

HST 195: History of the Vietnam War Sp14 (Escobar Meta 42384)

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Soldiers' Stories

by Joe Escobar - Saturday, May 10, 2014, 1:22 PM

This forum thread is for the Soldiers' Stories/Register Guard Letter discussion.

After studying the required materials, address the questions in your posts.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post.

To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Soldiers' Stories

Sum of ratings: -

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RG letters and what can be gleaned from them

by Bryan Sanders - Wednesday, May 14, 2014, 8:46 PM

Looking at the Register Guard letters reminded me of reading and viewing the interviews from our Appy book, *Patriots*. Both the letters and the book give us an opportunity to see how the beliefs of the individuals have progressed since then. They also give us an opportunity to know some of what happened.

It was hard at first to figure out how the antiwar protester's complaint about the Iraq war had anything to do with the spitting on Vietnam vets, but the reactions teach us some of the things that happened. The vets may not be the best people to go to figure out the politics of that day, but they can teach us a great deal of what happened. This helps to get an understanding of what the soldiers went through. For example, the writer of the last letter says that while he wasn't spat on, he was discriminated against. Many of the other writers who returned from Vietnam did report getting spat on though.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: RG letters and what can be gleaned from them



by Lauren Grant - Thursday, May 15, 2014, 10:33 PM

I definitely agree with you that I was confused when reading the first letter about the Iraq war since I wasn't sure how it would relate to Vietnam veterans and how they were treated. However I also quickly realized that the comments that progressed from each letter began to shape the different perspectives of what happened to the veterans. I think that the letters from the veterans are the best way to figure out what really happened since they are first-hand accounts, especially since not every veteran had the same experience. I found it interesting how every letter except Shaw's contained examples of how they were spat on as veterans. The fact that it was last in the order that was given gave the letters as a whole a nice contrast.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: RG letters and what can be gleaned from them



by Chen Ling - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 8:25 AM

Hi, I agree with you about vets are not the perfect people to know the political issues and solutions for that moment. However, knowing the facts is a good idea to get accounts from them, because they really know what happened, and they just might not know what planned to happen.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: RG letters and what can be gleaned from them



by Kye Ruddell - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 12:37 PM

Hi Chen- I understand what you are saying about getting the eyewitness accounts, but I am not sure that this is always a way to enhance the facts. I think that, especially with experiences so emotionally charged, the accounts can be altered by the person's ability to handle the reality of the situation. I think it is true that those who were there are going to give us the best information about what really went on in the war, but everyone's experiences were different and every person handled those experiences differently.

I think we are fortunate to have the eyewitness accounts, but they are enhanced by the film footage we have- this helps us to see what the soldiers were experiencing, as well as helps to explain exactly why their accounts may be altered by the emotions they had to have experienced (or blocked).

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: RG letters and what can be gleaned from them



by Justyn Dockery - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 4:38 PM

Kyle-

I have to agree with you that the personal accounts of someone with experiences that are emotionally driven is not always the way to enhance the truth of an event, but I would argue that for some historical facts the personal accounts might be the only source of information that can be obtained. This brings up the question of, what can be gained from the personal accounts, and how do we decide what is factual, misleading, exaggerated, or completely false?

For me personally, I believe having the compilation of letters from the Registered Guard allows us to read multiple accounts of a veterans experience upon their return to the US, and having multiple letters in agreement from various people about what returning soldiers experienced should help a person decide the truth. I am curious to know, however, if these letters had been written shortly after the soldiers return would they be the same, or has the lapse in time from the actual events and experiences of returning veterans either altered or changed their memories regarding what actually happened? I would like to believe that the memory of these events had not been manipulated or changed as a result of a veteran losing their memory or anything of that nature, but I do not want to assume that the veteran's recollection of events is completely flawless.

So with these questions and information in mind, I find that I am still having a difficult time in trying to say with any great certainty what we can learn about the real historical facts of any event from the Vietnam War. However, and possibly due to some truly subconscious bias resulting from knowing a veteran who wrote one of these letters, I believe this compilation of letters does provide us with enough personal accounts of the experiences veterans had upon their return to America that we could say some veterans were spit on and some were not. The major issue for us as students in trying to determine what is accurate or false from our own soldiers' perspective is just trying to decipher whether or not the stories generally seem to agree with each other. If between all the compiled letters there was no consensus between veterans regarding what took place, then I would be apt to ignore the entire event. But if a generalized consensus between the letters can be found, I would want to dive further into the event before making a conclusion.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: RG letters and what can be gleaned from them



by Juncheng Qian - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 6:07 PM

I agree that we can get to what things happened at that time from the letters and it is hard to distinguish if there is any emotional stuff that affects the way that they use to report what happened.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: RG letters and what can be gleaned from them



by Sheena Moore - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 11:01 PM

While Vietnam vets can teach us, I only see firsthand accounts as a very small piece

of the puzzle. Memories fade, emotions run high, and varying experiences all make firsthand stories a less credible source if you are looking at events as a historian. There was not a single letter out of the collection in The Register Guard that didn't have a bitter or angry tone. I understand why. Being spat on is bad enough, but having someone say it didn't happen would send me into a frenzy too. It's only natural to feel that way. There are just too many things that have to be considered before using a firsthand experience as a solid truth.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: RG letters and what can be gleaned from them

by Kyle Poirier - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 11:49 PM

I agree that one first hand experience cannot be enough to deem an entire truth, but what if you get enough first hand experiences. My real worry is how else do we get this information without first hand experiences initially. Whatever information we get needed to come from someone at first that experienced it. If I had enough time I would prefer to get all my information first hand as long as there was a lot of different peoples accounts.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Were Soldiers Spat upon?

by Justyn Dockery - Wednesday, May 14, 2014, 8:37 PM

Trying to decide what stories or letters to add to my own version of Patriots is almost a daunting task, and seeing that one of the letters provided was written by a man who is considered one of the family further complicates my reasoning regarding why I would or would not put certain letters in my own book. However, I believe it is extremely important to put a minimum of one letter claiming returning veterans were spat upon and one claiming the returning troops were not spit on, because the experiences of veterans returning home from the war were not identical in every part of the country. The first two letters I would put in my book are the first two letters from the pdf file, because these two letters poignantly depict the conflicting memories of what happened to troops when they returned and any potential inaccuracies; I believe for my book to be as accurate as possible, I must make the reader aware of the conflicting information between all events prior, during, and after the war.

Secondly, and probably due to the stories I have personally heard from Vietnam Veterans, I would include more letters talking about the veterans actually being spit on. In particular, I would include the letter Rodney Gordon, of Eugene, wrote in response to Bob Thompson's comments, because Rodney says he himself was spit at and addresses the possibility of veterans experiencing different events when arriving home in different parts of America. I would also add the letter titled "Vietnam Vet Data Incomplete," written by H. Hilliard Gastfriend, because he succulently summarized the errors in Bob Thompsons reasoning behind his claim of veterans not being spit on when they returned home.

Much like Appy has done throughout different parts of his book, I would also add a note to the reader in certain sections or controversy. In my letter to the reader, I would start by trying to explain why some of the information they are about to read is conflicting; and in order to maintain or increase the amount of historical accuracy within my book, I would try and provide the reader with as much detail about the collective behaviors and mentalities of the civilians in the various locations troops returned home to that are included in the stories I put in my book. I believe it is important to

try and explain or describe the variations of the civilians collective behaviors at different locations, because informing the reader of these differences will help them determine what to believe and what to question.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Were Soldiers Spat upon?

by Kye Ruddell - Wednesday, May 14, 2014, 8:44 PM

Justyn- That is interesting that one of the letters was written by someone you know well, I wondered when reading them if anyone in the class would know any of the men in the letters. You mentioned that knowing this person complicated your decision- why is that so? Knowing what you do about them (you don't have to identify which one- this is a more generic question), would you say that their letter was credible and that their viewpoint is accurate? Because you said that it "complicates your reasoning", can I assume that knowing the background of the writers has an impact on the validity of the stories?

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Were Soldiers Spat upon?

by Justyn Dockery - Wednesday, May 14, 2014, 11:12 PM

Kyle- I would say the biggest reason why knowing the person who wrote one of these letters complicated my decision regarding what letters to include is a result of the person regularly telling stories with easily noticeable exaggerations. However, and in my opinion, I believe he is an all around stand up guy and very honest. So these two contrasting qualities made it hard for me to decipher whether or not his letter was just a story for some type of entertainment purpose or a literal and factual account of what he experienced upon his return to the US. Overall I believe his letter was accurate and credible, and when comparing his letter to other letters who stated being spit on, I found more comfort in taking his letter to be factual instead of a story for some entertainment purpose. Lastly, and in response to your last question, knowing the story teller or writer of a letter does play a major role in its validity or lack thereof, because the more we know a person the more likely we are to have some type of bias about the legitimacy of the persons viewpoint.

I'm not sure if what I have written helps you or answers your questions in a way that is easily understandable, because I wrote as vague as possible to maintain familial anonymity.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Were Soldiers Spat upon?

by Kye Ruddell - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 12:44 PM



Thanks for answering my question. I understand your desire to keep anonymity, and am glad that you were able to take comfort in his report of his experiences, despite your feelings that many of his stories are exaggerated.

I wonder if that is the case with a lot of people who give their interpretations of important events in history. We are all prone to exaggerations which often happen as a result of time and maybe a desire to make our participation more or less than it really was. Maybe this is the case with this person, but when faced with the chance to really give his opinion on this topic, he was able to speak from his true experiences with the backing of the other men who also spoke on this subject.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Were Soldiers Spat upon?

by Chen Ling - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 10:17 AM

I also think if you know someone in the history book, you would add on your personal point of view of the person you know, and this might change your understanding about the letters or stories. I totally agree with this, and your understanding would be more accurate than others who did not know the letter writer.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Were Soldiers Spat upon?

by Justyn Dockery - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 4:54 PM

Chen-

Not to play devils advocate, but I do not personally believe that knowing the writer of a letter would make a persons understanding more accurate. I am fearful that in this example my relationship with the writer of one the letters could potentially make my understanding less accurate, because it is likely for me to have some type of bias that cannot be removed from my understanding of their letter regardless of how aware I am of the bias. As I stated in my initial post, knowing the writer of one of these letters actually made it harder for me to decide what to take as factual, and even with the reasoning behind how I made my decision on what to include in my own version of the Patriots book along with what is historically accurate, I do not know, nor can I say with one hundred percent certainty that my conclusion and understanding of the returning veterans experiences is correct. Unfortunately, trying to decide what is true or false about any historical event is not as black and white as we would all hope for, because there are so many variations in a persons viewpoint, experience, understanding of what is happening, etc.

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Sum of ratings:2 (1)



Re: Were Soldiers Spat upon?

by Kristine Wallace - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 6:37 PM

This is why I had time with this forum posting since I believe EVERY letter had some sort of important component to it. Of course, we can not always tell what is always the truth and what is just some angry individuals interpretation of events but I believe that all the stories are valuable in some way.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Which letters to include in Patriots?

by Kye Ruddell - Wednesday, May 14, 2014, 8:39 PM

I would include the Register-Guard letters from the veterans in the Patriots book, since these are important voices to add to the well-rounded compilation. Both those who experienced the spitting (like Herman Isaacs) and those who didn't (like Robert Shaw) would be included, since many people had very different experiences in Vietnam and when they returned home. These varied experiences were probably due in part to their locations, but were undoubtedly also colored by their expectations and their interpretations of events as they saw them. The additional "note to the reader" is helpful to show the diversity in backgrounds and variables which would have had a hand in the person's interpretation of their experiences. If the account needed assistance in being clarified or validated, that could be done by lending the reader the background and subsequent personal or professional resume of the person giving their story. Appy does this in several cases in the book, and it feels as though this lends credibility to some of the stories, to know that the person was a properly trained soldier, as well as to know how they went on to live their lives. It is assumed that those who were able to be productive and move through their lives appropriately may have a better grasp on the reality of their experiences in Vietnam and after. This is in opposition of the possible credibility problems of those who continued to struggle throughout their lives, reliving the experiences and possibly altering them along the way.

Bob Thompson may also have a place in the book, as this is clearly a state of mind that many had and continue to have regarding the treatment of the Vietnam veterans. The caveat that could precede this story might talk about the information on the internet and the myriad of people who are willing to simply believe what they read, instead of going to the sources and finding out for themselves whether the information in books and online is accurate. In his inaccuracies, Bob would lend the book an interesting alternate version of how people view the information they have learned over the past several decades about this very emotionally-charged topic.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Which letters to include in Patriots?

by Kyle Poirier - Thursday, May 15, 2014, 9:51 PM



That's a good point that you brought up Kyle, about the war vets that moved through their life productively and appropriately being possible a better gauge on finding out what really happened in Vietnam. This makes sense to me because this shows they were able to remove themselves from it emotionally, which means when they talk about it they will speak from a point of know bias. They will just speak from a point of view of what happened and what didn't happen which will be helpful for grasping the truth

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: Which letters to include in Patriots?



by Lauren Grant - Saturday, May 17, 2014, 10:48 PM

I also would include Bob Thompson in the book but your reasoning made me think about it in a different way. Thompson does represent a large amount of people who believe everything that they read without double checking sources and finding out if they are accurate. Some of the veterans comment on this and how if Thompson had checked his sources or tried to find accounts from soldiers that he would have found the exact opposite of what he was writing about. I definitely agree that Thompson's letter would give an interesting twist on how people learn information about the war and how this causes them to view certain subjects and situations in different or sometimes inaccurate ways.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: Which letters to include in Patriots?



by Chen Ling - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 10:31 AM

Hey Kye, I think people should go search some background or other sources to verify the reliability of what they read in history books. Different people will find out different things from same stories, like Justyn, he knows someone in the story, so he might be able to write some comments about the story, then if I read that story and his comments, I will think this is more believable and I will follow his understanding to understand accurately about what I just read.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: Which letters to include in Patriots?



by Kye Ruddell - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 12:52 PM

Chen- I agree completely. I think whenever we are looking at an actual event which has been experienced by so many and which can be interpreted in so many different ways, it is our responsibility to look into more than one source to

find the "truth."

A great example of this was adding the information from the AIM video to the PBS videos. While some of us may not believe everything either is saying for whatever reasons, I think it can be assumed that both contain elements of truth, or at least some people's truths. Does this beg the question that all of us seem to be trying to get to- what exactly is "truth" - there are facts which can be stated, that battles happened, bombs were dropped, and people died. Beyond those types of facts, there is the truth which each of the soldiers and those who were there have regarding these facts. I think these truths can change, depending on the person, their background, their emotional connection to the facts, and the outcomes for the individuals. This is where looking at more sources can increase the reliability of the events, as you stated.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Including Veterans Letters



by Lauren Grant - Wednesday, May 14, 2014, 9:25 PM

If I was writing my own version of *Patriots*, I would include the letters of the veterans and also Bob Thompson's letter. All of the letters that the veterans wrote are first hand accounts of what they experienced after coming home and therefore are all important. I would include Thompson's letter because it is the main point that all of the veterans are arguing for or against. His opinion is one that is controversial and stirs up arguments on both sides from veterans and non-veterans alike. This would be something that would add some more conflict to *Patriots*. One of the veteran letters that I would definitely want to include is Robert L. Shaw's because his letter is the only one that agrees with Thompson that he himself was never spat on but at the same time shows that he too was harassed like many of the other veterans that wrote letters by telling his own story. The other veterans, like Herman Isaacs, make good claims using personal experience to argue against Thompson. Their stories remind me of the ones in *Patriots* and would be letters that I would include.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Veteran Letters



by Bryan Sanders - Friday, May 16, 2014, 2:48 PM

Bob Thompson's letter I wouldn't include only because the section would focus on the veterans who participated and the experiences they had in the aftermath. Thomson's letter and its contents would be included in the note right before the veterans' accounts to help give perspective to readers. The primary point to include would be his comment that spitting never once took place. Also in the notes I would include a disclaimer that the original letters focused on reaction to the Iraq war, and that the spitting on Vietnam veterans was brought up and subsequently focused on.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Veteran Letters

by Lauren Grant - Friday, May 16, 2014, 10:19 PM

After reading your reasoning, I would have to say that if I was to write a note for the book I would place Bob Thompson's letter there as well. Your point that the section should focus on the veterans is something that I didn't consider at first and you make a good point. At first I didn't think that a note would be necessary but the more that I think about it, the notes that Appy included helps the reader focus in on what topics will be explored by the stories to come and clarify why these topics are being discussed. I think that a note to the reader would be useful to help the reader understand why these letters were written, like you said in response to a reaction to the Iraq war, and to give the central point that all of the veteran letters are responding to whether or not spitting on veterans occurred.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Veteran Letters

by Kyle Poirier - Saturday, May 17, 2014, 4:46 PM

I agree with you completely Bryon. I would only keep the veterans that experienced this first hand. Good point with touching on Bob's letter in the note to the reader. This would be a good way to keep the other articles relevant before reading.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Veteran Letters

by Chen Ling - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 11:00 AM

Hi, Bryan, you made a great point of Bob's letter. However, I think the experience in aftermath is also important and people would like to connect the facts selves with their background and what happened afterward, this definitely helps people to understand the stories. Therefore, I think this won't be a reasonable factor for keeping it out, we still be good to include it. 😊

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Including Veterans Letters

by Kristine Wallace - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 6:55 PM

We have to figure out as well if the letters/accounts from those people that fought for the "other" side are also worthy of reading and if they are truthful. It was very hard for me to read these knowing that the individuals that wrote/spoke about killing the American people also killed my husbands father and many other people my parents went to school with. It made me sick in reading how they saw the American troops run to the side of a wounded soldier and cried and how they were then taken

advantage of at that point. It may be true and it may be false but it still makes you sick inside.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Are letters believable?

by Chen Ling - Wednesday, May 14, 2014, 9:52 PM

Appy book is always doing valuable interviews for digging out the real history facts. And in the Patriots book, the author uses some memories to make them as the first historic accounts. AS same as Bob Thompson's letter, it just included some treatment of Vietnam wars veterans. In my mind, those letters are very important to us to analysis what is right or wrong of what we read in history books or materials. I think the veterans' letters are always the first accounts and believable source to believe. For those people, some of them did not agree with Bob and few agree with him, it might because of the different experience, and those people were writing about their personal experience in the letters so that they must had some difference with each other, even it was the same events in the same time.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Are letters believable?

by Kyle Poirier - Thursday, May 15, 2014, 9:40 PM

I agree Chen it is hard to believe that it didn't happen at all, It most likely happened to some people and not to others depending on where at which people they encountered. I think it is very helpful to here first hand accounts from people, as long as they are telling the truth. It is hard for me to believe these folks were not telling the truth.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Are letters believable?

by Dylan Ornas - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 11:02 PM

I really cant agree with you more Kyle. I cant believe that there will ever be a complete history, on anything. In all of historical record, there are so many people involved. Yes the letters to the editor are important, because they are a tiny sliver of the story, but we cant let them be a decisive force in what to believe or not to believe, probably not. The amount of variations in every story (especially Vietnam conflict related) are staggering. Yet this doesn't mean that any of them are necessarily wrong. Different people, different perspectives.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Are letters believable?



by Kyle Poirier - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 11:32 PM

Yes. Good point bringing up "different people different perspectives" because that changes how we hear about history. Two different people can experience the exact same thing, yet have a very different reaction or interpretation of it. So it's not just that some things happen in some places while others don't, like I was saying earlier. You also have to factor in the fact that people with different perspectives will get a different interpretation on what happened.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Are letters believable?

by Juncheng Qian - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 6:15 PM

Hi Chen, I agree that depends on their own personal experience that makes people understand things by different ways, like the spitting things that said he didn't spit and attribute to their prejudice. But someone might lie.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Letters of a Peculiarly Argument

by Kyle Poirier - Wednesday, May 14, 2014, 10:41 PM

I believe Appy would have included these four articles in his book:

Published: Monday, February 25, 2007

Spitting incidents did occur

THOMAS W. POSTELLE

Veneta

Published: Monday, February 25, 2007

Vietnam vets verbally abused

RODNEY GORDON

Eugene

Published: Monday, February 25, 2007

Veterans greeted with hostility

HERMAN ISAACS

Springfield

Published: Monday, February 26, 2007

Returning from Vietnam easy

ROBERT L. SHAW

Eugene

These articles are from the people that actually experienced the effects of coming back from war. All of the letters said there was spitting plus hostility when they initially flew back from the war except for Robert L. Shaw's account. He did experience hostility later though when he was trying to get a job to become a member of everyday society again. This seemed very frustrating from all accounts, whether it was getting spit on or discriminated against in the job market.

He may have included a note to the reader saying that he wasn't able to get any accounts from the "alleged spitters" and these moments happened a while back in time.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Spitting ignorance



by Debra Moran - Wednesday, May 14, 2014, 10:42 PM

If I could only chose one, I would have chosen Mr. Rodney Gordon of Eugene as his letter was precise, and even though there was a sense of well-deserved bitterness there was also a sense of honor in his response to Thompson. I feel that every soldier deserves his say so I would like to include all of them. I don't know that I would add anything because all of the responses to Mr. Thompson were filled with personal accounts and therefore must be taken at face value as truth.

As far as the other excerpt and letter those would need to be in the book as well as the antiwar sentiment played a large role in American life I may not agree with it but I feel it should be added to provide an understanding that if 40 odd years later these (watered down)sentiments still provoke a response it would have been hell to walk out of an airport after surviving the horrors of the war to then treated with ignorance by your fellow Americans.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Spitting ignorance



by Lauren Grant - Saturday, May 17, 2014, 10:40 PM

I agree with you that I would like to include all of the veterans' letters since each soldier has their own unique experience and deserves to have their stories shared. I want to agree that each letter must be taken as the truth but I feel that can become tricky. Since it is their own story it is hard to think that they aren't telling the truth, I want to believe that no soldier would lie in sharing their story, but it can happen. I think that taking each soldiers story has their own experience instead of the absolute truth then it can help keep us aware of what is historically accurate. I do think that for the

most part that a veteran's first hand account is one of the best sources at times. In this situation where we are discussing whether or not veterans were spit on, each veteran's story is helpful in discovering what happened in different areas and to different people.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Spitting ignorance



by Juncheng Qian - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 9:06 PM

I think the Veterans' letters are too subjective to be evidence of history but publish those would make a affect in this public.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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What to include, or what not to.



by Dylan Ornas - Wednesday, May 14, 2014, 10:46 PM

While this may seem an argument based off of a technicality, I would include none of the Register Guard excerpts in my book if I were writing *Patriots*. None of the excerpts I read seemed to fit with the general theme of Appy's book. While most of the excerpts are quite interesting and provide an insight into what the writer is thinking, I feel that they lack a certain balance that Appy acquires in his book.

While reading *Patriots*, I came to realize that most of his stories have a yin and yang aspect. While usually the one side doing the telling gives a story similar to what their side in the war was saying, they tend to at least acknowledge the other side and their grievances. At times giving more than adequate backup for their stance. I find the Register Guard submissions lacking in check-able facts.

Now I do submit that I have not read the entire entry for each, for these are just excerpts. For all I know the whole interview may address my points of concern. However for the time being and with the excerpts given I could not consciously include any of these within the book.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: What to include, or what not to.



by Kyle Poirier - Saturday, May 17, 2014, 4:36 PM

I agreed with you Dylan. These articles didn't really have the same yin in and yen effect that *Patriots* had. They did have opposing sides of views but not of them were first hand experiences they were just opinions of truth formed from reading and searching on "Google".

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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What to include to achieve balance

by Bryan Sanders - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 4:52 PM

To help create that 'yin yang' feel you mentioned, the veteran accounts can be supplemented with accounts of the experiences of soldiers who served in the Vietnamese military, whether North or South. It can explain the treatment the North and South Vietnamese soldiers experienced as they returned from fighting. Further, the section can include accounts of the people who were waiting when the soldiers on all sides returned home.

We have to remember that these are written responses to a newspaper and not responses given in an interview like the Appy book *Patriots*. However, they can still teach us some elements of past history e.g. reception of Vietnam soldiers and how it has affected them.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: What to include to achieve balance

by Dylan Ornas - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 10:31 PM

This is essentially my problem with including them within a book such as *Patriots*. The responses were submitted to a newspaper as letters to the editor. *Patriots*, as I have come to understand it, gains its historical credibility through showing two sides of one coin. The submissions to the paper seem to be one sided. The only person writing to the editor that I would consider including is Bob Thompson, and this is only because he makes a point to ask for references to Tom Preuss' grievances.

I really do find these excerpts interesting and eye opening to the different views the returning veterans have, but I find it hard to think about them as an addition to the book in question. The really main difference I see is that Appy took ~125 interviews out of 250+. I don't see this as him trying to hide facts or tilt the favor of the book one way or the other. I actually think that, after reading the letters to the editor, that he selectively chose these stories in order to show a balanced, and yet vivid, side to the story.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: What to include, or what not to.

by Chen Ling - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 8:25 PM

Yin Yang is a great point you just made, Dylan. And I also agree with you that we should connect the background and what was happened before and after the interviews to have better and more accurate understanding on the facts.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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What us students can take away

by Kyle Poirier - Wednesday, May 14, 2014, 10:59 PM

It is hard to know what is true in such passionate topics such as war. There are some lovers and there are some haters, and they may tend to push the truth towards the side they are passionate about. Down to the little things is hard to decipher what is true or not, like these articles, you would think that people wouldn't have so different conclusions arising. I believe a concern in these situations is doing inductive reasoning from what you hear and think it applies to everyone everywhere. Such as thinking now that anyone that says they don't agree with the war spits on soldiers. There are many that don't agree with the war and actually appreciate the terrible position soldiers were in. I think it's hard for someone to right that never happened though because the chance no one spitting on a soldier, with people saying they were, is very unlikely.

Something us students maybe should be concerned with is if they are just sick of all the hate they get from being in the war and just push the truth to make the anti war folks look worse. But how did they get sick of these people? There must have been some mistreatment.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: What us students can take away

by Sheena Moore - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 10:46 PM

I'm sure there were plenty of protestors who were awful to soldiers and plenty who weren't. People like Sam Brown from the PBS special took the approach of commemorating lost lives with a nation wide moratorium. Others, like the demonstrations at the democratic convention turned ugly quick. I can see how, depending on the interaction the soldier had, their experience and account of that experience could be influenced by emotions. Good point.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Shooting spat

by Juncheng Qian - Wednesday, May 14, 2014, 11:06 PM

These letters are represent thing subjectively because the writer of the letter may have the different emotion. Also they may stand in different status so they would get different information from one things, like the abused case people may feel different reaction of others words maybe they will feel rude or maybe they speaker might not mean that, it will depends on personal experience. But I would more trust the spatting thing is true, because that spatting is more special than other active, it it had to make misunderstanding.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Shotting spat

by Chen Ling - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 8:19 PM

Hi Juncheng, absolutely, I think personal experiences is super important, especially I read Justyn's post which was if someone knows the personality of a writer, he or she will understand the article more accurate than others who do not know the author. Therefore, I definitely agree with your point!

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Shotting spat

by Juncheng Qian - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 8:53 PM

Hi Chen, As you said to know the personality of writer, yes, it is very helpful to understand of the writer's way of describe things and the background could be identify the status of the writer that will help us to distinguish it is true or not and the what happened in the history.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Veteran POW's and communication

by Bryan Sanders - Friday, May 16, 2014, 5:15 PM

The stories in the American POW's clip that I would use in *Patriots* are the stories of the communication system used by the POW's, especially the tap code. It's an aspect of the POW's many people don't know about. The notes would include symbols or words to indicate what kind of sound is made during the interview. It would also say that POW's were kept isolated from one another, which facilitated the need to create an elaborate communication system. I would also mention that this helped the POW's to stay united even if they were physically separate.

Here is a link to the Wikipedia page on the tap code: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tap_code

Here is an example of the tap code table:

TAPS	1	2	3	4	5
1	A	B	C	D	E
2	F	G	H	I	J
3	L	M	N	O	P
4	Q	R	S	T	U
5	V	W	X	Y	Z

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Veteran POW's and communication



by Justyn Dockery - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 4:11 PM

Bryan-

I think you bring up an extremely interesting and intriguing piece of information from the American POW's video clip that should be included in our own version of the Patriots book. As you said the tap code is something that many people are unaware of, and I personally had never heard anything about the POW's having any form of communication between them until viewing this clip. Furthermore, I believe adding this information in a note to the reader would allow the reader to get a better grasp on the unity shared between all the American Soldiers in Vietnam regardless if the soldier was or was not a POW, and the increased understanding of unity between soldiers is likely to help the reader find more similarities between soldier stories in order to help them decipher the facts.

Thanks for the image of the tap code too!

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Soldiers and Accuracy



by Lauren Grant - Friday, May 16, 2014, 10:36 PM

I think that the major concerns about historical accuracy that must be concerned with when studying the war from the perspective of our soldiers are that not every soldier had the same experienced or experienced everything that went on during the war. The soldiers are emotionally connected to the war and that can sometimes throw off their accuracy when recalling things about the war. The brain can shut down and block things out, making some facts blurred. Some soldiers may have been for the war while others against it and that can easily sway the way that they viewed an event. Not every soldier therefore will be able to affectively give historically accurate information, although many can. However, each soldier did have his own experience and it can be hard to find fault in a first hand account. These letters as a whole show us that not every soldier felt the same way about the war and not every soldier had the same experience coming home. All of the veterans wrote about being mistreated when they returned but not all of them received the same type of mistreatment. Even such small details like whether or not veterans were spit on has different sides and views as well as experiences.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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To Spit or not to Spit...



by Sheena Moore - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 1:42 PM

Of the stories in The Register Guard that we read there were only two I would include, the account from Robert Shaw and Rodney Gordon. I chose both of them for the same reason. They acknowledge that everyone's experience is different. Mr. Shaw said that he was never spat on, but also says that doesn't mean others

weren't. Mr. Gordon had a very similar take. He said he was spat upon, but that tensions were particularly high around Oakland and that other soldiers from other areas may not have experienced the same hostility. It is important to remember history is not just about one account, but many.

As for the other stories, they were fraught with emotion. This is understandable, but heightened emotions do little to gain truth in the end. Also, Michael Rooke-Ley's letter completely sidetracks to the war in Iraq. Vietnam and the war in Iraq were two completely different wars. If he was trying to make the point that they were both political wars he should save that for another letter. It distracts from the main point which is his claim that demonstrators never spat on soldiers. Letters like Mr. Rooke-Ley's would definitely be left out for the simple fact that they were discombobulated and confusing.

In this situation where there's conflicting stories I feel a "Note to the reader" is necessary. I would include information about times and places where political tension was especially high. For example, The Berkley Riots probably played a huge role in how not just demonstrators, but the general public in that area felt about the war and the people fighting it.

Learning what the truth in history is a challenge. History is largely perspective. Not everyone has had the same experience. It doesn't make one more or less valid than the others, but looking at things like political climate, geography of events, and comparing stories help to decipher the truth. For example, in the PBS special a Chicago police officer, Robert Garver, talked about his experience with the demonstrations at the Democratic Convention. He claims he was physically beat and verbally taunted. To play Devil's advocate, what if he started it? What if he used excessive force while trying to control the crowd? In his perspective he may have just been doing his job, but to the person on the receiving end it may have been overboard. In order to gain the full scope of what happened one would need the accounts of the other people involved. As I said before, compare multiple stories.

As a student, there are major concerns about accuracy with firsthand accounts from soldiers. First would be a narrow perspective. Just like with the Officer Garver, the account is only a fragment of a larger story. Something may be your personal truth, but it doesn't mean it applies to everyone. Others soldiers may not have been spat on, it doesn't mean that it never happened. Other demonstrators may not have spat on soldiers, it doesn't mean others didn't. Getting an accurate account of things that have happened is about having a very wide understanding of people's personal accounts as well as events surrounding them. Another concern is forgetting the events. In some cases of PTSD the person may forget major parts of a trauma. Even if the person doesn't have PTSD time has a

tendency to fade memory. Finally, emotions effect how a story is told. It is unavoidable. Mr. Rooke-Ley was clearly passionate about defending fellow demonstrators, therefore his argument was disconnected and lacked any solid evidence. A google search does not make an argument valid.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Continuing search for the truth



by Dylan Ornas - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 10:52 PM

There is a common theme through our forums so far. Historical accuracy is called into question again and again and I am beginning to see why it is. This newest compilation of letters to the editor raise more questions than it does providing answers.

After reading these I find that there is even less certainty in the accuracy of current sources. While the Herring book has been clinical and precise in its facts and Appy has shows both sides so well, the fact that there can be so much controversy over a single occurrence begs the question "How can we really put our trust in anything written?" Without testimony from people who were physically present we can never truly know the full story. You need both sides, (thats what I think *Patriots* is for) and enough evidence backing each-others stories, to piece together a picture of what actually took place.

Closely tied to the above mentioned problem is the fact that it is hard to know when an account is accurate. I feel as though we must look at each and every story and account with a critical eye. Fact check with other stories. As we have seen in the register guard articles, there is much disagreement on even the smallest part of the conflict. almost every man who served in the conflict on both sides, I assume, has some sort of national pride attached. This I feel is possibly the biggest concern when looking at the Vietnam war. In my experience (and I am not exempt) pride breeds an unwillingness to allow defeat even in just a moral sense.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Continuing search for the truth



by Sheena Moore - Sunday, May 18, 2014, 11:11 PM

Absolutely! Accuracy is hard to determine. The Herring Book has sited many different sources. They cast a wide net to gather information and as a result their account of Vietnam seems to check out as true. They use everything from Whitehouse correspondence to other scholarly writings. I believe that firsthand stories have their place when it comes to research, but they need to be used in combination with many other information sources.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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