suffering too much subjectivity and forgetfulness. I mean I strongly think there's plenty that happened to those who witnessed and really don't want to relive what happened nor remember.

Part 2 : I feel that Ngo Vinh Long " If they're making maps. They're preparing for war" was most disappointing to me. At first I felt it was how there were constantly bodies in the river and them just being so many everywhere was bad, I was wrong. I'm more disappointed with seeing him treated as a child rather than a smart young adult who really knew some things I feel could have helped them. Although they did give him a chance; as soon as she wanted to help some of the sick, and not them, they were done with him. It did make me laugh that he called the war pretty well once he came to the United States and was interviewed.

Chester Cooper "Boy you speak just like an American" I believe had potential for the good because I think it's important to look into (if possible) the other side's plan. Especially when you come to find out they were stealing from you, I think really pays off. It's better to expect it rather than not and therefore be easily defeated. I believe research is a smart move to really get a feel of what to expect and help prepare more. I also really think even a little more information helps tremendously even if it doesn't show right away, in the end it usually does.

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

Last edited: Sunday, 9 October 2011, 11:05 PM (522 words)

Part 1: The story that caught my attention the most was the second story, from Dang Vu Hiep, General in the North Vietnamese Army. I guess when I started reading the book "Patriots", I didn't even consider the idea of getting a story from a high ranking NVA General. His story shocked me in many ways, mostly in how he described his time in the war as the best time in his life. Most soldiers, especially those taken away from their spouse and children to fight, do not describe war as the best time in their life. I wonder if it was because he was a part of the NVA, or because he was a high ranking part of the army that he enjoyed his time there so much. I think he seemed to be a fairly accurate source. He did not seem like he was pretending that he hated killing all of the Americans, and didn't seem like he was changing any part of his story so that the Americans who would hear his story would feel sympathy for the Vietnamese.

Part 2: The story I was most disappointed in was the one about the Navy Officer, Daniel Redmond. I wasn't disappointed with Daniel himself at all. In fact, I found that he had a great story that was very empowering and showed that there were some very good people in Vietnam. However, the Navy Doctor, Dooley's story was very disappointing, for a couple of reasons. First, I was disappointed about how the Navy would kick a Doctor that it praised as highly as they praised him out simply for being gay. Even if it turned out he wasn't the greatest of guys. From Redmond's story, it made it sound like Dooley wrote a book about his experiences that really was a cash grab on his part. While it's fair for him to hold a grudge, I don't think he's justified in lying to make money.

I really liked what Henry Prunier and General Giap had to say about Ho Chi Minh. I had always pictured Ho Chi Minh as a Saddam Hussein of his time, a bitter dictator, holed up in a military fortress who was out to simply do what was best for himself, and not for his people. It turns out, based on these two accounts, he really may have been the good guy of the Vietnam war. Prunier made Minh seem very humble and down to earth. While this seems to be common with revolutionary leaders in the beginning of the quest, it is rare that they are so humble later on, when they gain more power, and Giap suggested he was until the day that he died. Minh apparently said to Prunier: "Yes, I may be a communist, but that doesn't mean we can't be friends," which is a lesson that the world was in desperate need of during the cold war and is still trying to be learned. Just because someone thinks differently than you doesn't mean you can't still work together.

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

Last edited: Sunday, 9 October 2011, 01:22 PM (764 words)

Jason Phillips

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

Last edited: Sunday, 9 October 2011, 01:56 PM (984 words)

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Jeannette McCarty

History of the Vietnam War

Assignment 1

October 9, 2011

Tran Thi Gung's story was the most powerful story in section one. While all the stories are meaningful and involve the war in different ways, I found myself drawn to this one because I could easily identify with certain aspects, but not with others. It is easy to understand why she joined the guerilla movement and wanted to liberate and help her country. Nationalism is something that many of us can relate to. However, the way she described killing soldiers, being shot at, and being trapped underground for days is something that would break me as a person. When she says that she never felt guilty for the killing she did, I wonder if that is true, or she is holding back these emotions.

I believe Tran Thi Gung's account of her experience to be a trustworthy account of what it was like to be a Northern Vietnamese soldier. She speaks of the Americans as the enemy, and says things that seem to be remnants of war propaganda, such as "A stork can't shit into a bottle, so with our tunnels we shouldn't be scared of American bombers". Her account is fairly objective for having been in the army and having her comrades killed. She ends her story by justifying the killing she did by saying that it was either kill or be killed, and the Americans were the ones that came to kill her people, not vice versa. I believe that the passing of time has made her capable of reflecting on her experience, however, the story she tells seems a little distant. I believe she may have

sounded more emotional when she said the words, but on paper, without a description of her facial features and tone of voice, it is hard to tell.

The most disappointing thing to read about in Part 2 was when I learned about how the American government continued to send in South Vietnamese spies into North Vietnam, even when they knew they were getting captured, killed, or turned into double agents. One of the stronger themes of Part 2 seemed to be the lack of information and the communication breakdown on the American side. For example, serious mistakes were made in training military groups for the wrong kind of battle, and the lack of understanding the people and where they come from led to a loss of support for Diem and the American government. John Singlaub was a commander of SOG, and sent teams of spies into North Vietnam. From his account as well as the account of Luyen Nguyen, it seems as if it was no secret that these missions were not going very well. None of the spies ever came back before the end of the war; however, the program still ran from 1961 to 1968! The message that comes across in Singlaub's story is that the government was able to feel good having this mission go on, whether or not it accomplished anything. There was pressure to have more people in North Vietnam, and this was a way of doing it. It is frustrating to think about people on one side of the world making poor decisions that led to the death or torture of people who were simply following orders and trusting the government to make the right choice. Another theme that has come across through the readings is the way some Americans felt as if the Vietnamese were below them. It seems as though the government had no problem sending Vietnamese soldiers into a mission doomed to fail.

Although this section had many stories that showed the negative and dirty side of the war, there were a few pieces of "light" that shone through. The story told by Daniel Redmond mentions Thomas A Dooley, who was a navy doctor that wrote a book about his experience with Vietnamese refugees. While Redmond says that the book was full of inaccuracies, Dooley was a very kind man who was "genuinely concerned about the people". He visited injured soldiers, learned Vietnamese, and got to know the Vietnamese as well as enlisted men. This reminded me that not all people who went to Vietnam separated themselves from the people. I think if more people had made the effort to learn Vietnamese when they were there, and gotten to know the people, the war could have been very different.

Another section from Redmond's account touched me. At the very end, he reads from a letter he wrote back in 1955 about what he was doing in Vietnam. He acknowledges that back then, he thought the world could be divided into good and evil. He says he wouldn't say those same things now, and he has learned that the problem was very complicated and a preventative war was no solution. It's meaningful that he was able to look back on his experiences and see where he was naïve about the situation. It shows that he learned an important lesson about the world and life. It also shows the way society has changed its thinking from "good vs evil" to complicated "shades of gray" ideology.

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

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The story that caught my attention in part one was Tran Thi Gung's story. Initially reading the opening sentences of the paragraph, I immediately thought she would be just a nurse. It was surprising when she stated "I was in so many fights, I can't possibly remember them all." The fact she was a woman and pulled through many brutal feats impressed me greatly. Her reason for fighting (revenge for her father and to follow his beliefs) and bluntness leads me to believe she is being trustworthy and true to what happened. I also see no reason for her to make anything up; she wasn't an important general or official. Experiencing the war gives her more credibility in my opinion, as I've stated before I believe she has no reason to lie. She seemed to remember the details, like when she shot her first American soldier, and volunteering to sneak in bases. As she said though, she's experienced so much she can't recount all of her exploits. Her tough demeanor made this my favorite interview from part one.

Rufus Phillips's interview probably disappointed me the most with its outcome. It seemed like they were doing such a good job, only for all their work to be shot down. The Vietnamese gradually accepted they were there to help them, and Lansdale was building their confidence. Then the U.S. just supports the Cao Lao, which have no democratic experience. It's frustrating to think so much could have been avoided had they just listened to Lansdale and the others. It's a depressing thought when the U.S. makes decisions that are disappointing; that make me ashamed of the choices. I know it's easy to just to look back in retrospect but I wish they could have avoided the war.

When reading this I actually smiled when he said that people were coming out with bowls of water and greeting the troops. It's always nice to see progress between two strained relations, even if it might have been temporary. It just gives hope that if we take the time any two cultures can befriend each other. Even though they didn't go through with their idea at the end, their presence made southeast Asia strong, making the Communists only able to take over the remainder of Indochina.

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Jennifer Liles HST 195 Assignment 1 10-8-11 Part One of The Appy Book

Of all the stories I read in part one of the Appy book, the one that had me thinking for quite awhile was the story from George Watkins. First of all I can't even imagine having to live my life without my legs and eye sight. I wondered how he could possibly deal with it. I also wondered how he dealt with the fact that one minute he was walking and looking around, and then out of nowhere both abilities are gone without anytime to prepare himself. When he talked about his story he was somewhat comical and calm in his tone. It made me think how he could possibly be that way. If I were him I would be angry. I also wondered how many times he thought about how his life would have been if he hadn't lost his legs and eyes? He obviously a credible source for obvious reasons. He shows his war related disabilities everyday he lives. I also personally believe that anyone who experiences something at all has more credibility than someone who has not experienced it, regardless of how educated they might be on the subject. I also believe that memories of such a massive experience cannot be forgot. It's pretty obvious when I see Veterans getting emotional at the parades and other events related to their experience that they have not forgot. Part Two of The Appy Book I found a lot of disappointment in the events throughout the stories of part two, but Luyen Nguyen's story was really disappointing for me, because of the outcome of his life. I felt like he was loyal to the US and the way he was treated was so disrespectful. I also felt he was abandoned by us. I was just so sad to read his story and know what he had to go through. I could never imagine being in prison that long and having such a large family of my own having to believe I was dead and move on. The fact he missed out on his children's growing up all those years and his wife being remarried must have haunted him everyday. There was some positive results to these stories, they were the relationships that evolved for some, but mostly the fact that the truth was arising about what was actually going on and being published. I personally like where people who were once for the war had become anti-war. I realize from every story I read that there is no black and white way people felt, everyone had a different attitude towards what was happening. In a general sense there were people that cared and there were people who didn't.

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Hole Joshua
HST 195

Part 1

The story in part one of the Patriots book that caught my attention above all the rest

would have to be that of George Watkins. Sure almost every story that is told always has points that

are exaggerated but I find this one most reliable due to the injuries that Watkins sustained. Being a soldier

of the U.S. military and having served overseas I still remember parts of that deployment as if they were

currently still taking place but nothing nearly that traumatic had taken place. I believe that something

as life changing as losing both eyes and both legs is something that would be extremely hard to forget

especially if it was one of the last things that you ever saw. He was a soldier on the front lines and

the event had happened to him personally without receiving medals or in my opinion trying to make

himself look like a hero of some sort. Of course it may be bias on my part for also being a grunt in a

conflict/ war zone but that was the story that I felt myself most connected to.

Part 2

The story that I find the most disappointing would be that of Luyen Nguyen the

“Lost

Commando”. This was a very touching story but what I disliked was how he was treated by the

U.S. military personnel in which he was working with to train the commandos who were dropped

behind enemy lines. Nguyen’s story made him seem like a stand up instructor and the fact that he

went with his team behind enemy lines to eventually get captured even though he was beyond the

rank of the average soldier who went on these missions and knew that these troops sent out there

rarely came back alive showed that his loyalty lied with his men. With all that being said throughout

His story he tells of how all the U.S. personnel’s lack of respect and professionalism towards Nguyen

and his rank.

His story mentions a part where a U.S. Lieutenant- colonel disagreed and criticized him in front

of his troops. Personally I think that shows a serious lack of respect and gratitude towards the local

military that the U.S. was supposed to be fighting side by side with. Another part mention was a couple

of U.S. troops who Nguyen was training had left his class early for lunch and when Nguyen had confronted

them one soldier proceeded to take his weapon off of safety as if he was going to shoot him if he tried to

stop them. Yet another example of how the U.S. believed themselves, regardless of

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Part 1

TRAN THI GUNG

The story that caught my attention the most was Tran Thi Gung's Story. The first thing that caught my attention was the name "TRAN THI GUNG." This made me realize the person wasn't an American. I've never heard an experience of someone that wasn't an American. Another thing that caught my attention was the quote from the very beginning of the story, "I was stuck in a tunnel for seven days." This made me imagine being stuck underground for an entire week, never knowing when you're getting out or even if you'll live to get out. The biggest surprise to me was finding that Gung was a woman. When I think of war, especially Vietnam, I think of men at war, not women. So I was already pulled into this story from the first few lines.

I believe that Gung has a lot more experience than most people that were involved in the Vietnam War. Gung talks about her father being killed and believing that her mission in life was to continue her father's cause and to revenge his death. Her father was a Viet Cong and after his death she joined the guerillas. Because Gung was such a small girl during Vietnam, it's really interesting to hear that she had a lot of courage and she stayed strong even though she was scared. "...But I felt very scared and very nervous because I was just a small girl and the Americans were so big." It surprised me that Gung would do whatever she had to do. Right after she killed an American, she would wait until the other Americans carried their body away and then she would grab their weapons. She could also use just about any weapon on the battlefield.

I look up to Gung in a way. She was a very brave and courageous woman. Most

women couldn't do the things that she did. She was a very good leader and she was awarded a decoration with the title "Valiant Destroyer of American Infantrymen," among many other awards. This shows me that she was a very amazing woman, and a very brave soldier to do all of the things that she did. Though it was Viet Cong, Gung was doing what she was brought up and taught to do. She was fighting for her people.

I do believe that Gung was very reliable with the story that she told. First of all she has a picture of herself when she was younger, with a rifle in her hand and her right finger on the trigger. She also had a thick belt on that held cartridges of ammunition and grenades. This picture shows me that she is very credible with the story that she told. I believe that because Gung was there, in Vietnam, she has far more credibility than anyone that wasn't involved in the war. I've been told many things about Vietnam, from people, or even history books but, I don't think anyone is more credible than someone who actually experienced the inside of Vietnam. No one can understand it like they can.

Many, many years have passed since the Vietnam War, so some people might think that those who were involved might have forgotten some things. They may think that they over react the things that took place there. I believe that, yes, it has been quite some time since the Vietnam War but, someone who experienced the war, someone who was standing right there while it was all going on, something that was so big and unforgettable; how could they forget that? There are big things that happen to us in our lives, unforgettable experiences and I don't believe someone that was very involved in the Vietnam War could forget or even sway their story of their experience in even the least bit.

Part 2

LUYEN NGYUEN

Luyen Nguyen's story disappointed me the most out of any of the other stories. It

really made me sad to read about how he was so mistreated by the Americans. “The U.S. Advisors told the commandos—we hired you, we pay you, you should obey us and ignore the Vietnamese.” The Americans and the Vietnamese were supposed to be working together, not against each other. From reading Nguyen’s story it sounds like the Americans had no respect for the Vietnamese, and that’s what they were being taught. I had absolutely no idea that this went on during the Vietnam War. It seems as if the American’s thought they were in charge. They were taught they could do whatever they wanted and the Vietnamese couldn’t stop them. Also, the Americans got treated way better than the Vietnamese; better pay better food, more freedom. That disappoints me the most. They should have been treated equally, especially when they’re fighting against the Viet Cong, together.

In Nguyen’s story he speaks a lot about his time in Prison. Nguyen was abused a lot during his imprisonment. They kept him in a dark cell and shackled him all of the time. They wanted him to declare that he was a puppet of the U.S., a henchman, and that the U.S. invaded Vietnam to dominate. But Nguyen stayed strong and loyal to his army. “But I refused to acknowledge these things. I tried to keep my loyalty to the army.” Three months after Nguyen left his family; his wife was informed that he was missing. She thought he was dead. Nguyen had a chance to write to his family but, he refused. He didn’t want to make his family sad again. They had already dealt with the pain of losing him. “All of them believe I’m dead and their tears are dry. I don’t want to make them cry again.” I thought this was very selfless of Nguyen. Even though he missed his family terribly and he was miserable where he was he was thinking about their feelings and not his own. His wife became very poor while he was gone and she remarried. When she found out that Nguyen was still alive she divorced her second husband and waited for him to return to her. Even though Nguyen was away from his family for 20 some years, he still had hope that he would one day be with them again. I think it’s amazing how

courageous Nguyen was. He could have given up at any time and stopped all of the torture from happening. He could have just lied and said he was a henchman. Even though he was mistreated by the Americans, tortured in prison, and missed his family dearly, he stayed loyal to his army and only hoped for the best. I believe Nguyen was a very devoted commando and he ended up getting what he deserved.

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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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Part one

"I was stuck in a tunnel for seven days"

I found TRAN THI GUNG's "Ginger" story compelling. It isn't the norm to picture a female guerilla. I always have questioned why a person would choose a government mandated life over the freedom I hold dear. The photograph she shared was the biggest reason I found her account believable. That along with the personal motivations, (the death of her father and his comrades) solely due to his beliefs and politics. Also the childhood friend that she showed mercy, that coupled with her named citation of bravery and patriotism. Gingers story brought home to me a parallel understanding. She was defending and protecting her way of life. In the same way that an American G.I. might choose to go to a far-away land to prevent an ideology such as communism from knocking on his american door dictating their way of life.

Part two

"Whats good for Peru is good for Vietnam"

I chose this account of Paul Kattenburg because i've often wondered about the reputation we americans have in other countries, specifically a term I've heard many times "Ugly Amercans". I still don't know its roots but after this reading I have flashed on it many times. Kattenburg from my point of view had the best of knowledge of the Vietnamilies people, their culture, religions and traditions. I criticize the arrogance of the National Security Council as a whole. First, for not seeing the advantage of respect for your opponent. Sec-

only, for not updating their council members but instead who knew communism from a European experience i.e; WWII. Thirdly, being a junior member with such potentially valuable information about Vietnam. Having an invitation to such a meeting only to have his extensive knowledge be put on the back burner. These ridiculous men who would decide the fate of so many Americans with what I perceive as total disregard and no real earnest to make strategically good decisions about our role in a foreign land is inexcusable to me. Ignoring the French's defeat and not recognizing the Vietnamese disinterest in fighting at all. Choosing to propagandize the American citizens, rather than tell some truth (had they bothered to know Vietnam the country or its people) perhaps we would have gone in better or left better regardless of the outcome.

Part two Paragraph two

As for the positive side of things, Paul Kattenburg is to me a true Patriot. His courage to speak to the N.S.C as a junior member, ignoring protocol and at obvious risk to future political reputation and prestige. Displays such bravery. I find it Patriotic, enlightening and it moves me that a man who practiced the freedom of speech that we possess in this country and all though he was demoted as it were and not respected as he should have been. Still I like to think that he sleeps peacefully at night. Knowing that he did his best to enlighten us about a little country, Vietnam.

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One of the stories that caught my attention the most in part 1 was the account of Tran Thi Gung. This story grabbed my attention and was interesting by nature considering that she was the only woman in her unit. Her father was a Viet Cong and was killed by southern soldiers in 1962. She joined the guerrillas in 1963 when she was only 17 years old to continue her fathers cause and fight for Northern Vietnam. I believe that her cause was a noble one and I respect her for standing up and fighting for what she believed in. She felt compelled to help liberate her country from poverty and police brutality that was apparent at the time. I believe that she is a reliable source of information and she definitely has more credibility than I to speak about the happenings in Vietnam at the time. However, I also believe that she clearly has a subjective viewpoint about the objective realities that compelled her to fight for her country in the first place. I can see that her commitment to Northern Vietnam came from an emotional standpoint, and loyalty to her fathers point of view and her upbringing. It seems that there isn't much of a way to escape subjectivity in her situation. She wasn't an outside observer, she was right in the middle of everything that was going on and therefore I feel that her take on things is naturally a bit bias. Despite that, I admire her courage and loyalty to the cause that she stood for. I can't imagine the bravery it would take for a 17 year old girl to stand up against grown men in a war setting and accomplish everything she did for the guerrillas. Tran Thi Gung's personal rendition of her experience in Vietnam stood out to me more so than any other story in Part One of Patriots, and that is why I chose to write about that piece.

The story in part two that I was most disappointed with was that of Ngo Vinh Long. His account was disappointing to me because many people seemed to think he was naive and wrong, but I feel that he had quite a bit of insight in to the happenings of Vietnam regarding the American policy and American involvement in Vietnam. The part that got me the most was the negative response by Vietnamese Americans in America during his talk that he gave at Harvard and his support of the antiwar movement. I feel that his intentions were good, and it upsets me that he was subjected to so much hatred and violence from his own people at that time. In the beginning of his account the author states that " Several in the audience threw molotov cocktails at him." (Appy) and

he continuously received death threats and had to "change his residence eight times" (Appy) over the following year. I don't think anyone should have to live in a constant state of fear because of their beliefs, and that is why I was so shocked and disappointed when I read the section about and by Ngo Vinh Long.

While the account of Ngo Vinh Long was one of the most disappointing to me, it was also one of the more positive accounts in my opinion. I feel that he was an extremely intelligent and enthusiastic realist and didn't fall victim to a subjective viewpoint. Though he was raised in the Mekong Delta, he realized that what was going on in Vietnam was wrong and he was willing to speak out against American policy and involvement in Vietnam once he realized the reality of what was going on. I think it takes a lot of courage to stand up with the viewpoint that he did despite where he was from. He didn't blindly follow any cause, but instead looked at things objectively with an open mind and made his decisions accordingly. Reading his account instilled hope in me. It was nice to read about someone standing on principle and speaking up for what they believe is right despite many conflicting points of view. I believe that if more people had the courage and intelligence that Ngo Vinh Long did, the situation and outcome of the Vietnam War would have been very different. His story was sweet and sour for me, but very inspiring, and that is why I chose to write both sections of part two on his account.

Works Cited:

"Patriots" 'The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides'- Christian G. Appy, pg.54

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

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In the initial section of the Patriots text the interview with Tran Thi Gung (pg 15-19) stood out distinctly. Tran fought bravely for her people and country; her story is both candid and poignant. The information she provided about the war, from the revolutionaries' point of view, appeared reliable. Tran related her experiences in a very clear and frank manner. Her credibility, due to personal experience, is undeniable. She viewed first hand, as a participant, the poverty and desperation of her people and the battle tactics of life in the Chu Chi tunnels. Her story was a well balanced blend of personal experience and factual information.

In part two there were a number of interviews which were very disappointing, mostly due to the lack of understanding and conscience of major leaders described by the interviewees and occasionally the interviewees themselves. Richard Olson's (pg 62-64) exhibited a disturbing lack of regard for the seriousness of his position in Vietnam; he speaks of it with seeming fondness, as if it had been a sport. The interview with John Singlaub (pgs. 90-94), was somewhat disturbing. During his interview Singlaub described anti-war protestors as "traitors", seemed to have an almost gleeful regard toward killing (pg. 93 para.3), and compared American "advisors" in Vietnam to missionaries or frontiersmen fighting/converting the Native Americans.

There are also numerous positive lessons to be drawn from this section. The interviews often described acts of compassion and intercultural understanding and wisdom (even if gained after the fact). The interviews with

Sergei Khrushchev (pgs. 87-89) and Malcolm Brown (pgs. 64-65) present very different but very relevant examples of hope, conscience, and decency during the war and the attempt to understand it after.

One of the positive (instructive) lessons that can be drawn from both the first and second section is the importance of perspective in understanding the full scope of the Vietnam War. The final quote on pg. 43 is an excellent example of how critical perspective can be. After the discussions held in the mid-nineties in Hanoi McNamara stated that, "We need to draw lessons [from the Vietnam War] which allow us to avoid such tragedies..." Vo Nguyen Giap responded, "Lessons are important. I agree. 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..."

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PART 1

The story I have chosen is the story told by Tran Thi Gung. This story caught my attention because of the more in depth accounting of what she went through. I like the fact that she didn't sugar coat anything that happened. In doing this, I find her accounting of what she went through much more reliable, trustworthy, and believable than any of the other stories. Especially if compared to the first two stories, which seemed like they were trying to tell a story without really giving any in depth details. Just because Tran Thi Gung was there and very involved in the war, doesn't automatically give her more credibility. What gives her story the credibility of being an accurate accounting is in the way she tells her story. From her reasons to joining the war to her thoughts all these years later, her matter of fact accounting gives her much credibility. Joining the war to extract revenge for her father's death, and continuing his cause, is much more believable than a young girl of 17 joining the war because she believed in the politics of the war. Admitting that in the beginning she was very scared, the Americans were very big to a woman of small frame, is an honesty that most men won't admit. After shooting her first American and seeing how the other soldiers came to their friends aid, in her words, they became sitting ducks and very easy to shoot. Shoot one, sit back and wait for his friends, shoot the rest of them, gather all of their weapons, and then start all over again. With this strategy, she came to realize that she was no longer afraid of these "big targets, so easy to hit." What I admire about Tran Thi Gung, is that she made no excuses to justify what she did during war. Even though she had nightmares reliving her experiences, she felt no guilt. The Americans came to her country, not the other way around. Deciding on whether Tran Thi Gung, or any of the story tellers, suffered from too much subjectivity, is not something I can decide on. They are the ones who were there, and I believe that no matter how hard someone tries to be totally objective, it just can't happen. When someone is involved in war, I cannot believe that at some point personal feelings don't become involved.

PART 2

I have no clue why I am having such difficulty with the 2nd part of this assignment. I first started this assignment on Monday, thinking that would give me plenty of time to complete it with time to spare. Yet here it is time to turn this assignment in and I wasn't able to complete this assignment. If I was a writer, I would call it "writer's block," but I am not a writer. I just believe that the stories are too important and too personal for me to try and "fudge" my way through it, so I am turning it in with only part 1 finished.

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

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Part 1

I understand that he mentioned his name in this book who he was and how did he involve in the war. He was physically involved in the war and lost his foot. I believe that he was telling us his experience that was bad about how they did. I don't think it is not for him too long ago to forget because this is how he was suffered from the war.

Phan Xuan Sinh story caught my attention because people lost their life easily and during the war life is so cheap. The story told me that during the war shooting each other is alike first come first served. For example, they think fishermen are Viet Congs so that they shot them. In the war, you don't have time really to find out what was going on. To protect yourself first, you need to shoot other people as soon as possible. This is one of the dark sides of the war.

I think Phan Xuan Sinh was talking about how did they make an awful mistake. Apparently, they were killing innocent people. This is the most important part of the story because they admitted they were doing wrong and they were not winners for innocent people. I understand that how did they feel after that. Not just because of they are soldiers but also they are human being too.

War is just about bad. People became into tragedy even they are involving in or not. He mentioned that he is drafted not because of he loved the war. This happened because he was a citizen of Vietnam. Finally, the story gave me a clue that there are some people who got advantages of war. There are two situations. One situation got all privileges from the war. The other one was engaging the war for investing their lives for aimless purposes.

Part 2

I really like Vo Nguyen Gian pointed out the question, many people asked "How did we win?" I don't understand why people ask that kind of question. It makes me disappointed too. As for me, the answer is already have. They won the war because they fought for their country and with their hearts and not for money. Vietnam is their country. They love it. They know that they will win it eventually. This is the main point of winning the war. In other side, people came to Vietnam because they are drafted and just professional soldiers working for military. They don't feel the war as much as the Vietnamese. They were sending by the government who wanted to play politics. The government was soaked in some thoughts that wanted to win the game. Finally, the war shows us both sides have different attitudes. The attitude made who won the war.

Giap was telling about the leadership of Ho...how he devoted his love and energy for his country. He was thinking about his country all the time. Ho is a hope for Vietnam and all his nationals. Vietnam is very lucky to have a great leader for its country. I think this is a part of

why they won the war. The leadership leads the path of the country. Ho creates the future of Vietnam. His people did not reluctant to give their lives for him and the country because they love their leader. They also knew that he led them very well and stayed with them during the war. I can't find there is no black and white between leader ho and his people. He loved the country and the people do him too. They all believed one day Vietnam will get Independence. This is what I can see some positives of great leadership.

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

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While reading Part One of the book *Patriots*, the story that stood out to me most was that of Tran Thi Gung. I thought it was very honorable of her to join the guerrillas to continue her father's cause after his death. I also thought it was amazing of her to be the only woman in her unit, let alone being just seventeen years old and able to gain so much respect from her fellow comrades. I found her story to be quite truthful and believable. The way she so openly spoke of all of the killings she was a part of, and blatantly discusses all the tactics she used while telling this all to an American makes me see real credibility in her retelling of those events. She also does a great job in contrasting her story and not having too much bias to her own side. This really showed when she spoke of having sympathy for the soldier she had captured and purposely not blindfolding him. I also really appreciated her honesty in the end of the interview when she stated that she "never felt guilty" about the killing she did, and when she said "if I went to America and killed people there, I would feel very sorry and guilty. Since the Americans came to my country, I do not feel guilty."

Reading Part Two, the story that most disappointed me was that of Paul Kattenburg. He had lived in Vietnam up until the 1950's, he was very knowledgeable of the Vietnamese culture, and he had been a supporter of Ngo Dinh Diem. Less than ten years later he returned to Vietnam to find that everything had changed, and that they were "dealing with an absolutely sinking ship" in response to the country and it's leader, Diem. What frustrated me most was the appalling ignorance of most people at the thought of Vietnam. "They did not know what they were talking about. It was robot thinking about Communism and no distinctions were being made. It was a technocratic talk. They were talking in a vacuum on the basis of experience gained largely in other crisis situations." Kattenburg spoke of how Walt Rostow stated "What's good for Peru is good for Vietnam." It disappoints me that they made no cultural distinctions between places with completely different backgrounds, landscapes, languages, etc. It's frustrating because Paul knew the area much better than any of those men due to his work and time spent there in the fifties. The United States just seemed completely ignorant to any of this and just assumed that we knew all the answers. After the council's decision to prolong American intervention by planning a coup to overthrow Diem, Paul Kattenburg suggested the alternative to withdrawal from Vietnam altogether. He suggested it would be better to "get out while the getting is good" and that we should leave with honor. I was very disappointed and frustrated with Johnson's response: "We haven't gone this far with this whole thing to give it up now." To me, this seems like such an ignorant way of thinking. If United

States would have done much more detailed research in to the Vietnamese people and their country, and not just gone with the “we can't bail after coming this far” approach, maybe the war would not have gone on so long and we could have prevented many casualties. One last quote from Kattenburg that really sums up his frustrating situation best in my mind was: “In order to do dissent significantly and change policy around, you have to be a large group of people in many agencies.” Unfortunately in many situations, this is the frightening truth.

I definitely took a few positive lessons from John Singlaub and his compassion for the people of Vietnam and the potential for good that came from some of his actions. The first thing that stood out to me was his participation of bringing people of the North to “Paradise Island.” They would take care of any health problems, feed them, clean them, and make them healthy. They were trying to relate the concept of freedom to these people by explaining concepts to them that had been repressed by Communism. John and his men sent the Vietnamese back North with gift packages and set up radio stations with news and entertainment, while also dropping small radios in North Vietnam for them to use. Even though this system did not work for long, I believe it was started with good intentions, and that this system of propaganda was a good alternative to fighting. Secondly, I really appreciated that Singlaub thought of himself as somewhat of a missionary. I like that he and his comrades established a very good connection with the ethnic minority of mountain people called the Montagnards. They were teaching proper sanitation and had medics rotate through villages, and this was the work that made him feel like a missionary. It's refreshing to see that it wasn't all brutal combat, there were people out there working on genuine humanitarian efforts while serving time in the military.

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

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Rhonda Pate

Escobar

HST195

CRN21315

PART #1

Roger Donlan seemed very genuine in his personal account of the happenings during the Vietnamese War. His story was informative yet heart wrenching, he left humbled by his selfless act of heroism. Donlan didn't embellish his heroic deed even though he received the Medal of Honor, I believe he felt he let himself and his country down because he didn't save his fallen comrade.

Rhonda Pate

Escobar

HST195

PART#2

After reading only a few pages I was greatly disappointed in our countries lack of integrity. I had always lead myself to believe that we were better than that, but I'm sure that was the whole idea to keep people in the dark.

We offered a hand to the South Vietnam to gain their trust yet we stabbed them in the back by letting France move back in after giving them a taste of freedom.

I think the military had no reason why??

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

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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.

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SARA DONLEY

Assignment #1 - Reflections on testimonies from Part 1 and 2 of Patriots, The Vietnam War Remembered from all sides, by Christian G. Appy

From the moment I started reading Christian G. Appy's book as an assignment in this class, I knew that it would have a meaningful emotional impact on me. I tend to like reading from a first person narrative as opposed to a textbook format. This book has a fascinating element of discovery, and I believe a very necessary perspective from many different walks of life.

As a female reading about this war for the first time, I found that Tran Thi Gung (p. 15) had several portions of her testimony that stood out to me. There seemed to be a detached sense of humanity about her stories and depictions of events. Before reading her testimony I hadn't thought of the concept of Vietnamese women fighting in the trenches as "guerillas." In the very first paragraph of her account, it states that she wanted revenge for her fathers death. I believe this explains part of the reason her dedication to her cause was so fierce. She goes on to speak of how the Viet Cong knew that if they shot one American soldier there would be many more soldiers who would come to the wounded soldiers aid and the Viet Cong could shoot many more of the enemy. She called them "sitting ducks", especially when they cried over the body and mourned. She also speaks of her unit as conducting a death ceremony for her before she went on certain dangerous missions, for the sake of creating maps of the enemy camps and bases. There had to have been a huge psychological impact when her comrades spoke of her as if she were already dead (while she was standing there listening). By definition I believe she was a true patriot and very brave. She not only stepped out of traditional gender roles, she became known for her tenacity when doing so. I commend her for her honesty when she states in the last paragraph of her testimony that she does not feel guilty about killing Americans who came to her country to kill her.

"We were a cross between missionary heathen and a frontiersman who was building in the face of enemy attacks." This statement was from John Singlaub a former commander for SOG (p. 90). I was extremely disappointed in this testimony of the war. The account seems as if every paragraph was contradictory to subsequent ones. Just when he starts to make sense, it seems he goes off on another tangent that makes a person wonder if he is mentally capable of giving any statement that should be taken seriously. I found it interesting that he believed the Special Operations Group (SOG) was psychologically reforming the war in the North. He recounts how they tended to the Northern guerilla's or Viet Cong in a physical capacity and after doing so the SOG sent "generous" gift packages back with them to try to create a resistance or uprising. Instead, what transpired was the fact that they obtained double agents.

He goes on to say that he felt good about putting missionaries back into the North that had gotten a "taste" of something other than what the communists were putting out (keeping in mind that he also stated they were oftentimes captives). I believe, in this context doing exactly what the communists did. He explained that we helped the South Vietnamese (Anti-Communist Vietnamese) flee the North into a safer environment along with the aid of the Catholic church, and this is why the Shangri-La camp was set up. After all, we couldn't win the war if there were no resistance programs within the Northern region and nobody was there to rebel. Nobody that the unit placed into the North from this method of psychological warfare was expected to have an impact. However, he says "we had a good psychological program."

On the other hand, in John's two faced statement he says the media was biased. That people ended up wanting to come back to the war because they felt they were supported and fighting for a good cause, whereas in the US the morale was very low. Isn't this just what the military was wanting from, "Good soldiers" and the boost of morale on the front lines? Can't he see that it was not just the media that was biased, but the people that he was getting his information from that were also biased?

Again, I can't say that this particular story was a favorite of mine. He was very opinionated and not at all objective in his thoughts. I don't know that he has the ability to be objective. There is a great possibility that he was brainwashed at the same time he was trying to brainwash, "The enemy."

I do believe that some of the descriptions made regarding the strategies this unit used were accurate. There are other accounts that can confirm the validity of most of this information. From dropping pre-programmed transistor radio's, sending gift baskets, and tending to the Viet Cong physically, this is just one more way that the US misallocated funds in their great endeavor to win this war.

On a more positive note, I could tell he wasn't completely absorbed in what the military was saying and doing on points of topics he referenced. He does recount his request to discontinue the SOG program and tries to make sense in his mind of who and what went wrong in this war. Basically, I believe he is just another casualty of the war. Confusion is abundant, and quite possibly psychological damaged as well. It is not necessarily his fault, though, this just explains one more way in which our soldiers were trained and molded to fit the needs of our government. Insight is educational, and very important. I would rather be cognizant of these stories than be ignorant to them. This makes freedom great. As people we can access stories such as these, and make intelligent decisions based on this knowledge. Heck, we can even change our minds!

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

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Part 1

The story that caught my attention was that of George Watkins. I chose to write about his story because it is the only story from Part 1 that made me cry. I cried mostly because of Appy's commentary at the end: "On my way out, he makes a request I do not know how to honor: 'Fancy it up,' he says" (25). In a way, this added to the credibility of the story. I saw so much emotion in the way Watkins spoke, even though it was obvious he wasn't very well educated. I believe wholeheartedly that he had very little knowledge of what was going on in Vietnam; I know from my other readings that a lot of people didn't in the early days of the conflict. I am also a bit angry for him that the military trained him to be a combat engineer, but then threw him into the middle of battle without any battle training. I don't think it matters that so much time had passed since the war when he was telling Appy his story. He is factual and clear. However, I don't think it's possible to tell a story of that magnitude without a high level of subjectivity. Everybody perceives things in a way that makes sense to them. When Watkins visited the Memorial Wall, he asked the same question I've heard so many of my dad's generation ask: Why did all these people die? I know that there are people who believe we should have stayed the course and crushed Communism in Vietnam, but Watkins is part of the majority that wonders why, what was gained from it? The introduction to the first episode of the DVD series stated that Vietnam was the most widely protested war and left so much unresolved. It's tragic.

Part 2

It was hard to choose the most disappointing story, but I finally decided on the second to last story in the section. John Slinglaub's account of the "Sacred Sword of the Patriot League" left me with the same sick, empty feeling I had when I saw the movie *The Good Shepherd*. I was disgusted with the way the SOG manipulated the peasants of Vietnam, making them think there was a resistance with vast resources that toppled that of the Viet Minh. I understand that to win a war you must rally the support of the people affected by the war, but it was a dangerous game the SOG was playing with the minds of the people. It was more than just war propaganda films and posters; it was like Winston at the mercy of Big Brother, but without the physical torture. I was also annoyed that Slinglaub was critical of the media's representation of the U.S. presence in Vietnam. He thought he was a missionary, doing good works for the people and teaching them the salvation of democratic, capitalist free-thought—never mind that he boasted in the same tangent that they "slaughtered" the Viet Cong. American intervention was solidified by our encouraging a coup against Ngo Dinh Diem—even after we supported him. We do a lot of horrifying things during wartime in the name of doing good.

I found encouragement in Paul Kattenburg's story, though. Our only real example of

Communism in action was the Stalin regime. Communism under Stalin was evil, therefore Communism is evil. This fallacious syllogism caused mass panic in America. Kattenburg was a man who saw things clearly in this time of national panic. He looked past the Soviet Union looming in the north and saw an independent country with its own national pride, its own culture and history, and its own unyielding determination to truly be free. He saw unmistakably that the Viet Minh would fight as long and hard as it took to win their country back. He saw that it was a fight that America could not win. He saw that we did not have all the answers we thought we had. In a time of complete ignorant arrogance, Kattenburg was convinced we should just pull out of Vietnam “with honor” (82). I find it encouraging that in the midst of all the illogical foreign policy our country comes up with sometimes, there are a few good people who see the big picture.

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

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Tabatha Heater

October 9, 2011

Patriots- The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides by Christian Appy

Part 1

The story, "I was stuck in a tunnel for seven days", told by Tran Thi Gung, really caught my attention. It was surprising to see a female's account of the Vietnam War from a fighter's perspective. When I think of this particular war, I think of only men, and American men at that. I thought it was very interesting to hear her perspective on the war and why she believed in what she was doing. When she stated that Americans had killed her father and she was acting out of revenge, I could relate to her anger and determination. I did believe that her accounts of the event were probably accurate in her eyes. How she viewed the American soldiers, how she stated that she felt no remorse because we were in her country, and how she even went as far as to say that the soldiers became easier targets when one soldier would get injured or killed and more would come to retrieve him.

I did have some trouble though believing the entire story though. I believe that there is a great deal of trauma associated with her life during those years and with that, I believe, a clouded judgment of events and how they took place. I am sure this is true with anybody that has suffered so much during such a long period of time. When Tran Thi Gung stated that she would go in and out of enemy camps to gain further information, or how she was an expert marksman seemed a bit glorified. However, for the most part, I do believe her accounts of the Vietnam War and her place in it/

Part 2

The story told by Sergei Khrushchev, "The Vietnamese had their own ideas, "was disappointing to me. His claims and statements of Americans seemed ignorant at some points. Sergei states that Americans believed more in propaganda and less in the facts of what events were really happening. I disagree and think that Americans felt that our reporters had integrity and would not lie about the events over in Vietnam. What we

have grown to realize is everything through is swayed by a person's own beliefs. If a reporter was against war, then he would show things that favored his view. If a reporter was in favor of our occupation in Vietnam then the view would take a different light. According to Khrushchev, the Soviet Union presented a biased look at the same event, "Soviet propaganda presented the war as an example of American imperialists battling against the brave freedom fighters." This type of personal bias is alive in each and every one of us.

However, I did find it interesting when he stated that Vietnam caused Americans to awaken by truly grasping that even with a willful government, not every war can be won. I thought this was a very important insight and view. When people are fighting for freedom of belief or choice, then it has been proven, they will fight and win or die trying. This has been proven over time in many battles.

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Tia Gagner

Assignment #1

Even though all of the stories that I read were attention getting the one that I was really drawn in by was that of Tran Thi Gung. What stood out to me the most was the fact that she was a woman. I feel a little guilty choosing this story because she did fight against the Americans but I believe she was doing what she felt was right. To think that a tiny young girl had the courage to go offend her father's death makes me respect her choices. It was also amazing for that fact that she ended up being one of the top fighters for her group. She was very smart and learned fast, she was a true fighter and a survivor. I am sure that she exceeded others expectations by just staying alive. I almost give her more credibility than I do the Americans. This was her home, her life, her family. She was there fighting for her country her people. I do not think that she was killing Americans because she hated them; she was doing it because she felt it was what she needed to do. The fact that she mentioned she would feel guilty for killing an American here in the US tells me so. I find her to be a reliable and trustworthy source. She was there for it all, the first years of her life consisted of war. She was more than willing to talk about the GIs she killed and never held back the fact that she fought against them. She had more invested in the war then an American would. Even after all the years, I still feel that she remembered things as if they were yesterday. I think that anyone who has gone through such devastations will never forget it. It is too vivid; it is too real, as she said she still dreams about the war in detail. She was a war hero in her people's eyes and that is what really matters.

The story that I found to be most disappointing was that of Luyen Nguyen. What was disappointing was the way he was treated. I found the way that the Americans pushed his beliefs aside to be absurd. I found him to be a strong and prideful individual. He was

fighting for the right for his country and his people. He had no real ill feelings towards people and was just doing his best to support and encourage his troops. I think that if anyone could encourage the troops to fight it would be one of their own people. What was so wrong with Luyen speaking of fighting for their country and their rights? Why would we as Americans put down other men that were only there to help? The US just had no respect for the Vietnamese and did not care what they had to say. It was also disturbing that the commandoes were paid more and given more food. Like Luyen said, they were above the law and there was nothing he could do. The thing is that Luyen was a true leader and a true man. He took on the challenge of going north with his soldiers even though he did not have too. Even though he knew, there was a great chance they would be caught. The fact that they dressed them in black was also a sign of disrespect. Not only did Luyen have to deal with the lack of respect of the Americans he ended up dealing with twenty-one years in solitary confinement. He was a true man of honor and held to his beliefs and chose not to give in. Even in prison, he was treated with less respect than the Americans. This was his country yet he was treated like dirt. In the end he survived and showed he was a true soldier, his wife even divorced her second husband after she found out he was still alive. He must of been a good guy that she truly loved. Its hard to read about such a strong man being treated so poorly.

I think that there were several accounts of hope, compassion and goodness in many of the stories. One that stood out to me was the story of John Singlaub. His story talked about the help they provided to North Vietnamese. The American soldiers gave them food, skills and medical care. They also sent packages back home with them in hopes to help others. Even though the antiwar protest in America left these good doings unnoticed at times the soldiers themselves new of the good they did for the people. They provided some hope and care for the people and that was all that mattered. I also found Vo Nguyen Giap's story encouraging. Not because of the events so much but because of what he had had to say. He talked about winning the war because they would rather die than live in slavery. That their deepest aspirations have always been self-determination. He felt that the spirit provided them with stamina, courage, and creativity. I think that these people were fighting for what they believed in. I cannot really look down on them for that. For anyone to have

that much compassion about their home and their people is a good thing. When it comes to several events in life, it is not just about wealth and power. It is also about heart and I think that the Vietnamese people had a lot of heart.

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

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Throughout the stories that were told in Part 1 of the Patriots, there were numerous ones that caught my attention, but one which particularly grabbed my attention. The story of Tran Thi Gung, a Vietnamese woman who partook in the merciless slaughtering of warfare, was extraordinary. As the story unfolds, the reader begins to get a basic understanding or background check and is able to grasp why a woman of small stature would join in the fight. Losing her father under the circumstances of him being Viet Cong was probably extremely hard to take in. Providing a great deal of information, Tran gave inside imagery about how the guerillas worked. Building of tunnels, taking ammunition from wounded or dead soldiers, and not to mention the skills of a marksman, she was promising. Promising on the basic notion that she was willing to give up her life for the well being of her comrades and countrymen. Tran provided the utmost shocking information, that as an individual it is hard to take in. Her statements about how the tunnel system worked, guerilla tactics on ambushes, and strategies on killing southern attacks, just makes this story sound believable. Tran was an individual that stood for an idea that was bigger than her; I can relate. Her information on tunnel systems and guerillas way of accumulating ammunition during battles sounds realistic and believable. Here is a country that is high in poverty and deprivation of food, so stealing ammunition or weapons from a dead soldier and learning how to utilize the new weaponry sounds justifiable. By justifying the reasoning behind their tactics, I believe what Tran is saying. She was there firsthand and individuals that have experienced an experience that another has yet to endure allows for Tran to have the benefit of the doubt, in my opinion. There is the possibility that Tran is only recalling the positives of her situation and time has passes but the topic is war. As an individual who has never seen that type of situation, and with the motives of revenge there is no reason for Tran to give out information that is not factual. Tran ends her story stating that she has no remorse for the killings that she was responsible for, due to the fact that Americans went to a foreign land to kill her comrades and countrymen. In a sense she sounds justified, if an individual comes to American land to kill friends, family, etc. there is no reason to feel sorry.

High-ranking military officer Bernard Trainor had a terrible and disappointing (if one would be inclined to say) story. Disappointing in the fact that the man comes

from a different generation and time period where thinking outside of the box is foreign. Reading his life story and noticing how he was just so high on the military and how that is all his life is about is just depressing. From his youthful days in high school Trainor speaks of how all he wanted was to get into the military. It is understandable that as an American and event like World War II (WWII), that one would be enthusiastic to join the military and serve for your country. That is honorable, yet that was not the war that Trainor fought in. Trainor fought and led in a war that was “supposedly” stopping the spread of communism. The man was killing men, women, and children and he seems emotionless. The story of how he had Vietnamese paid soldiers, stake out a location, and open fire on a building based upon a hunch or his intelligence, definitely altered my mood. For a moment you think a man is respectable for serving his country, to find that he had paid natives to kill their own. He was contributing to a cycle that had no reason to continue. The attitude of just doing what a higher commander tells you to do and executing even though you may be in the wrong does not settle well. Trainor appears to not have a mind of his own when he states he had to talk to a general who was surely wearing a bug and had to give the answers the higher officer wanted to hear. It is just disappointing that his rank is more important than doing the right thing. It is a shame.

The stories of Ta Quang Thinh and George Wakins were great stories and inspiring. Ta Quang risked his life during the time of a bombing to protect another individual whom he was taking care of as a nurse. Placing someone else before you even though the risk of possibly injuring yourself is admirable and honorable. Although he was the only survivor of the bombing but he lost more than just a comrade; he was paralyzed. He lost everything, money, savings, feelings, animals etc. and has nothing to show for it. There is a definite feel of compassion for Ta Quang. While on the other hand George Watkins lost both of his legs and eyes yet he still is okay with life. George appears to have accepted the fact that he is in this condition for the rest of his life. I mean that is truly all he can do, but he saved the life of another individual. Telling another to walk away from him saved that gentlemen’s life at the expense of his legs and eyes. George says he has no bitterness but that he wishes none of it happened. I enjoy seeing that a man is not holding any grudges in his life and just moving on with what he has because in the end that is all you can do. It is a life lesson in general, accept the situation you have or change in order to get change. By Watkins giving his story out like so, he is teaching myself and other individuals life lessons of persevearance and acceptance which will teach others and therefore causing a chain reaction to make the world a better place.

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Tyler Stark assignment 1

I find the patriots book to be a very a very insightful read. For my paper, I didn't want to choose just one story to write about because, what I was inspired by was the human spirit of the combatants exhibited from both sides of the war. The one story in part one that I feel wholly captures this is the recollection of Tran Thi Gung, pg. 15. In this story I was impressed with the young woman's strength. In this war she was the enemy, but more importantly she was human, I was impressed that though faced with a numerically superior, better equipped, better supplied and funded force these people fought with such a tenacity and strength that they made taking their country an impossibility.

The young woman in the story fought and killed men, and survived bombing raids in underground tunnels at an age when her cultural counterparts in the U.S. would still be on a swing set, or playing with dolls. She Exhibited strength of the human spirit, bravery, and the will to survive. I was greatly impressed with her frankness as well, she spoke in a very factual manner, I'm not saying that her recollections are perfect, but she did not shy away from describing the acts of violence she committed with an honesty that would make me believe her. If she wouldn't lie about killing a man, or dozens of them, I cant think of anything else she would lie about.

In searching through the passages of the Patriots book for one specific thing to focus on that I found most disappointing I found it in the account from Ngo Vihn Long, pg 54. His account starts with so much hope and national spirit, here is a man who genuinely want to help his people, and believes in his government. What I found to be disappointing in his account was the political maneuvering and psychological warfare committed on the south Vietnamese. The southern Vietnamese government's brutal attempts to control the population by scaring them from joining the northern rebel army by means of public executions, and the corralling of the populace in the small agrivilles. Wars are messy brutal and viscous, every one suffers, but to see the government torture and brutalize its own populace in order to stop them from becoming rebels sounds like a perfect recipe of fuel for resistance and defection. The second part of my reading, the search for something good or positive comes from the same story. I found Ngo Vihn Long's compassion for all the individuals in the war a stark contrast to the brutality that was also present. He demonstrates, and speaks of the fact that not every individual involved in such a brutal disaster such as war is evil. Ngo Vih Long recognized that soldiers go to war, but they don't start them, that no one wanted to be risking their lives on a battlefield when they could be home

living peacefully. I was impressed with his ability to remain hopeful,inspiring, and see that even though the war and the governmental polocies were devastating, he didnt neccesarily attribute that quality to the men fighting it.

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William Donigan

Assignment 1

Escobar

After reading part one of the Appy text I found the story of Tran Thi Gung to be the most interesting. I enjoyed this story because of the female soldier perspective that it brings. I also like this story because it explores the tactics of the Cu chi with regards to their underground tunnel system. Judging by what Tran Thi Gung wrote; I believe her story especially the part about her and her comrades being stuck in a tunnel for seven days and nights with limited resources and it seems reliable however by her past experiences she would only be trustworthy to her own people. She would do anything for her people including volunteering to go and sneak onto enemy bases, "I always volunteered to sneak onto the bases at night to reconnoiter and draw maps so we could plan our attacks.(pg. 18)", because of this I find her to be credible. She seems to be very objective but with this story she does get subjective at times, "Whenever anyone asks me about the suffering of the war, I always have a terrible nightmare that very night in which I relive these experiences. I miss my comrades very much and often see them again in my dreams.(pg 19)" and with this combination of objective and subjective information it allows the story to be believable . My favorite quote from this story is "... I never felt guilty about the killing I did. It was war." because war never changes.

In part two the most disappointing story I read was the story written by Evelyn

Colbert. While the story was short the message it portrays is clear. The start of the story begins with “Dissent which contradicted the public optimism was ignored.” and I am disappointed by these events. After reading this story; it reminds of today’s issues with the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. “In 1963, during the Buddhist crisis, my shop wrote a paper which took the statistics that were being produced by the military and make the case that he’s very statistics show that the Viet Cong were doing very well. Naturally, the military got annoyed. Secretary of defense McNamara Robinette to secretary of state dean rusk say the State Department had no business producing papers on military subjects that have not been cleared of defense department.(PG 84) “ This quote is similar in context to the Wikileaks scandal; where certain information is not disclosed to the public if it’s not convenient to popular belief.

In the same text by Evelyn Colbert there is something positive. Evelyn Colbert retained her integrity and still published works regardless of popular optimism. People like Evelyn sadly are in short supply in today’s media environment but they still give me hope. Back in the Vietnam era information was much easier to control however in this day and age and with the invention of the Internet it is much harder for that kind of information be controlled.

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