

The stories in the first part of the Appy book were intriguing and quickly enraptured me into obsession. Reading these eye-witness accounts of a war many have long been confused by politically, has had a humanizing affect. The most impactful story was told by Bernard Trainor, a seemingly reputable former Commander who did two tours in Vietnam, and worked with credible media sources such as The New York Times as a military correspondent. Trainor came across believable, objective, and factual which made the years in between the events and the interview with Appy not seem too extreme. This may have to do with the fact that even after retirement from the military, he continued to stay in the tactical mind frame as he did work for the media. Even if he was chiming in on other national news or crises, it is more likely that he has been able to keep these facts fresh in his memory, in comparison to a person that got out and rarely, if ever, talks about it. In his account, Trainor compared the Vietnam war to the American Revolution, where he explained that the Vietnamese would fight to the death. Just like the American colonists, the Vietnamese demanded independence at any cost. This could strike a cord in any patriotic American who feels deeply that Americans will accept nothing less than a free nation and will stop at nothing to achieve it. Even the younger generations, who may have experienced that great sadness and fiery anger of 9/11, could most likely relate to the idea that countrymen will stand proud and strong behind their own people to defend them and their ideals, even if it means the ultimate sacrifice of their lives. What a powerful concept. The Vietnamese also had certain advantages like knowledge of the land and support of the people. In the second DVD episode, Ho Chi Minh was quoted as he answered concern regarding their lack of weaponry, stating, "if we have the people, we have the most powerful weapon". This reminds me of my own father's recollection of his time in Vietnam that he recounted years ago. He told me that there was nothing more frightening than an enemy you could not clearly decipher from your ally. He went on to explain specific instances where Viet Cong would dress as peasants and ambush the Americans. On the other hand, the Americans in Vietnam were compared by Trainor to the British in the revolutionary war; lacking "national sentiment" lead to "disenchantment" of the operation. The message was clear: motivation has everything to do with who can win a war, money and heavy machinery aside. Part two was also impactful, but in a different way, especially with the story told by Journalist Malcolm Browne, who covered the war in Vietnam for the Associated Press. It is amazing what these journalists must have seen and heard, that they were not allowed to report, due to censorship. To read his account of the two-seater T-28 that left with full racks of bombs from the main airstrip, to return with empty racks and a clearly exhausted machine gun was frightening, as was his example of the pilot was a blond-haired, blue-eyed man. Although the pilot had a Vietnamese man in the second seat, it was clear who was running the show so to speak. This was in clear contrast to the U.S. claim that their role was "subordinate" to our allies in Vietnam. Browne explained that he was "threatened with expulsion" by having reported this observation on the airstrip, which makes one question the political twisting of this war and any American involvement anywhere for that matter. It is disappointing to realize that the American people are told what our government wants us to know and even more so that they have the power to cover up details of history we may have resisted, had we known the extent of the given situation. Malcolm Browne's account of Vietnam was not all disappointment, especially his recollection of Christmas Eve, 1961. With all the horrors he had witnessed, there was a touching glimmer of humanity when the drunken men at the special forces camp shot off mortars, and the guerillas from the Viet Cong tunnel complex fired as well in celebration. There was palpable hope in Browne's statement, "for that one night of the Christmas season there was no fighting- a rare respite". The message was that no matter the cruel, violent, and unremorseful horrors the guerrillas set forth onto soldiers and civilians alike, at the core of their souls, they were all just human beings. It is so easy for us to make our counterparts out to be these evil, emotionless demons, such as the opinions of the Nazis during and after WWII. Quite possibly it is easier, considering our human capacity, to mow down "evil demons" with machine guns, than to do it with the mind frame that you're actually murdering someone's son or father.

Part 1 - well written, and although you made much more of this single story (and tried to "answer" the entire war ~~so~~ using a single story in week 2 of a 10 week term) your writing was convincing. "on track".
 Part 2 was more very good 1st paper.