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Register Guard Letters
by Joe Escobar - Saturday, May 13, 2017, 9:44 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Register Guard Letters topic.

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. Use a title to describe which questions you are addressing. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Register Guard Letters

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First Hand Accuracy
by Tyler Ritter - Tuesday, May 16, 2017, 1:04 PM

Tyler Ritter

Joe Escobar

May 16, 2017

Question #2

Im going to take aim at question #2. First I believe that nothing is “all or nothing”. Regarding the letters to the editor, I believe either and all could have occurred. In my honest opinion I believe first hand accounts are much more useful then second hand information that has been regurgitated. This also has me thinking about how every situation, regarding how first hand accounts of returning veterans, seems to be dynamic in nature. Watching the POW’s talk was really interesting, and it showed just how awful they where treated. It’s tough to discern between information regarding the Vietnam war, and how accurate it truly is.

Veterans it seems, where treated very differently, in different areas. One thing seems to be in common between the accounts though, and thats that they where not treated very fairly upon return, wether it be from employment, to random strangers. Since, in my opinion, first hand accounts are often accurate, their does exist times where some people during the war might not have known exact facts about what was going on. Should we balance first hand accounts and try to match them to written statements? Regardless, history should be remembered accurately, its just going about that is a challenge in itself.

I believe these letters to the editor tie into the video of POW’s. The veterans that talked in the video seemed to remember every detail of their long detainment, and rightfully so. What they went through was horrendous. Just like one of them says however, “we had no idea what was going on in the outside world” (Return with honor). I believe in taking first hand accounts into their own context. I mean by this, to learn about what happened to POW’s at the time in context with how POW’s where treated, their is no point at quoting them when it comes to affairs outside their stories. In other words, keep things relevant.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: First Hand Accuracy

by Brandon Dibble - Saturday, May 20, 2017, 10:41 PM

Tyler,

You make some great points here and I am going to agree with you in saying that first hand encounters speak much louder than second hand information, especially when we are considering how the soldiers were treated upon their arrival home. I do not think outside sources can even begin to tell the story of these soldier because they were not the ones how lived through the hard times soldiers faced returning to the United Stated from Vietnam.

I also think the similarities between these soldiers experiences speaks a lot for the authenticity of these first hand encounters. Even the letter from the soldier who claimed “returning from Vietnam was easy” said he had never been spat on/at (Robert L. Shaw) but admitted that he did in fact encounter poor treatment in the form of being cursed at and turned down for work after returning from Vietnam.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Re: First Hand Accuracy



by Tyler Ritter - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 2:11 PM

From what Ive seen, most veterans where treated very bad even if it didn't get to the point of being spit on. I think a lot of people that did do that to soldiers where probably very misinformed. It speaks volumes when someone could have the audacity to spit on anyone let alone a soldier coming home. I find it very relieving that someone made a proper "welcome home" even though it was all this time way over due.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: First Hand Accuracy

by Stanley Cates - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 3:24 PM

In regards to your statement: "The veterans that talked in the video seemed to remember every detail of their long detainment, and rightfully so. What they went through was horrendous." Shouldn't we be a little more cautious with statements like that since traumatic events tend to cause people to forget things rather than to remember them? (Casa Palmera)

That being said, I do like you statement: "...I believe that nothing is "all or nothing"." This coincides well with my thinking that the question posed is a little implausible. However, I'm not convinced that your faith in anecdotal evidence is well founded. If we want to ask whether vets were ever spat on then the only logical answer is "maybe". Sure, there's loads of anecdotal evidence, but we'll never be able to prove whether those people are lying, or subject to false memories; that goes for both the spitter and the spittee (?). So really it seems that the question we need to ask is not whether it ever happened but whether it was a common form of the abuses that we do know occurred in various fashions toward vets. Seems given that question documentation rules with an iron fist of anecdotal evidence; because even a few genuine instances of a particular do not constitute a generality.

Casa Palmera, "How Trauma Affects Your Memory." Casa Palmera. N.p., 23 July 2015. Web. 21 May 2017.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: First Hand Accuracy

by Joshua Meeker - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 5:42 PM

Hey Tyler,

I would have to express the same thing that you mentioned. The individual stories provide much more substance than the Longest War provides(though it serves as a great summary). By just reading the text your getting the general knowledge of what happened but it leaves something to be desired and after a while the readings can become stale. I really like the first hand accounts to. It provides that real life experience of the times and the feelings of the people who were around.

As for the interrogations I agree that they were horrendous. It was pretty interesting to see how those men managed to speak to each other by tapping on the walls with code. I remember when of of the POWs said that the building sounded like it was being banged on by a bunch of woodpeckers. It was interesting to see that when these Americans were in that situation they acted similarly to how the North Vietnamese ground forces behaved. By that I mean that without power the POWs had to rely on themselves and their cunning; therefore able to overcome the opponent in the end.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Rational conclusions.

by Stanley Cates - Tuesday, May 16, 2017, 7:02 PM

I think that if I were the author of Patriots, or a book resembling Patriots, I would include the stories/letter from the following: Bob Thompson, H Hilliard Gastfriend, and Robert L. Shaw.

Bob Thompson has approached the subject seemingly without a great deal of malice toward any particular group and has simply “stuck to the facts”; citing evidence to support his arguments. This stands in stark contrast to the individual whom he is responding to, Tom Preuss, who is clearly worked up about the subject but provides no citations to back his seemingly over inflated claims of heavy investments to “destroy this president. [Bush]”, and by logical extension, the war effort. Naturally it would be unfair to put in Thompson’s letter without Preuss’ letter as context. Likewise, I would include H Hilliard Gastfriend’s letter because the same tactics Thompson used to support his argument, citing and analyzing sources, Gastfriend uses to refute it; even going so far as to provide evidence that Thompson’s source is “fatally flawed in relying on electronic searches”, pointing out that not all relevant sources had been digitized. I would include these three pieces because they illustrate the use of academic argumentation in properly analyzing and issue even in the presence of questionably founded thinking.

That being said, I think the most profound letter put for was from Robert L. Shaw. Shaw agrees with the letter of Thompson’s argument but has a different take on the spirit of the subject. Indeed, according to Shaw, there was adversity faced by returning Vietnam vets, as is evidenced by his account of his experience in the job market subsequent his return. However, he neither directly supports nor refutes the question of whether spitting ever took place, he only comments that neither he nor his acquaintances ever experienced it directly. This I think hammers home the reality that experiences differed for each Vet as did they for each protestor, thus demonstrating that the stereotype of spitting protestors might be an inappropriate image of the era as a whole.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Confusion about Thompson

by Maile Sur - Tuesday, May 16, 2017, 9:14 PM

I’m a little confused on why you think it would be a good idea to include Bob Thompson’s letter to the editor. Granted, Thompson used a source in his letter, but this single source is just an account of one person’s experiences as a veteran. The topic is whether or not

spitting on returning Vietnam veterans occurred or didn't occur. Just because one veteran didn't get spat on, doesn't mean there weren't others who did, which means claims as strong as "No one spat on Vietnam vets" should not be made.

I agree with your comments on Robert L. Shaw's letter in regards to Shaw neither supporting or disputing the fact of spitting ever taking place. Like you said, the experiences differed for each veteran, but I don't think it is smart to include a letter that specifically says "No one spat on Vietnam vets" and "In fact, it appears the 'spitting on veterans' story is completely false" when we have other first person accounts from veterans that state they *were* spat on. Thompson is making extremely strong claims, that are directly made invalid by veterans themselves, which is why I am confused on why you would include his letter.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: Confusion about Thompson

by Stanley Cates - Thursday, May 18, 2017, 3:54 PM

First of all, the source in question was not "just an account of one person's experience as a veteran": "In 1995, a study by Thomas Beamish and others analyzed some 495 media stories and found no reports of spitting or even negative taunting."

Secondly, I never said that I agreed with Thompson; I instead implied admiration and respect for his methods. Yes, "no one spat on Vietnam vets" is a strong claim, and a difficult one to prove, and admittedly I don't think I would have come to the same absolute conclusion as Thompson. But the point is that his source can be, and was, analyzed and shown to be either credible or, as Gastfriend shows, non-credible. This sensible and supported argumentation is strongly contrast to what Preuss is doing, which seems to be acting based purely on how he feels; unfortunately, how he feels isn't terribly useful for the purposes of gathering objective information.

As for your statements: "...we have other first person accounts from veterans that state they were spat on. Thompson is making extremely strong claims, that are directly made invalid by veterans themselves..." The problem there is that your statements preclude the notion that it's impossible for a veteran to lie; that's why we need documentation, of which according to Thompson's source there is none, Gastfriend's source disagrees, thus it's a good objective argument pair. Why would a veteran lie about such a thing you ask; perceived comradeship or solidarity, general one-upmanship, sympathy seeking, embellishment. So perhaps it takes one person to make up a story about being spat on and now that's the keystone to being validated as a Vietnam veteran so little white lies get told. They might not even be lies per se, memory is a tricky thing, you can remember things that didn't happen, especially if it's suggested that they did or should have happened (Shaw).

Also, before it even gets suggested, I am not implying that all veterans are liars, I'm merely reiterating that they are human.

Shaw, Julia. "What Experts Wish You Knew about False Memories." *Scientific American Blog Network*. N.p., 07 Aug. 2016. Web. 18 May 2017.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Rational conclusions.

by Joshua Meeker - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 5:55 PM

Robert Shaws letter was pretty great, I will definitely agree with you there. Because he does go about his response in a really interesting way . He never claims that the "spitting" incidents were real or fake, therefore he does not ad to the confusion of ignorance. But also takes on another step he goes on to speak about his trials to find work; which grabs the reader much more than the previous argument since yes getting spit in the face sucks, but not being able to find work just because you were a vet is a hell of a lot worse in my opinion(and I'm sure most would agree). I couldn't even imagine going to fight in some other country for several years just to come back and not even secure yourself a place for work. I myself found this really interesting since I did some time in the military myself. Whenever I tell an employer they usually like to hear that and I usually end up employed because of it. Blows my mind how society changes in such little time.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Letters included by Postelle, Gordon, and Isaac.

by Maile Sur - Tuesday, May 16, 2017, 8:03 PM

Regarding the first prompt:

If I were to include any of the letters for the Register Guard, I would choose Thomas W. Postelle's, Rodney Gordon's and Herman Isaac's. Based specifically off the fact that there are first-person accounts that state there were instances of hostility towards veterans, I feel that all of the other letters to the Register Guard are pointless. Just because there isn't anything published online that states someone was spat on or someone was verbally abused doesn't mean it didn't happen. The fact that three people wrote letters to the editor in our local newspaper describing the hostility they endured completely disregards anyone else claiming that "spitting never happened." Postelle stated in his letter specifically, "As an Army private flying on Delta Air lines to visit my family while on leave, I was spat upon" (Postelle, Register Guard). Gordon also talks about his experience and says that he "experienced being spat at and was the subject of verbal abuse" (Gordon, Register Guard). These are first person accounts that spitting at veterans did occur, which in my opinion would be the best letters to include in Patriots.

I do, however, feel that there needs to be more of a back story included or a "note to the reader" if any of these letters were included just because they are a little hard to follow if you don't know the context to their letters.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Letters included by Postelle, Gordon, and Isaac.

by Kyle Martinson - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 5:37 PM

Those letter that you said I agree with for the simple reason they are first hand accounts. You are correct in saying that just because something isn't published doesn't mean it didn't happen. Personal experience and personal statements are best resource.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

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Re: Letters included by Postelle, Gordon, and Isaac.

by Joshua Meeker - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 6:06 PM

This whole debate almost seemed pretty silly in a way didn't it? I mean of course spitting at veterans is not great , but is it really that relevant for there to be this heated debate about it? The way I see it, if people are willing to protest and fight the police in the streets while rioting then I'm sure they would have had no problem spitting at vets. People were really pissed off with a war that was entirely too long, nasty things were bound to happen. And ultimately in the grand scheme of things Vets getting "spit on" is peanuts compared to the other things they had to endure at home

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Letters included by Postelle, Gordon, and Isaac.

by Brent Roessler - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 6:42 PM

Well said Joshua. It's pretty nuts to think we are still wasting energy on this issue. I agree with you that it shouldn't be so hard to believe veterans were spat on. In the heart of the moment, with anger your primary emotion, people tend to do some rather uncharacteristic, disrespectful, and even harmful things to others. I'm believe, without doubt veterans we spat on and I wouldn't change my belief unless there was undisputable evidence proving otherwise.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Letters included by Postelle, Gordon, and Isaac.

by William Wyatt - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 11:27 PM

Hey Maile,

I certainly agree with you. Personally, if I were the author I would probably only include first-hand accounts, whether it be from soldiers, loved ones, or anyone who actually observed hostile instances. I Wouldn't necessarily say that all the other letters in the Register Guard are pointless, but would say they aren't as pertinent as the first hand accounts from individuals like Gordon, Postelle, and Isaac. Primary sources get about as close as possible to the actual events that occurred. Whenever a story is retold, details get distorted, just like that old telephone game most of us probably played in grade school. In Lieu of that, just because a source is primary doesn't mean it's necessarily true, and should be scrutinized regardless.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Blurring the lines of fact and opinion

by Maile Sur - Tuesday, May 16, 2017, 9:33 PM

In regards to question 2:

I feel that the letters to the editor tell us that there were many different stories circulating over the Vietnam War—what was real, what wasn't, was kind of left up for interpretation. I think it would be interesting to see what Bob Thompson would say after reading the other veteran's accounts of their experiences of being spat on, just to see if it would change his opinion from his prior statements. As far as major issues concerning historical accuracy go, I definitely think people should stay away from making such bold claims if there really is no way of knowing the truth, or if there isn't enough information to back it up. I definitely think it is valid for someone like Thompson to have the opinion or be under the impression that something like spitting on veterans wouldn't happen, but for him (or anyone for that matter) to make a claim that it didn't happen at all, is detrimental to the accuracy of historical information. I say that because if someone were to find only his letter to the editor, and no other information, and it states "No one spat on Vietnam vets" and "In fact, it appears the 'spitting on veterans' story is completely false," one would have reason to believe that he is correct and spitting did not occur.

I think the comparison to be made between the Register Guard letters and the audio and video clips is that there are first person accounts from veterans in both. I think where the three sources contrast, however, is in the validity of their information. I feel that some of what was said in the letters to the editor were not accurate and give a false depiction, whereas what was said in the audio and video clips is accurate since they were POWs and they experienced everything firsthand.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: Blurring the lines of fact and opinion

by Stanley Cates - Thursday, May 18, 2017, 3:58 PM

"...if someone were to find only his letter to the editor, and no other information, and it states "No one spat on Vietnam vets" and "In fact, it appears the 'spitting on veterans' story is completely false," one would have reason to believe that he is correct and spitting did not occur."

I disagree. If we're thinking critically I think it's more practical to say that one would have reason to investigate his claim.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Re: Blurring the lines of fact and opinion

by Maile Sur - Thursday, May 18, 2017, 8:09 PM

Can you genuinely say that you wouldn't have reason to believe his claim? In every instance that you read something do you investigate the claim?

If we're speaking "practically" then I would say that I wouldn't investigate his claim. When I am given information in a class setting, I give it the benefit of the doubt and take most of what the claim is saying as the truth. I understand where you're coming from, but if we're going to use practicality then I would have to say I wouldn't go through the trouble of investigating his claim. Maybe that's just me?

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Blurring the lines of fact and opinion

by Stanley Cates - Saturday, May 20, 2017, 1:02 PM

According to your response to my post *you* seem to have reason not to believe his claim. So why suddenly is his claim to credible for the sake of your argument, but non-credible for the sake of mine? Also yes, when I encounter new and significant information or claims I typically briefly look into them, particularly in an academic setting.

The trouble with your idea of being practical is that academics isn't practical, it's critical. Being practical leads to the spread of misinformation and just believing whatever you're told. Don't get me wrong, I've been fooled before, but the point is that taking everything at face value isn't academic thinking.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Register Guard Letters Question #2

by Joshua Meeker - Wednesday, May 17, 2017, 12:36 PM

The stories from the letters from the editor points to the conclusion that history is/will always be limited by the perspective of the individual. This is to say that no two people in the war will have the EXACT same experience. Therefore opinions and facts about history must always include something to compare it to. That said, when looking at history it is more helpful to not only look at each event with a microscope but to also get the zoomed out sight of the events transpiring. The letters to the editor was well constructed (could have been longer) since it gave multiple points of view. It almost plays the game of "he said, she said ". People agree on the topic or people disagree. But the important thing is to realize that things are never black and white. Especially on the debate of the spitting on veterans. Some say it never happened and some say it did. How do you really know what transpired? To answer that for myself I looked at what everyone had to say. When the responses seem more emotion driven than factual I take that to account. I prefer to listen more to the people who are calm and expressive about the experience since they are usually not there to merely slander someone or work hard to defend their position. Robert Shaw for example did not seem emotionally heated when he wrote his point of view. Even though he did not say that he was spit on he did explain his experience when trying to find work. Given his experience it is easy to see that the treatment of Veterans was not optimal, to say the least. I could easily see that certain veterans were spit on. American people were frustrated with the war and they couldn't go to government officials to release their frustrations directly, so it seems that the Vets were almost a scape goat.

So as a student who is concerned with the accuracy of information to regards to Vietnam, I realized that studying history is a multi-step process and all information should be taken into account, no matter how ridiculous it sounds. I like to use analogy and compare history to detective work. When detectives want to figure out something the look up multiple sources. They don't just go and question one person and call it a day; they go around and get a panoramic view of the subject in question. This gives them a more complete, or less bias opinion, than they had before. So when studying the accounts of our soldier I do the same. I give them my undivided attention and then I compare it to other sources of information and then try to reach what I find to be factual or most likely to have happened.

When comparing the "letters to the editor" to the "soldier speak"/"POW" it is safe to say that the way they are dishing up the information is quite different. In the letters there is more of a debate feeling and you are receiving your information from a source that is split on what actually happened. In the soldiers speak and POW videos the information was more unanimous which make it seem like these events happened without question. Like I said Im sure that veterans were spit on. Especially were anti war protests were very strong, like they were in California. This leads me to believe that vets being spit on wasn't really a question; the question of where they were spit on would be more advantageous.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Re: Register Guard Letters Question #2

by Tyler Ritter - Thursday, May 18, 2017, 2:36 PM

I completely agree that history and first person accounts are dynamic, and change from point of view to point of view. I really like when you said learning history is a multi step process and it does need to be treated as such. I like to think that just because something didn't happen to one person, it COULD happen to another. The POW's account are very interesting and unsettling. These first person accounts seem to be very validated through the stories each of them shared. (I.E they all talked about the stuff that happened when they where prisoners of war).

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: Register Guard Letters Question #2

by Alexandria Villa - Thursday, May 18, 2017, 3:00 PM

I really think you hit the nail on the head there, especially with your statement on showing how history and events are not ever the neat black and white categories we sometimes wish them to be. Each person involved will have their own inherent truth, based on what the individuals involved saw, felt, and knew to be true at the time. I think that, in the best and worst case scenario, all we can hope to do is educate the general public about both sides of every story, but drawing the line at leaving out events that are more likely, or proven to

be, true. It isn't about being correct (though it would be nice), it is about allowing all the evidence and all the human attributes to be laid on the table for all to see, so they can draw their own conclusions. Even if that conclusion is inherently flawed or warped, at least the rest of us can know we tried our best to promote truth without having to stuff it into someone's face and force them to acknowledge it the way one, single individual saw it.

I just would like to point out, like I did early on in this class, that half of the message is dictated by the audience it reaches out to. Just like how the stereotype is for toys, 'plastic cars are for boys, dolls are for girls', most places in charge of getting information out will 'tailor' that information to their target audience. In doing that, something's are omitted, lost, glossed over, or just downright ignored. I feel like this is an important piece of looking into any sources that present these accounts, letters, or other information about touchy subjects, like the Vietnam War.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: Register Guard Letters Question #2

by Joshua Meeker - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 6:24 PM

"half the message is dictated by the audience it reaches out to." Very keen observations Alexandria, and one that I frequently forget to think about. Still would be interested to know why they did the PBS series the way they did. Especially towards the beginning of the videos when it seemed like the US was the "bad guy".

I'm glad to you agree on me on the concept of historical knowledge. Specifically the point where "it isn't about being correct". I feel that a lot of students in general like to have something (idea, belief, bias) they can hold onto. And when someone challenges them they throw a fit . But you see that ultimately that is weakness, since while your clinging to your belief you wont make room for someone else, even when their ideas could add to your own. Which reminds me of a quote from Bruce Lee -*"Empty your cup so that it may be filled; become devoid to gain totality."*

I feel this quote is a great underlying principle when studying anything, because your right it would be nice if we could be "correct" but there really is no such thing due to the complexity of people, and storytelling.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Trust your Gut

by Brent Roessler - Wednesday, May 17, 2017, 5:07 PM

QUESTION 1:

If I were the author of Patriots, I would stick with the stories I felt were most genuine and honest. The source of our information is so curtail when it comes to figuring out the truth. I was extremely turned off by the second Register Guard letter by Bob Thompson of Eugene. His

credibility lacks any real and raw data. He only speaks of the “lack of proof” of spitting instead of going straight to the source for authentic information (such as interviewing veterans.)

I did really enjoy a couple of the follow up letters (Rodney Gordon and Herman Isaacs) aimed at correcting Thompson and his uneducated statement that “No one spat on Vietnam vets.” First off, I get a sense of authenticity when reading these letters. They include times and places. They convey passion in their words which makes me get a sense that these people lived through these events. Their statements aren’t bias. It’s a matter of what happened, not what I think.

As far as changing anything, or adding a “note to the reader”, I wouldn’t. I believe what makes these stories so authentic is to remove all opinion. The opinion of the Author of the book isn’t what I am interested in; it’s the first hand testimony from actual soldiers/ vets that provide me with the creditable knowledge I seek.

Amongst a few of the letters I enjoyed I also appreciated a story in American POW’s. 4:33.) I never caught the veterans name; he was a POW who had an incredible event take place during his time as a prisoner. The story was first person. He never said, “I think” or “maybe this happened”. The stories that I feel I gain the most authentic knowledge from are the first person, non-bias, clear, clean and concise ones.

QUESTION 2:

Learning the truth is hard to come by when we aren’t directly involved in the event being studied. But, I do believe the best way to gain pieces of the truth is to ask questions to creditable individuals who have directly been involved in the event. As humans we also cultivate the ability to have a “gut feeling” or “a hunch” one might call it. This also should be something you pay very close attention too. If we feel the source is at all shady, misleading, or dis-genuine we must certainly not take the information as gospel. Peer reviews are also another great way to give creditability to the source. Has the letter or testimony been reviewed by creditable peer’s for authenticity?

Though both the letters and audio stories were great material, I felt the audio stories gave me a more real sense of what the Vietnam War was really like. I understand there will always be a little room for embellishment or sugar coating, but that’s where we as students have to be careful. We don’t have the ability to know for sure who is telling us 100% of the truth all the time, but we can use multiple sources, check for peer reviews, and trust our gut.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



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Spitting on the Vets

by Kyle Martinson - Wednesday, May 17, 2017, 6:31 PM

Question 1

I would use the letters by Thomas Postelle, Rodney Gordon, Herman Isaacs, and Robert Shaw. All of these are first hand accounts of what happened as a returning veteran. Whereas the others are mostly criticisms of others peoples work. The note to the reader I would include would say, “These are accounts of personal experiences of Vietnam veterans.”

Question 2

In my opinion it can tell us is that there are different experiences even for the smallest things. Also that everyone sees things different from each other. One major issue I have noticed is that everyone had a different experience. That makes the testimonials different to a point where you could find completely opposite experiences for the same issue, such as the spitting discussed in the letters. The letters that I would use are closely related to the audio and video resources in my opinion.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) 1

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Re: Spitting on the Vets

by Tyler Ritter - Thursday, May 18, 2017, 2:39 PM

The fact that one veterans account of what happened can be different then someone else's is very interesting and made me want to research more about how veterans where treated when they arrived back in the states, or even on the plane back. Although, these different accounts are hard to verify alone, they can be deemed relatively truthful when many accounts come together to say the same thing.

Sum of ratings:0 (1) 0

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Re: Spitting on the Vets

by John Anderson - Saturday, May 20, 2017, 12:20 PM

Why not use all the letters? If you only use some of the letters to try and define an event you lose perspective. I feel that if you use any, you have to use all. If we have reached a point where we as students only pick and choose facts to present out of context then we are no better then despots telling a false narrative to an unsuspecting public. Yes, some of these letters are not as factual as others, but let that be its own evidence, add a note about the inaccuracies, but don't pick and choose what you feel is valid and what is not.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) 1

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Re: Spitting on the Vets

by Alexandria Villa - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 10:33 PM

I definitely understand where you are coming from, but I have to say that there is something to the 'accuracy to the truth' mentality. After all, in a broad sense, if you use everything submitted, you can run into places where idea's and truth become scattered. Every letter may have had a legitimate thing to state about the issue, but some will be further from the main idea than others. This can lead to a confused audience, who then loses interest and comprehension, and then who may deem the entire object of discussion as something not worthy of their time. It is hard to think about that, but it is a chance that can end up happening. I know that I have come across different bits of information that came together to create a jumbled mess, and having a confused audience may be worse than an ignorant one.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) 2

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Re: Spitting on the Vets

by William Wyatt - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 11:43 PM

Hey John,

I do see your point. Why not use all the letters? at first it does seem like a good idea because perspective wouldn't be diluted with lack of information. When I think about it logistically though, It seems that hundreds possibly thousands of individual letters would end up becoming a book/novel of it's own. I Think another great point of yours is to never pick and choose what you feel is valid or not, but rather take all the evidence, note the inaccuracies, and do our best to find historical facts.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Hypothetical addition to Patriots

by Maxwell Ahrenkiel - Wednesday, May 17, 2017, 6:47 PM

If I were the author of Patriots I would definitely add Herman Isaac's and Robert L. Shaw's letters. I would place them next to each other and leave a note to the reader explaining the details as to why these letters were written (in response to Bob Thompson). I think both of these letters did a good job of showing how some soldiers were treated poorly after the war, but they captured this in different ways. Herman Isaac wrote about his own experience of being spat on and insulted, while Shaw wrote about how difficult it was to find a job because of his past as a soldier. Along with this, I would add part of the Soldiers Speak audio file. Specifically from 6:00-end, where you get to hear how some soldiers were treated when they got back home, as it relates to the letters. I think the final minutes of the audio file did a good job of giving listeners a lot to think about. It says," at the time it was hard for me to understand why they were doing it, but uh, through the years I realized that's what this country is all about... You can protest the war, but don't protest the soldiers... I did what I had to do and by god, you'd a done it too, or died... When you see death, you have a whole different perspective on life... Nobody gives up their life for their country. They have their life torn away from them. Nobody, nobody gives up their life for their country."(6:00 into Soldiers Speak)

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Register Guard Letters

by Brandon Dibble - Wednesday, May 17, 2017, 10:27 PM

After reading the assigned letters printed in The Register Guard from local Vietnam War veterans about their experiences upon returning home from Southeast Asia, it seems that a lot of veterans became the targets of the anti-war protest. When we consider this relatively small sample size of replies printed in The Register Guard similarly stating that these incidences of spitting and verbal abuse did in fact occur, I feel that they can shed a little perspective on the larger scale of the situation.

An interesting thing I have noticed after listening to the Vietnam soldier audio file and then reading the letters is that it seems these protests and acts of hostility towards returning veterans seemed to be most prolific in large cities where the protesting of the war was most common such as San Francisco, California as stated by the local veterans. It would make

sense that the returning soldier were more likely to find trouble in these areas more so than other parts of the country. A soldier returning to California from Vietnam may have been differently than a soldier returning to Montana for example. That may be why stories of these times can vary so greatly, being that where you are returning to from the war played a big part in how you were treated.

I personally feel that these letters from veterans on their return home is possibly some of the best information we can get considering this topic of how veterans were treated because they were the ones who lived through it and had to endure the hardships it brought upon them. I also feel that the similarity between these replies speaks in favor of the authenticity of these veteran reports in being mistreated.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Register Guard Letters

by John Anderson - Saturday, May 20, 2017, 12:16 PM

To some extent you have to understand the limitations of stories, I feel. What I mean by that is this; I grew up in California, and my mother was part of the anti-war movement in the late 60's and early 70's in SanFran. She watched her friends and her boyfriend go to war, possibly to die, and watched her other friends burn their draft cards. This was a time of great strife, not just for vets, but for their loved ones as well, and it still has ripples that are felt in the area today. When you have a very negative and polar reaction people are more likely to remember that reaction. An individual returning home from the war is more likely to vividly remember being spit at, then being hugged and welcomed home. Context, historical and societal, must always be taken into account when digesting these types of sources, because you can never tell how much is 'heightened reality.'

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Register Guard Letters

by Brandon Dibble - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 12:26 PM

John,

While I do see where you are coming from with this information, even if the veterans did suffer from some type of "heightened reality" these incidences do in fact seem to have occurred and that is the point behind this week's forum. When you take in all the information we are presented, these atrocities were recorded by many of the veterans and they all seem to share the story and/or have very large similarities. Even the veteran (Robert L. Shaw) who said he was not spat on/at admitted to having to go through a time of great strife himself, not being able to find work or being the subject of violent encounters. Even though he agrees with Thompson's letter saying that spitting never happened, he experienced being slandered along with many other forums of disrespectful behavior and that ties into the other veteran's stories who encountered that same type of behavior.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Register Guard Letters

by William Wyatt - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 10:58 PM

John,

I definitely see your point. It certainly was a time of great strife, not just for the veterans, but for the loved ones of those who had to go off and fight. Its important to realize that feelings t'words veterans weren't as polar as portrayed. I Agree with your statement about very negative actions being more likely to be remembered than the good ones. Such as, verbal abuse and spitting at veterans. It's important to remember that many of the anti-war protesters where those who had love for their friends, spouses, and children, only protesting to in an effort to get them home.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

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Re: Register Guard Letters

by Sydney Zuelke - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 10:02 PM

You make a valid point about the fact that soldiers' experiences surely varied from city to city. My question would then be, how do we make sure that one experience (or one region's majority) doesn't speak for everybody? How do we make sure that something isn't blown out of proportion, or on the other hand, underestimated? That's the tough part about history, I think, is finding that middle ground and accounting for different groups of people.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Register Guard Letters, stories 'worth' using, and my personal thought bubble on it

by Alexandria Villa - Wednesday, May 17, 2017, 11:08 PM

If I was the author of *Patriots*, I would try to use only the stories or letters that pertained to the subject, ones that were clearly written and stayed true to the topics at hand. I would also try to keep the 'horror' level to a minimum, even though in some cases those hellish moments are the ones that matter, and the ones that leave a lasting impression on the general public. I think it is important to leave a note of sorts in the beginning of certain accounts, whether it be for personal stories or for the letters. It shows the reader, no matter who they are, what they know, or where they come from, that another human took the time to 'pen' the words they wanted others to read. It would give those accounts more depth, as well as allow the reader a 'viewfinder', of sorts, in which to get a glimpse of why this person matters. I think the notes also give the writer a sense of credibility, even though this does not give them immediate reprieve from the idea of whether or not they are truthful, or even historically accurate. As many have mentioned before, myself included, there is no such thing as being completely truthful, as human experience will leave certain way of viewing things, a certain bias, if you will. All one can do is allow those who seem to 'fully' know how it felt and what happened during any time, the ability to convey it to others.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Register Guard Letters, stories 'worth' using, and my personal thought bubble on it

by Maxwell Ahrenkiel - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 5:59 PM

Alexandria,

I agree with you completely, and I'm glad you made this response. I think you make a great point when talking about keeping the 'horror' level to a minimum. I think it's important to do this, and be aware of this, because having 'horror' is really what gets a lot of things 'clicks, or views' in today's world. Also when somebody is focused on the horror aspect, it very easy to get carried away, and that's when facts and details commonly get varied in some way.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Re: Register Guard Letters, stories 'worth' using, and my personal thought bubble on it

by William Wyatt - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 10:35 PM

Hello Alexandria,

I definitively see your point about only using stories or letters that are honest and pertain to the subject. I Would also argue that as the author, whether its impossible or not, should strive to include little to no bias, especially with regards to achieving historical fact. With certain respects, reducing bias means that thoughtfully written letters, articles... are posed in a ways that allows others to offer their opinions and counter arguments in a respectful and honest environment.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Re: Register Guard Letters

by Sydney Zuelke - Wednesday, May 17, 2017, 11:32 PM

If I was the author of Patriots, I would include all of the letters, except perhaps Bob Thompson's "No oe spat on Vietnam Vets". This is not because I'm assuming all vets were or were not spat on, but simply because of the historical inaccuracies, omission, and ignorance the letter seems to carry. Suggesting a quick Google search doesn't do justice what historians and newspapers have accomplished in all those years. Both the audio and the video make claims that the American soldiers were treated poorly when returning home from the war, by anti-war protesters. In the "Soldiers Speak" audio, one Vietnam vet remembers stepping off a bus at Travis Air Force Base in Oakland, Americans throw tomatoes at him. He claims, "It was hard for me to understand why, but through the years I realized that's what this country is about." I believe he means this country is about free speech. The book claims to be one that tells all sides of the story, and depicts several different experiences – this is what the letters do (for the most part). I would include a note to the reader, offering some context, using all the historical information I could, and disclaiming that we are posting these letters as fact.

I do believe that these stories tell us that no one truth or one story is always wrong or right – there were so many soldiers, and so many perspectives, and so many experiences. We may be able to find a clear majority – but that doesn't mean they speak for everyone. It's easy to feel a certain type of way when listening to both the audio and the POW video – these soldiers

did indeed see things no one should have to see. Some were tortured for several years, some were (somewhat ironically) forcibly used in the very anti-war propaganda that caused their own people to turn against them when they can home. BUT even with these emotional stories, we still don't have the full picture. That's what our history books are expected to do. Most of these letters mirror the sentiment of the audio and the video, that even today, soldiers are blamed. As one letter stated: "We are harassed back then, and now Thompson wants to keep the flame alive. What a country." Ultimately, we have to admit that everyone has their own agenda. But we should also recognize that these soldiers seem to overwhelmingly have the same horrible experiences – and that should be acknowledged.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Register Guard Letters

by John Anderson - Saturday, May 20, 2017, 12:01 PM

I disagree with your claim that Thompson's letter should be omitted. I think that the inconsistencies and the omissions are precisely why it should be included. Much of the war in Vietnam was won, as they said, on the streets of New York. The war was more then for the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese, it was also for the soul of the US. Thompson's poor understanding and lack of empathy are just a small example of a much larger issue that we all face, even today, with modern societal issues. If we cannot show the 'bad examples' as context for how one should present good examples then we cannot grow as historians and students in general.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Register Guard Letters

by Sydney Zuelke - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 9:55 PM

I appreciate your opinion! I was torn about my decision to possibly omit his letter, because I do think that including his letter could provide some insight into different issues we have as a society, and further lead to important discussions -- obviously his letter led to all those other people writing in afterwards in rebuttal -- so it did some good. So I see definitely see your point.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

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Re: Register Guard Letters

by Brandon Dibble - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 12:28 PM

Sydney,

On the other side of the fence, I am going to agree with the omission of Thompson's letter. He seems to have no "first-hand" experience about the subject of soldiers being treated poorly upon returning home and offers little in the letter except to try and prove (poorly) that it did not happen. We are presented multiple accounts of this type of behavior happening from actual veterans (I am unsure if Thompson is a Vietnam veteran, it did not seem like it from the letter) and Thompson comes along to tell everyone they are wrong because he couldn't find any information about this subject personally. If Thompson was a

veteran of the Vietnam War, maybe he did not personally come into contact with this negative behavior upon his arrival home but that does not mean that other veterans did not experience being spat on/at or other forms of blatant disrespect. What Thompson says in his letter directly contradicts the following letters sent to the register guard from actual soldiers who experienced the return home and pretty much calls all of these veteran's liars even when they share these stories and have many similarities between them.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) 2

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Re: Register Guard Letters

by Stanley Cates - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 4:54 PM

"He seems to have no "first-hand" experience about the subject of soldiers being treated poorly upon returning home..."; well, presumably neither do most of the people in this forum. So by extension of your own logic I can argue that your argument is invalid. Admittedly, Thompson chose poor sources, but the fact remains that we cannot, for multiple reasons, take every account of anecdotal evidence as credible; corroboration with documentation is important. Even though, and maybe because, I don't necessarily agree with its content I would not omit Thompson's letter. Like John said, you need poor examples to contrast good ones, and it does display another perspective that can offer insight to how the war was seen.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) 2

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the Spitting games... or maybe the Spittening

by John Anderson - Friday, May 19, 2017, 4:01 PM

I agree with reasonable discourse and sick burns as much as the next guy, but sometimes you have to ask yourself how far people are willing to argue simply because someone will respond to them. Which brings me to this point: should these letters be used in a book such as the Patriots text? While I feel like I haven't read a sick burn like this one in awhile: "he could not find it on Google and he read a book about spitting," I feel like having arguments like these require a great amount of context. I think that some of these can most assuredly shed light on some of the events that people may have experienced, but many of these letters a dripping with bias and ambiguous support. It is important to have these statements as a way of framing the past as something that wasn't so golden. The flower children, much like modern protesters, did not simply use peaceful non-violence to try and accomplish their goals. People were, and always have been, pissed at not being heard. When people are pissed, they take out that anger on the first person or object that reflects that anger, in this case, the Vet. This makes logical sense. But, and this is a problem that we as students in the age of information face, simply resorting to taking "junk off the Internet" is still a bad option upon which to rely.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) 2

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Re: the Spitting games... or maybe the Spittening

by Stanley Cates - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 4:32 PM

“...but sometimes you have to ask yourself how far people are willing to argue simply because someone will respond to them.” That is a great question Mr. Anderson, let's find out.

As for your statement: “I think that some of these [letters to the editor] can most assuredly shed light on some of the events that people may have experienced, but many of these letters a dripping with bias and ambiguous support.” Couldn't virtually any account in the Patriots book also be described as lousy with bias? So what makes the bias in these letters more virile than those in the testimonies of the Appy book? Or is the bias in the Appy book off set by the fact that the bias is in multiple directions?

“People were, and always have been, pissed at not being heard.” Perhaps, but doesn't that presuppose that no one was paying attention? Certainly, there was a certain faction that would just assume the opposition to the side; but I don't think it's a far stretch of the imagination to say that Johnson, and the American armed forces, wanted the war to be over just as badly, if not more so, than the protestors did. The trouble comes from trying to determine the best way to come about that goal rather than there being differing goals. I think that's important to keep in mind when discussing historical events, that there does not necessarily need to be opposing ends in order to have conflict; the means can be just as precarious.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: the Spitting games... or maybe the Spittinging

by John Anderson - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 6:40 PM

I don't know stanley, just how far is too far? I think that your point about the books is spot on, which is why I firmly believe that you have to include all these accounts if you include any. As to your second statement, I fully believe, and this is based on personal testimony, that sometimes people are pissed regardless of whether or not they are heard.

That being said, I discussed in another post how it is important to understand that many of the people living in this era were not polar opposites. My mother was anti-war, but she also supported the young men who were drafted into service. Many of the protesters watched their loved ones go off to combat, and, contrary to a more modern belief, I still think that the vast majority of individuals in the armed forces would have preferred not to have been there at all.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Register Guard Letters

by William Wyatt - Friday, May 19, 2017, 11:59 PM

Hey guys,

When held as a POW Jim Stockdale recounts his interaction with Vien Quoc, a propaganda expert in Vietnam who said, “You know about the war as a weapons, he said the Vietnamese people know we can't compete with you on the battlefield. It's not that, that wins wars anyway, its national will. And When the American people get the idea of what this war is all about they will lose interest in pursuing it. We are going to win this war on the streets of New York.” Jim

later states that POWs became “a major factor in the strategy of the Vietnamese, we were a branch of the anti-American war movement.” (Jim Stockdale American POWs video) Jim’s portrayal of his conversation with Vien Quoc is a great example of the mental struggle POWs endured. To know that once you have been captured you become a strategy for enemy success. Another example of mental struggle was the isolation imprisoned soldiers suffered. “If you get isolated, thats when the trouble begins, and you can’t do that. You have to communicate at virtually any cost. If you get caught and tortured for a while, thats just the overhead, but you do it anyway.” (9:30 American POWs video) This is another good example of mental struggles POWs underwent during years of imprisonment. “For a year I just layed on the floor trying to make my parts move. It took my a while to get up. Finally I got of a windowsill and I stretched and relocated my elbow, got my shoulder strait and began a long slow healing process.” A Great example of how terrible, and intense physical torture was for American POWs. (14:16 American POWs video) To me, these are a few of the many examples given in the American POWs video that are relevant to, or could be added to the Patriots book.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Register Guard Letters

by John Anderson - Saturday, May 20, 2017, 11:57 AM

While I feel that there needs to be more context given from the perspective of Vets who endured physical and psychological torture, how much worse was the torture when they returned home and became the subjects of national hatred? I feel like parts of these letters at the very least need to be included in the account of events that transpired to show that this war was fought on all fronts, not just in the jungles of Vietnam.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Register Guard Letters

by William Wyatt - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 10:16 PM

Hey John,

I Agree. How horrible was it that U.S. citizens showed such disrespect and hatred t'words Vietnam veterans. Many individuals from the anti-war movement didn't show empathy, or even try to understand what it must have been like. Rodney Gordon a Vietnam vet living in Eugene said, "When I got off the plane in San Francisco, I experienced being spat at and was the subject of verbal abuse." (Rodney Gordon Register Guard Letters) Strange to imagine what it must have felt like, fighting and watching friends die, all to come home and be treated like a monster.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Guard Letters #2

by Maxwell Ahrenkiel - Sunday, May 21, 2017, 5:37 PM

To answer question two, a compilation of letters such as this can show us several things. For one they can show how everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but along with that, it can reveal the wide range of POV's associated with any particular event. The major issue that can often be displayed is that this can also make it harder to find the truth because there are just more sides of the story that could either be true or false. When hearing from the soldiers, an issue that may arise is that some soldiers may not know all of the facts to their complete truth. They were there simply to do their job and get out. Also due to bias and the pure intensity of war, it's quite possible that some details may be a little misguided.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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