

HST 195: History of Vietnam War Sp18 (Escobar 41945)

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Week 7 Forum Register Guard Letters

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Register Guard Letters

by [Joe Escobar](#) - Saturday, May 12, 2018, 12:45 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, something that describes which one of the questions you are addressing. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Register Guard Letters

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Re: Register Guard Letters



by [Jonathen Gray](#) - Monday, May 14, 2018, 4:10 PM

The Register Guard letters are, for the most part, very tit-for-tat and non-structured. Which makes it hard to use as individual testimonies for use in creating an understandable record of a historical event. While I was unable to find concrete background information on Michael Rooke-Ley it does appear he is a commentator offering his interpretation of national events rather than first hand experience. The replies vary wildly on what I would consider applicable or even consisting of reality.

The Tom Preuss response was spouting opinions, insults, and baseless accusations and would be the only one not worth even considering a worthwhile perspective. Bob Thompson seems to be another commentator on world events reiterating what a book has already told the world without adding any personal or professional insight. Thomas Postell, Rodney Gordon, Herman Isaacs, and Robert Shaw are among the veteran experiences I would consider sharing if I was the author of Patriots. A note to the reader really wouldn't be necessary as it shows a boots on the ground experience that demonstrates individual experiences contrasted with other experiences. A notable protester would be a valued asset in giving more perspective. The important thing is to dissuade hyperbolic exaggeration. "Spitting on soldiers NEVER happened" or "spitting on soldiers ALWAYS happened" is improbable. Especially for something as hard to prove such as spitting and the excessive length of the Vietnam war. It's not as if there was an active movement to record spitting as they were happening.

Sum of ratings: [3 \(1\)](#)

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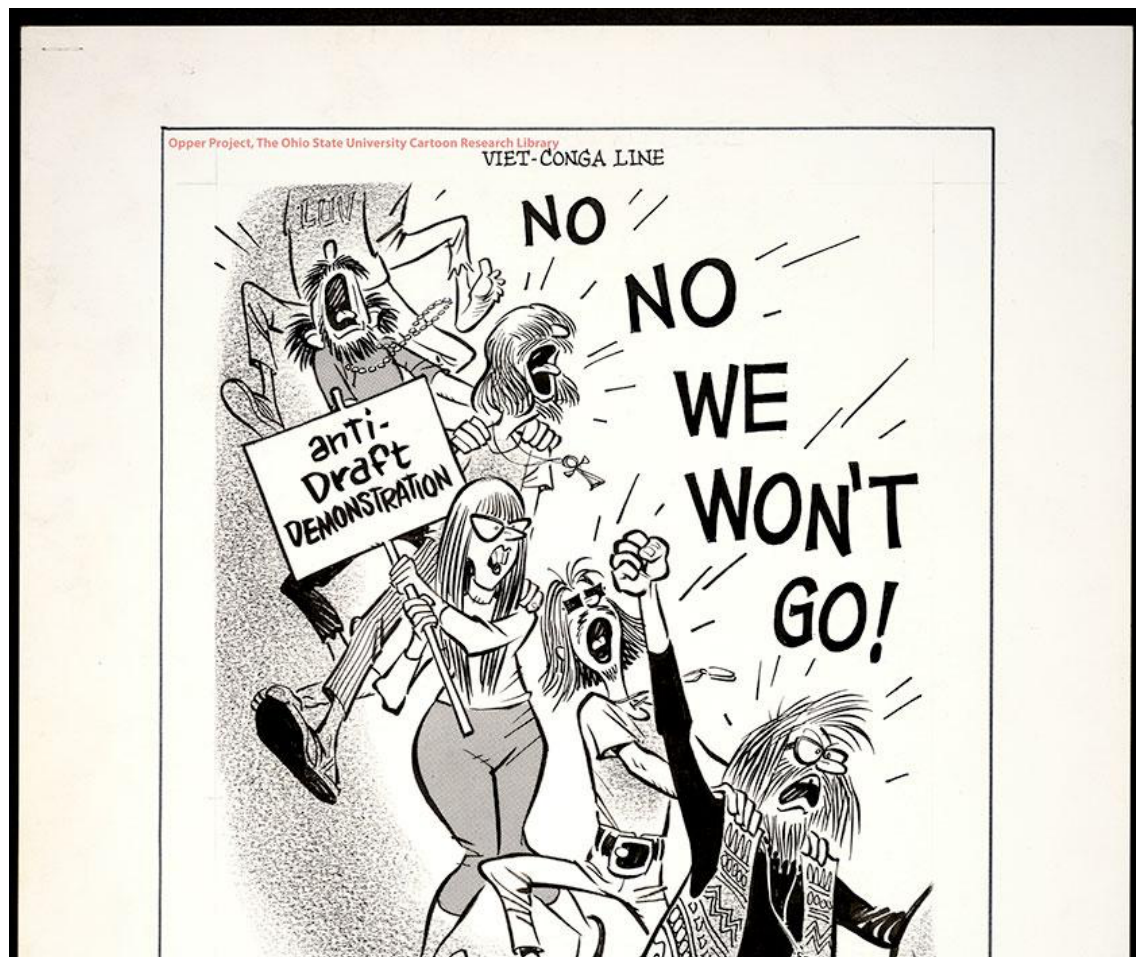
a little rant on Preuss

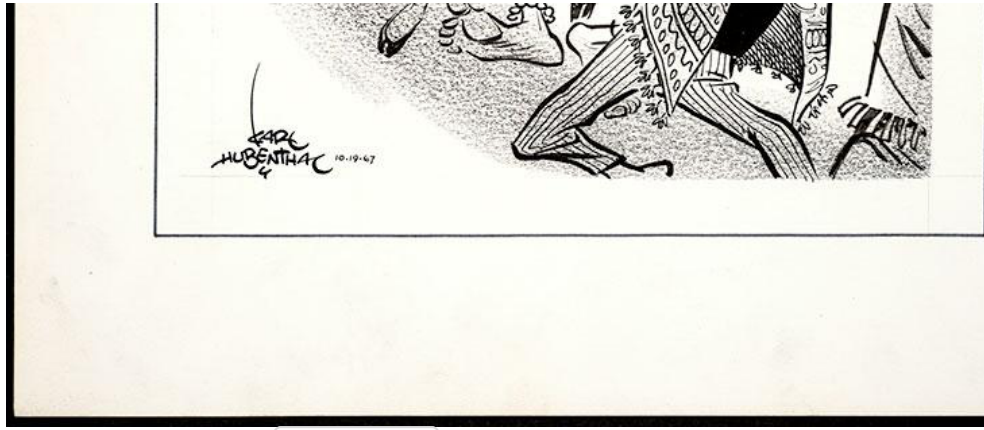
by [Kate Adkisson](#) - Friday, May 18, 2018, 7:55 PM

I also found the letters on the offensive rather than being informative, such as Tom Preuss' response. Tom Preuss accuses Rooke-Ley of being a part of an effort to ensure the defeat of America in Vietnam. The idea that anti-war protesters were the reason we "lost" the war is laughable to me, as even though some anti-war protests may have boosted North Vietnamese morale, it didn't create the drive to obtain an independent Vietnam that the soldiers and guerillas gave their all for. Preuss then accuses Rooke-Ley of advocating for a totalitarian state through abolishing borders, religion, and judgment. From the small segment of writing we are given from Rooke-Ley, it is clear that he opposed the invasion of Iraq and the discrimination towards Muslim/Middle Eastern people that was emerging. I believe he was trying to draw a connection between the invasion of Vietnam and the racism that followed towards the Vietnamese people, such as dehumanizing them and calling them gooks. Preuss somehow interprets this into Rooke-Ley being a traitorous commie who is responsible for the bloodshed. Tom Preuss is recycling old ideas from the

Hawks of the 60s and 70s. Their mindset doesn't allow any dissent or criticism towards our government or military. Being against the actions of our country automatically makes you the enemy. Marching against the war automatically makes you supporting the communists. In my view, this couldn't be further from the truth.

The people of this country, especially the young, set the tone for what they want to be right and what they want to be wrong. The actions of the few rich at the top don't dictate what is "American" and what is patriotic. The people of this country supporting the other people of their country is patriotism. And sending off young men, willing or unwilling, to die for a cause in the interest of the few at the top, was a negative action against the people, thus the protests. The protests aren't against the country, they are against the few men controlling the actions of the many. People like Tom Preuss who get swept up in the cult of America is the Best Country on Earth and if You Say Otherwise You're my Enemy can't understand that our country and its leaders mess up, inflict damage and pain, and commit atrocities worldwide in the name of peace or freedom. Accepting that truth is hard. It is much easier to blame the protesters, the dissenters, for our failures, rather than the leadership. Acknowledging that the people who run your country, really who control a lot of aspects of your life, may be wrong, is a scary and unsettling thing.





Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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**Re: Register Guard Letters**by [Miles Arnold](#) - Saturday, May 19, 2018, 9:43 AM

I agree with you on the fact that people are quick to choose a side. "All of them were spit on" and "none of them were spit on" is not the only way things went down. But, It is only the people who are denying that it ever happened who want to see "proof" of the events. Like Bob Thompson, who states in his Register-Guard letter, "Unless Preuss can provide references to proven instances of such behavior, I will be steadfast in my understanding that exhaustive research on that very topic has shown no examples of such behavior, period." Period?!?! Not everything needs to have a written or recorded history for it to be true. Even in a court of law an eyewitness account of events is enough to be considered sufficient. How did his "exhaustive research" not turn up ONE interview or written veteran account of spitting? We have heard from multiple soldiers that say they were spit on upon return from war. I would consider those accounts proof that it did happen.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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**Spitting: An Exception Rather Than A Rule**by [Daisy Burge](#) - Monday, May 14, 2018, 10:07 PM

I don't think it's possible to make sweeping generalizations about anti-war activities and attitudes towards veterans simply because anti-war protesters were an extremely heterogeneous group - everyone from clergy members to yippies to civil rights groups to Quakers opposed the war fiercely. In fact, it is estimated that over half the American populace did not support the war of Vietnam by 1968 and these numbers grew steadily through the 1970s. Though some radical antiwar activists held combatants personally responsible for war atrocities committed by American forces, and as such harassed veterans for their participation in what they saw as a mass murder, it is clear from both

qualitative and quantitative evidence that this is not the case. To claim that absolutely no anti-war protesters ever harassed Vietnam veterans, as Bob Thompson claims in his response, seems to be a fairly dubious statement, and veterans like Rodney Gordon and Herman Isaacs were quick to provide their own personal anecdotes contradicting Thompson's claim.

It is undoubtedly true that many far right conservatives both during and after the war exaggerated the occurrence of violence and harassment of veterans as well, however. Blatantly political attacks on the anti-war movement propagandized a few attacks on veterans and used those instances of spitting, verbal and even physical abuse, to characterize the entire anti-war effort as disrespectful and anti-American. The propagandist, which can be somewhat exemplified in the words of Tom Preuss, cannot serve as a historical record of fact, but rather as an example of the effects of conservative backlash to the isolated incidences of harassment against veterans.

The fact is, most anti-war protesters held the American and South Vietnamese governments responsible for the atrocities committed in the war rather than the soldiers carrying out their orders, many of whom actively became involved in the effort to end the war. Indeed, many veterans became involved in the anti-war effort through connections with civilian groups. Many anti-war protesters saw veterans who opposed the war as the ultimate authority on why the war was cruel, ineffective, and damaging.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1) 3

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Re: Spitting: An Exception Rather Than A Rule

by [Haonan Bai](#) - Sunday, May 20, 2018, 10:13 PM

The U.S. veterans of the Vietnam War will be discriminated and disgusted by the American people is because it is considered meaningless after the war failed. The first U.S. president to start assisting South Vietnam was Eisenhower and John Kennedy began to support operations in Vietnam. Lyndon Johnson expanded the war. But during the Nixon administration, the United States gradually withdrew its troops from Vietnam due to the domestic anti-war tide. The Vietnam War was the largest number of wars in the United States after the World War II and had the greatest impact. That is why American anti-war protesters spit on veterans. Just like Thomas W. Postelle and Rodney Gordon said in the letter. When they get off from the airplane. people scold them and spit on them.

I think you are right about most anti-war protester held the American and South Vietnamese governments responsible for the atrocities committed in the war rather than the soldiers carrying out their orders. They may only treat the veterans in order to achieve political results. Maybe these veterans are unwilling to participate in the Vietnam War, but they have no other choice.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

2

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Spitting Controversy

by [Jonathan Haskell](#) - Monday, May 14, 2018, 10:13 PM

For the first question, if I was Appy what letters might I choose? Well, I would exclude any letter that proved ignorant to fact such as Bob Thompson letter from right here in Eugene. I of course would exclude anything that was just a retort to the the commentator Rooke-Ley and I would exclude anything that is simply a retort to the ignorance of Bob Thompson. I would imagine I would want to be picky and only choose letters that I would think the reader of the book would find interesting and not just argumentative banter. Under these parameters I think if I was going to include any letter from the spitting handout it would be the letter from Robert Shaw. He spoke how people were prejudice against him in numerous ways simply for fighting for his country.

As for question two I think this is very important. It was the simple act of googling it and not finding merits to the claim that made Bob Thompson ignorant to the facts. He stopped after he hit enter and didn't find anything from searching the internet and then thought he knew that it was myth. If I have learned anything from the history classes I have taken in college is a good book holds a collection of facts a lot better than a website page. Also one must always read with a mistrustful eye so one doesn't fall for the unstudied, and it also adds to the "oh my gosh.." and "I can't believe it went down like that.." moments.

The major issues concerning historical accuracy I believe was answered especially in this class by looking at the time frame from all sides. I really enjoy hearing the tales of the Vietnamese soldier or Viet Cong guerrillas from their point of view in the Appy book and the PBS series. I also appreciated the AIM view as all opinions are going to have their counterpoint.

I had heard the stories about the spitting and the throwing of dog faces and crazy

I had heard the stories about the spitting and the throwing of dog feces and crazy antics of the war protesters but never doubted it. I always considered it truth. I don't know if it is because I grew up with the parents I had, but I wonder why people like Mr. Thompson doubted it took place? Is it a sense of I feel this way, so if others feel the same way I feel about it then they would never spit on someone because I would never spit on someone. Is it really as simple as "it didn't come up on Google."? We aren't dealing with Orlando Jones in that Time Machine movie with Guy Pierce. It is just a computer. It is just as machine. A machine with an algorithm that is pop culture based. Based on number of other ignoramus peoples clicking the same thing you clicking when searching for something similar to you. It can not learn for you. Crazy.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1) 3

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Understanding the stories and the Videos, Question 1

by [Haonan Bai](#) - Tuesday, May 15, 2018, 12:25 AM



If I was the author of Patriots, I will use the stories from Thomas W. Postelle and Rodney Gordon. Because they were both of the Veterans from Vietnam since I read their letter. They both contradict Bob Thompson's letter which is No one spat on Vietnam vets. Also, Rodney Gordon gave his own experience to prove that Bob was wrong. After I read Rodney Gordon's story, I believe what he said. Because he said he experienced being spat at and was the subject of verbal abuse when he got off the plane in San Francisco, and also, he said the spit almost hit his boots, it was very close (Vietnam vets verbally abused, Rodney Gordon). I will use his story because he is a veteran with these bad experiences. This can better convince readers and give them

the authenticity.

From the soldier speak and POW resources, I further understand the real situation of the American prisoners in the Vietnam war. Torture was common and the Geneva Convention was not followed, as the North Vietnamese claimed the Americans were political criminals, not prisoners of war. So that's why the Vietnamese abuses American prisoners. As the [American POWs](#) Video clip said, Mike McGrath gave a detail about the description of how Vietnamese abuses him which was called the Vietnam rope trick (POWs video, 7:54). [American POWs](#) were released and returned home as part of Operation Homecoming in 1973. More than 200 Americans were reported as MIAs. Perhaps more than any other war, Vietnam continues to illustrate the complexity of the POW/MIA issue.

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Trustworthiness of Testimony, and Spitting in the face of the puppet masters.

by [Kate Adkisson](#) - Tuesday, May 15, 2018, 8:41 PM

After reading through the Register-Guard letters a few times, I still feel a little confused about the overall context of the letters. Why exactly was the topic of “spitting on vets” addressed in the Register-Guard? Did something happen publically to stir this conversation in 2007? Nonetheless, I got an overall sense of division within the letters and replies. In the opening excerpt by Rooke-Ley, we are shown his summary of then-current events concerning the Iraq war and former President Bush. What Rooke was trying to accomplish was to show, in my opinion, the similarities between the Vietnam era and the present, how the American public is routinely kept out of the loop of our government’s international actions, as well as the dehumanizing of Muslim or Arab persons such as we did in Vietnam with the Vietnamese. The replies to Rooke-Ley’s commentary vary from angry, “sick”, respectful, as well as informative. The most level-headed response with no personal attacks to Rooke’s character seemed to come from veteran Robert L. Shaw, in which he recounts that even though he wasn’t spat on, he was metaphorically or symbolically spat on in the form of employers discriminating against him by not hiring him for his service.

The Register-Guard letters are opinionated, flawed, and untrustworthy to me. Anyone can write to the newspaper, claiming to have been or experienced things they never were or did. Just because someone says they are a veteran in the papers doesn’t mean they are in real life. This isn’t to insult these people, as they totally could be veterans, but I have no way of proving it unless I researched them. I cannot prove the events they described, because there is no footage or documentation available other than their words. I don’t believe the same could be said about the veterans from Soldier’s Speak and the Prisoners of War video. These people were interviewed professionally and were all real veterans. Though their memories are not fact and may hold some discrepancies, I would rather trust their words over the words of

not fact and may hold some discrepancies, I would rather trust their words over the words of angry bickering men from the Register-Guard letters to the editor. Words that struck me regarding the treatment of returning soldiers include this memory from Soldier's Speak, in which a man says "I remember arriving at Travis Air Force Base, leaving the gate and the bus to a group anti-war demonstrators hitting our bus with rotten tomatoes and eggs. At that time it was hard for me to understand why they were doing it, but through the years I realized that's what this country is all about" (Soldier's Speak audio, 6:37). Here we have a veteran providing testimony that returning soldiers were harassed and attacked, however in the form of food being hurled at them instead of spit. I have no doubt in my mind that incidents like this happened, as well as possibly veterans being spit on, and while it's not entirely justified, the man makes a point which I am still pondering, which is "I realized that's what this country is all about." This country is about protest. This country is about opposing ideas. This country is about individualism, about a person's right to their beliefs. That's one of the reasons some soldiers may have believed when they went to Vietnam. They were securing people's right to freedom, to individualism, to opposing ideas. They were there to promote what they had back home, however naive or flawed the soldiers were. Protest is American. Another blip of testimony that resonates with me is, "you can protest the war, but don't protest the soldiers. I did what I had to do." (Soldiers Speak, 7:00). Spitting on soldiers may have been a way for some to protest, to express the emotions of the people. While it may not have solved anything, it was a way to undermine the authority and discredit powers that be. Spitting on an instrument of war sends a signal to the puppet-masters when the puppet masters are far out of reach. How does one protest the war, without protesting the soldiers? While the soldiers didn't create the war, they were just "doing what they had to do", they are the very reason the fighting continues. While their superiors may be giving orders, these are the men shooting and killing. Spitting on a soldier is as close as a protester can come to spitting right in the face of Johnson, or Kennedy, or Nixon, without getting shot by secret service.

All in all, I put more trust in the testimonies from the video and audio presented as opposed to the Register-Guard letters, as they (for me at least) seem more trustworthy and solid, despite the fact that they are relying almost entirely on one's memory.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1) 3

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Deciphering history

by [Miles Arnold](#) - Tuesday, May 15, 2018, 9:22 PM

it's interesting that the author of "The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory and the Legacy of Vietnam," Jerry Lembke, who was in Vietnam didn't reach out to other veterans to find out whether or not soldiers were spit on.

If we have to be careful of anything it is checking the sources and authors of what we are reading. Although Lembke is a veteran of the war he is not a historian and may

have a more narrow view of the war than a historian might. It looks like he did in fact do research but failed to include veteran accounts of returning. perhaps he though his account and experience was enough and since he couldn't find any record of it he thinks it didn't happen.

If we are going to decipher even the small details we need to make sure that all the sources are covered. The author of that letter, Bob Thompson seem to only use this one piece of writing to argue with actual veterans who are saying they were spit on. It seems sloppy to me.

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Re: Deciphering history

by [James Alewine](#) - Saturday, May 19, 2018, 5:30 PM

I think you might be right---I discovered this article in my search for the truth. This is an excerpt from a New York Times article October 13, 2017, discusses the spitting on veterans.

“The reporter was asking about accounts that soldiers returning from Vietnam had been spat on by antiwar activists. I had told her the stories were not true. I told her that, on the contrary, opponents of the war had actually tried to recruit returning veterans. I told her about a 1971 Harris Poll survey that found that 99 percent of veterans said their reception from friends and family had been friendly, and 94 percent said their reception from age-group peers, the population most likely to have included the spitters, was friendly.

A follow-up poll, conducted in 1979 for the Veterans Administration (now the Department of Veterans Affairs), reported that former antiwar activists had warmer feelings toward Vietnam veterans than toward congressional leaders or even their erstwhile fellow travelers in the movement.

I was glad the reporter was interested in the origin of these stories, because beginning even before the war ended, news organizations had too often simply repeated them — even though some stories had the hallmarks of tall tales all over them. Even The Times once quoted, matter-of-factly, a veteran telling of how he arrived stateside from Vietnam on a stretcher with a bullet in his leg, only to be splattered with rotten vegetables and spat on by antiwar college kids.

Whoppers like these go unchallenged by reporters and scholars perhaps because

...hoppers like these go unchallenged by reporters and scholars perhaps because of their memoirist first-person quality, stories told by the men who say it happened to them. I collect the stories, I told the reporter, and have a spreadsheet with about 220 first-person “I was spat on” accounts.

But you don’t believe the stories, right? she asked. Acknowledging that I could not prove the negative — that they were not true — I went on to say there is no corroboration or documentary evidence, such as newspaper reports from the time, that they are true.”

Now, what I find most interesting, why isn’t there more out there from the time period on this topic? Pictures, articles, or testimony’s.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/13/opinion/myth-spitting-vietnam-protester.html>



Sum of ratings: 1 (1) 1

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Re: Deciphering history

by [Parker Mann](#) - Sunday, May 20, 2018, 11:51 PM

...

Miles,

You are right this is interesting.. but what your post did is make me think about considering 1st hand and often very bias sources of soldiers tales VS the more broad but 2nd/3rd hand stories told by historians. Considering that both of these flaws in sources leads to inaccuracies in information, and why I feel there is so much controversy around the war, and especially the treatment of vets, and the tales we have read.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

1

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Patriots and Traitors - The Register Guard Letters

by [Nicholas Walker](#) - Tuesday, May 15, 2018, 10:17 PM

Call me biased, but if I wrote a book like "Patriots," I'd only include stories that put the military in the positive light. Since we know that it is the tiny minority of soldiers who acted cruelly and deserved to be spat on, I see no reason to dwell on those cases, giving them more coverage than they warrant. Not to say that Appy does this to any meaningful extent, but that's my stance. If a group of people act a certain way most of the time, then that's how they should be represented. At the very least, I would have no interest in drawing the soldiers—who fight in our nation's interests—in a bad light. The POW video is a shocking insight into just what these men had to endure, and the Soldiers Speak audio puts a personal context to the nightmares of war. The Appy book also establishes this with confidence, so in that regard I wouldn't change much.

I may, in some instances, choose to have a "note to the reader" that expresses some of the harsher realities of the war, perpetrated by us, but I would want the overall tone of the book to be 100% in support of American soldiers. For example, I may mention that some soldiers under more or less imprecise orders would exact vengeance upon village families that had nothing to do with their lost comrades, and I would try to stress how that simply isn't acceptable behavior. Still, the American perception of the military is often as a bloated, evil killing machine, but soldiers in all branches do a lot of good work to help people, both from an American interest and for the people in the countries they are stationed in and deployed to. That is the image we must preserve until it stops being applicable.

The Register Guard Letters show a fascinating insight into the challenges a younger generation will have when empathizing with the people, both American and Vietnamese, who fought in Vietnam. In particular, the part where Bob Thompson claims that there was never any recorded historical document of soldiers being spat on, when the eyewitness accounts from other soldiers showed that there were. This shows how personal testimonies can alter one's perception of events, or shed new light on a

circumstance that studies and research may not be able to show so clearly. When understanding history, we can't always rely on spreadsheet thinking. If you can't feel the struggle of the smallest cog in a war machine, how will you understand how it works?

The letters compare to the clips we watched in one primary way: The letters had to be established through character witnesses, while the clips were validated in the preponderance of evidence surrounding them. There were videos of the tortured, telling (or perhaps blinking to) us that they were, in fact, being tortured; One can investigate the camps in which they tortured them; The Vietnamese tacitly admitted (after Ho died) that they were engaging in brutal torture. However, when it comes to the spitting, it's one man's word against another's. A credible word, but limited by one's willingness to believe it all the same.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Re: Patriots and Traitors - The Register Guard Letters

by [Jonathan Haskell](#) - Friday, May 18, 2018, 10:54 PM

“Call me biased,” - ok biased. So if you were a historian and wrote a book on history your goal would to be to negate truth?

“I'd only include stories that put the military in the positive light. Since we know that it is the tiny minority of soldiers who acted cruelly and deserved to be spat on, I see no reason to dwell on those cases, giving them more coverage than they warrant.” - So the destruction of a village that someone grandparents grandparents lived in doesn't warrant mentioning? The fact that this country, one based on freedoms of its people, own citizens used this freedom to degrade its own soldiers isn't relevant? Well actually you said “deserved to be spat on.”. You are right only a tiny minority acted cruelly so just the percentages say that the majority if not the entire number of soldiers spat on didn't do anything horrific in their war actions. The fact that these innocent men were belittled like that is very newsworthy especially in a country with freedom of the press.

“If a group of people act a certain way most of the time, then that's how they should be represented.” - Ok so like a normal German dude goes about his day.

He does this day after day. He is a normal guy maybe a lawyer or something. He goes to work loves his wife etc. He has a boring existence until his country fights a war and he is given the order on the eastern front to murder a bunch of Latvians. War ends and he then goes back home to his wife and his law firm. He is “most of the time” a loving husband and a good lawyer. That is how he should be represented yes?

“At the very least, I would have no interest in drawing the soldiers—who fight in our nation's interests—in a bad light.” - First of if a nation or any group of people have desire or interests it is probably not going to go well for the person or people who currently own it. Nationalism, well I won't get into my feelings about it in detail, but I mean if it gets everyone who lives near you all riled up for some goal to exploit some other place or people... well then it is the worst disease to befall humankind and I think earth should try to do without it.

“The POW video is a shocking insight into just what these men had to endure, and the Soldiers Speak audio puts a personal context to the nightmares of war.” - Well said and I couldn't agree more!!!

“I may, in some instances, choose to have a "note to the reader" that expresses some of the harsher realities of the war, perpetrated by us, but I would want the overall tone of the book to be 100% in support of American soldiers.” - why is truth unsupportive of American soldiers? I disagree. I think it is important to the American fighting man to know and learn from past mistakes in the field of war. In all cases no matter the subject knowledge is power and lack of it especially by choice is the opposite. It is a show of weakness if one doesn't own their mistakes. I don't think our country is weak especially since we own our mistakes in Vietnam.

“I may mention that some soldiers under more or less imprecise orders would exact vengeance upon village families that had nothing to do with their lost

comrades, and I would try to stress how that simply isn't acceptable behavior." - I would hope they know it isn't acceptable behavior, but that probably depends on how much masked propaganda your 1984 utopia generates to the masses.... I am just playing!

"Still, the American perception of the military is often as a bloated, evil killing machine, but soldiers in all branches do a lot of good work to help people, both from an American interest and for the people in the countries they are stationed in and deployed to. That is the image we must preserve until it stops being applicable." - First off I agree sort of. You say "the American perception of the military is often as a bloated, evil killing machine". I disagree slightly to make the point that I know a lot of people including myself who did or thought of joining the military. Especially from the poorer neighborhoods as it is the best choice of a future. I would agree totally if it read "the perception of the American military is often bloated, evil killing machine." That I think is accurate. I would also agree when you say soldiers in all branches do a lot of good work to help people, but did they ask for our help? Did they truly need our help? History will tell! Then though you added "both from an American interest and for the people in the countries they are stationed in" What if those interest do not coincide? Are we going to look out for the people whose country we have overstayed our welcome in or our own interests? Completely rhetorical question I think everyone including you know the answer to that!

"The Vietnamese tacitly admitted (after Ho died) that they were engaging in brutal torture. However, when it comes to the spitting, it's one man's word against another's. A credible word, but limited by one's willingness to believe it all the same." - Yes they tortured prisoners and that's never right. Including when we do it. The spitting isn't just one man's word against another though as it happened more than once in more than one place most of which had eyewitnesses or passer bys or different people who despite their personal feelings pro or con during that time saw the incidents. Also I would imagine no matter their political or personal feelings at the time on the war in Vietnam they found the actions of the spitter reprehensible and wrong. Thanks for your post & for reading!

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Patriots and Traitors - The Register Guard Letters**by [Nicholas Walker](#) - Sunday, May 20, 2018, 11:29 PM

Hmm... I think you did a good job punching holes in the logic of some of my statements, but I think you may have misunderstood my position, or perhaps I didn't word it correctly. The question was regarding what I personally would do if I was writing the Appy book. There are plenty of history books out there that will show you the dark side of our involvement in the Vietnam war, but I would rather write something positive that inspires people or gives them a sense of national pride. To continue with your WWII Germany analogy: even though we know that what the German government wanted was evil, I would still want the Germans of today to view the soldiers that fought in the war as brave patriots, even if they were fighting towards a bad goal. I don't think it's common or even necessary for soldiers to understand the geopolitical circumstances of a war. War is an expression of nationalism, it has to be, and nationalism is essential to maintaining a functioning society. No historian is ever going to accurately represent with 100% unbiased how and why certain soldiers did what they did, so it is inevitable that even in a collection of quoted personal stories, an implication will be cast by the author. My intended implication would be one of seeing the soldiers as heroes, if they indeed were. It's still historically accurate. Nobody needs me to drag them through the mud any further.

You seem to be under the impression that I intend to censor something from history by taking this approach, but if not including and emphasizing everything negative is somehow "propaganda," then you would have to concede that not including everything positive is also "propaganda." Historians have to decide the tone of their works at some point. I don't need to stretch the truth to show the valor of Vietnam vets, in spite of a few bad apples. Young people today don't know much about the Vietnam war, myself admittedly included, yet it still shocks me when I hear people my age talk about the war. One girl said "isn't Vietnam like, when soldiers used agent orange on people?" Is that really what they're going to be remembered for? Somebody has to counteract this narrative.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Education is key**by [James Alewine](#) - Friday, May 18, 2018, 8:42 AM

As a student of the Vietnam War, it's very important to consider all accounts of this tragic story. Everyone experiences life in a different way---just like all the soldiers had their own experiences and stories to tell. That is what makes us unique as individuals. As an author or producer of such material, that will be used as a historical reference, it is important to state the facts to the best of one's ability. That said, there is always room for error.

In regard to "the letters to the editor", I worked for a newspaper as a designer for about a year. My editors would fact check everything through multiple sources and it was very embarrassing to get a letter to the editor and have to publish it. For this reason, I'm sure Michael Rooke-Ley did his homework---not to mention, I remember the Iraq debacle very well. Tom Preuss in his response, proves to be right winger position in this period---and we also must remember this was after 911. There were a lot of heated debates about another Vietnam. When people get passionate about their party base and are ill informed things like this will happen. But it also brings to light a very interesting issue about a perception of the Vietnam War that some Americans still have.

Education is key to understand the real truth, and for us, as U.S. citizens, it is important to know what the government did and how the world reacted. This will prevent it from happening again. You cannot know where you are going until you know where you have been!

Now that I feel I have a true understanding of how America got involved, and why the choices were made in moving troops over there, I am even more sadden by the treatment of the Veterans. They did what was asked of them by our own government and most didn't even want to be there--but they did it for their county.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Question 1

by [Parker Mann](#) - Sunday, May 20, 2018, 11:08 PM

If I was the author of *Patriots* I would include the letters of BOB THOMPSON, RODNEY GORDON, HERMAN ISAACS, and ROBERT L. SHAW. You could of made the case for any of the letters to be included as a story, but I feel that these stories hold the most weight, as well as controversy.

Bob Thompson is one of the only letters to be claiming their were absolutely no cases of Spitting. I would choose to include his case because he does include valid points about that if there were so many incidents that It would make sense for there to be documentation of at least a few of these incidents. He is the only story I would include that is not heavily leaning toward the opinion of claiming veterans were spat on, so for that reason too, I would include his letter because he adds a minority point of view.

Rodney Gordon's story would be included in my book because he opens up his letter with a valid point of that Bob Thompson shouldn't just come to conclusion of that there was spitting at all because he did a google search, and read a book about it. He also told his story as a veteran, a POV that couldn't be portrayed by Thompson, and he was more respectful to Thompson than some of the other anti-Thompson writers.

I would include Herman Isaacs letter because he claims he was spit on and provides a somewhat believable account of what he says happened. It follows the pattern of the other cases of vets being harassed/spit on but also seems respectful and truthful, while also encouraging doubters to go and talk to more veterans and do more research. It was good for him to not disrespect non-believers, while also encouraging them/telling them not.

Robert Shaw's letter was perhaps the most interesting story to me. He was a veteran who actually did agree with Thompsons letter. He also attests he was never spit on or heard/told of an veteran being spit on. He does say that he was slandered though, and treated really awfully but never spit on. He provides a great median letter in that he says that he never knew of any evidence of spitting, while also providing his story which follows the pattern of other veterans tales, and making it sound believable that it could of happened.

I would include 'note to reader' introductions for each letter to make sure that the letters were not misleading or making the author seem like they had a perspective they did not have. For example knowing that the author of the letter is a veteran adds lots of context, and that is something the reader deserves to know in my opinion. It is important to let the reader develop their own opinion.

Sum of ratings:3 (1) 3

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