

Due date: Saturday, 17 October 2009, 09:10 PM

Last edited: Saturday, 17 October 2009, 06:10 PM (353 words)

As a person who has a hard time with history I found that many of these stories were hard for me to get involved in. I found that for me there was so much technical things about the war that were hard for me to relate with, or to somehow associate it with my life, so it made it hard for me to stay in tuned with the story. One story that held my attention was John Singlaub's story. I guess this one was intriguing because it makes you look at how we deceive other people to get what we want. The way they would give them radios but only had two station, I feel in a way this is kind of brain washing them. We were giving them the things they needed like, medicine and sewing kits so that they would feel like we were the better path to take. This story was also the most upsetting to me because he talks about how our soldier moral was and how we treated them when they came home. With this war we only hear about the negative things I liked how he talked about the good things that American advisers were doing like building bridges and digging wells. War is never good but there are good things that come out of it. It always seems like the media like to focus on the sad and never the good. I have heard many say that it was a war we should have never been in. There is always death with war and especially today I am very proud of any man or women, who have or are fighting in a war. There is a reason even if we don't really know what the reason is. Like I have said before history is not my strong point and I have a hard time relating to war especially since I have no real close ties to it. I do feel that the man and women who fight for me I am very proud of, and make me proud to say I am an American.

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Brian Hein

HST 195

October 17, 2009

Patriot's Journal #2

At first thought this journal assignment seemed to be an easy one. As I reread through the *Patriot's* book I changed my mind. I found that every story could be considered as being disappointing in some way. Also, many of these could be seen as both disappointing and still give a glimmer of hope at the same time. The story *You could smell the burning flesh* told by Malcolm Browne provided a good example of how something so terrible could still have something positive come from it. The death of Thich Quang Duc by immolation was difficult to read about, but at the same time it did bring a huge amount of attention to the plight of the Buddhists under Diem's rule. This story had the largest emotional impact on me, but there were two other stories that I found to be most disappointing. Both of these stories give a good example of ethnocentrism and ignorance by the people who were making decisions concerning America's position and actions with regard to South and North Vietnam.

The first of these stories is *What's good for Peru is good for Vietnam* told by Paul Kattenburg. Reading through his story I was again struck by how little the people who were at the National Security Counsel Executive Committee knew about the country of Vietnam. They were instead focused upon stopping Communism. Vietnam was just the place this fight was happening at that time with no consideration given to the difficulties Vietnam would present. There was the idea we knew what was best for other nations even if it was not wanted. At various times in the reading this attitude seems to come through, such as when Kattenburg stated "we could manipulate other states and build nations; that we knew all the answers" (p. 82). It was disheartening to see those with opinions that differed from what was expected and punished for expressing their opinions. This is also the case in the second story. In *Dissent which contradicted the public optimism was ignored* told by Evelyn Colbert we find at the Bureau of Intelligence Research at the State Department how information which did not support the "public optimism was ignored" (p. 83). And when statistics the military produced were re-evaluated and showed the Viet Cong were doing better than expected Secretary of Defense McNamara instead of reevaluating his position was upset that the Bureau of Intelligence Research for not having cleared their evaluation with the Defense Department. This struck me as a willful attempt to remain ignorant of the true facts, using only the information which readily supported your views.

From the reading I know this was a different time and place, the focus on Communism was much different at that time, and still today dissent is rarely appreciated when it is seen as detrimental. But, what makes these stories so disappointing was that they show there were some who realized what was going on and where this may lead, and just how these views were ignored or discouraged. It is hard to say if anything would have changed if some of these ideas were listened to. I also wondered if there may have been others with similar opinions who did not wish to speak up because of the way dissent was dealt with by those in positions of power over them.

Just as many of these stories were both disappointing and hopeful at the same time I found the story *She divorced her second husband and waited for me* told by Luyen Nguyen showed how life always will continue on. After being captured by North Vietnamese soldiers he spent twenty-one years imprisoned, many of them in solitary confinement. While his story is more than sad, it was at the end of the story of when he was reunited with his family I found hope for the future. It was the simple statement about seeing his daughter and grandchildren for the first time I realized life goes on even in the worst of times. The

reading for this week tended to be rather negative focusing on the bad decisions made, and the hardships people experienced. These few sentences reminded me life still continues to be worth living.

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Chad Schultz

October 15, 2009

History 195

Journal Entry # 2

Between the 14 stories that we have read, there were a few that separated themselves amongst the others. So far the short stories have been extremely factual and interesting. The specific story that hit a sore spot and left me questioning how these brave soldiers, went through something, as heart wrenching as this War, was Phan Xuan Sing and his reflection "all my ancestors are buried here."

The unit was located in a very secluded area, where the fisher man loved to go out, at anytime and fish. It was a quiet night and all of a sudden they heard something similar to gunshots, specifically like some one was firing off rounds. So the unit did not hesitate and counter fired, until they heard no more return fire. After a few minutes the area was quite sound and they decided to discover who was firing at them. When they caught sight and learned that their enemies were innocent fisherman out hoping to get their catch of the day, they were devastated. A large amount of bystanders were killed and several were wounded.

This story was quite the eye opener. I couldn't imagine being in Phan Xuan Sing unit and discovering that we had just made a mistake of hurting and killing innocent people. But then again, these fishermen might have been notified to stay aside from this area and to possible fish in another spot and decided to disregard their notification and went on.

In addition to this short story, was another that Phan Xuan Sing reflected back on. There were several fire free zones, and if anyone was in vicinity they could be fired upon. So one day their unit was exploring an area in which they heard was deserted and possible enemies could be within the radius. As the troop investigated they stumbled upon an old thatched house. Inside was an elder couple living here and the unit immediately told them to evacuate and not to come back, and they did so. A few days later the unit was in the same area and discovered that the couple was back in their place, so Phan Xuan Sing decided to ask why. The man had replied " All my ancestors are buried here and this is our land, we are not going to leave."

Hearing the elder couple say that they, basically plan on being buried within their house by the war or not was devastating. I couldn't imagine having that much bravery to stand tall against a war I had no control over, but then again who did. Reflecting on what the old man said, He was standing up for his ancestors, and felt that this was the necessary repercussion to do. Everyone was fighting for their country and innocent bystanders were affected by something that seemed unnecessary.

Taking a look back and reflecting, it seems there were very apparent negative aspects in each story, but if you looked beyond the negative, you could sense in some of the speakers stories positive emotion. For example, one insert was talking about luring in

the Americans by killing one, and they would all run to see if the soldier was wounded, and then the opponent would take advantage, and would kill all the Americans together. In correlation with the tactics, they would snatch the artillery and practice. In the story the speaker said, this was how he learned to shoot every weapon on the battlefield. This story overall, was devastating, but in the speakers tone seemed like it was a bit apparent, that this was something enlighten during the war.

In a lot of stories you hear the authors talking about guilt and not knowing why they were fighting, and on the other end of the spectrum you also hear people saying "It was war, wouldn't you shoot me if you saw me holding a weapon and pointing it at you?"

After the author making that statement, I contemplated if I felt that way. To put it raw, it's life or death, and you have no decision if you want to be in this war or not (Since the soldiers were drafted). I am not agreeing or disagreeing, but when I look at it, in that perspective, I could honestly agree with the author.

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I am really trying to get this submitted on time. I have just lost an entry-- have no idea where it went, just dissappeared from the page. I will try to re-do and have it to you.

I am finding that all the stories seem to blend together for me. They all seem to have the same undertone of saving Vietnam from the evils of communism, even though I believe that this is what the country needed for its people.

I am seeing that the reason that stands out is the finanical end. The power of the dollar always seems to be the real motivation even over a noble cause.

I found the most suprising story to me was from the son of Nikita Khrushchev, Sergei. I guess I am suprised because I did not realize that he had involvement.

I am sorry this entry is not longer or really "up" to my usual standards. I have a touch of this nasty flu and even though I have read over the section for the lesson three times nothing is sinking in as it should. I am lucky to have it in by due time .

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I have enjoyed reading this book mainly because of the variety of view points they have collected. Comparing it to most books on the Vietnam it captures my attention and keeps me thinking about what it would be like to have lived or fought in Vietnam during the war.

One of the more disappointing stories that I read was the one told by Dang Vu Hiep. He is an retired general for the Vietnamese side. He tells about living in small villages in the hills of Vietnam. The part that bothers me the most and is most disappointing is when he describes an air raid in which American troops bombed the Vietnamese shores. Dang relates this directly to an attack on the small town of Pleiku where the Vietnamese killed nine American soldiers. The underlying tone that Hiep uses to describe his view of the scene.

The story is just described is located towards the front of the book, as I worked my way further back I found more stories to my pleasure. One story that I found a little more positive is the story of Jo Collins. She was a former Playboy playmate. She was asked to make a visit out to Vietnam to visit the troops and lift moral. In Jo's story she first describes that she had no idea to where Vietnam even was located. She says, "I thought I was going to Europe." The reality of her story really set in when she goes on saying that one man had been waiting this whole time to see her and then unfortunately only gets to speak one sentence while lying on his death bed. She ends it by saying that the boys there were only fighting for there country, and this made me feel proud to be an American.

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A story that was disappointing for me to read was the story of Vo Nguyen Giap's *The most atrocious conflict in human history*. The way that Giap was treated in the beginning of the story was saddening. After just becoming an adult he was sentenced to a French prison for anti-colonial activism or not agreeing with their occupation and control over his home land. His new wife was also sentenced to prison for similar beliefs and died while being punished. The troubling life of this man was not the part of the story that was disappointing to for me. The part that was unsatisfactory for me was how he did not have any option to fight or not he simply wanted free will for himself and his people. When Giap said, "maybe it was a tragedy for you, but for us the war was a noble sacrifice." I think made me realize a great deal of how the conflict was truly misconstrued from being a horrific loss of life for U.S service men and more of a unintelligent move on behalf of our president at the time.

The part of this story that was for me a positive lesson was how America or any country needs to learn from mistakes that past leaders have made. Leaders are often in extremely difficult situations where they need to think of more than just protecting their own citizens. Finding alternatives that will be less detrimental to their military's, financial resources and preventing loss of lives is a path to strive towards. This story will surely enlighten people to realize that Vietnam was a country that had ultimate self-determination to become what it most desired, to be free. Giap was determined to fight not only against multiple foreign military forces but for his country's right to have sovereignty.

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Due date: Saturday, 17 October 2009, 09:10 PM

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A story that was disappointing for me to read was one by Daniel Redmond because of the events that he saw and the things he described. For example, when he mentions seeing a mother giving birth to her child and she refuses help, so she is forced to bite the umbilical cord and then wash her newborn baby in a dirty river. When he talks about all the refugees that were evacuated and how they were sprayed with DDT to kill the lice is another situation that was horrific, especially since none of the refugees had ever used bathrooms and how they reeked of shit. I'm not sure about a positive lesson from these stories, but a positive thing that came out of John Singlaub's story was all the gift packages they received. Also, the health benefits that the South Vietnamese were given to help their malnutrition and other diseases. I believe that the Vietnamese thought that the Americans were there to actually help them out, instead of doing them harm. I also think that any help we gave was only short term and we were only doing them a favor that wasn't going to last. We may have given gift packages to them or made the health benefits available to them, but these, like I said before, were only short-term gestures that have little significance in the whole scheme of things.

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I think the story that affected me was John Singlaub's "Paradise Island". There are two parts that bother me .The first is The Sacred Sword deception. They would capture fishermen and peasants and take them back and tell them they were somewhere else and lie to them, I know this is war but the more I read it is full of propaganda and personal vendetta's and lie's. Then when we let them go we would give them radio's that only got our station. To me it sounds like brain washing! On a personal note this war is hard to study for me because of my Dad I have always been, we were right they were wrong. I guess a kind of ignorant state of mind .I just want to believe soldiers are great and are heroes, so when I find out facts that were different than what I was thinking in my head, it is a blow. The next example from what I read really upset me more than all I have read. What gave great encouragement to Ho Chi Minh and his people were Traitors like Jane Fonda, Ramsey Clark and Tom Hayden. They went over there and told them that we are winning it at home, and we are destroying the morale of the people at home. Some of them had morale so low that they would volunteer to come back because they could not stand to watch the T. V or read the papers because of the bias from the media. We were helping a lot of people in the area do other things like dig wells, agricultural work and building bridges. So for me all the traitors should have been hung, or they could go live in North Vietnam! The media should also not be allowed in war zones because they can be to biased. In other words free your mind and don't watch news programs.

I think LBJ did not want to go to war. Some people I talk to disagree, but I really believe him. So some light for me is knowing the war should have been avoided, but what if we did nothing? I am finding it hard to find light but I am trying to be more optimistic. I mean, think how many American lives would have been saved if we did not go to war. I am so torn in myself wondering that very question. So my light is thinking the President did not want to go to war, and tried to help them and build dams etc.

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The more I read about the Vietnam War, the more disgusted I become with how we as a nation acted and treated others. One of the stories that I was bothered by was "Paradise Island." I think it was awful for us to "kidnap" people from the North, not only were they confused at first but then we gave them gifts. How does giving individuals gifts make them want to change their ways of life? The thoughtfulness behind this act, seemed more like communism than anti communism because of how controlling it was toward the people. The radios that were given as gifts had one or two radio stations that were designated, how is that not controlling?

Another story I disliked hearing, or more the tone of the man interviewed was Sergei Khrushchev. His last remark toward the United States was "America cannot behave like an elephant in a china shop," I read that as a big slap in the face because we aren't all like that. Not all Americans are for wars and fighting and not all Americans think they're better than everyone else or anyone at all. Another comment he made referred to the 9/11 attack, I was upset at first, but after a while, he is right when it comes to the United States and the war now. Why didn't we learn from the mistakes over in Vietnam and try harder to avoid going to war, and why are we still in Afghanistan?

Sergei Khrushchev did make a valuable point in the end that I do agree with about the current war. A lot of the stories read I enjoyed because they're touching, like Luyen Nguyen who was very loyal while imprisoned for so many years and after such a long time his wife went back to him. I could (or like to think I can) relate to his story because my husband will be away for 6 years and miss a lot of our child growing up. As for the rest of his story, what an amazing individual to stay with his men knowing they were more than likely going to be caputered and die. To me, his dedication is what we all want to believe that each soldier is like, when in actuality most are like his men; scared and give in easily.

I was glad to read the stories about both sides getting along; the Americans and Vietnamese, and that there was laughter and enjoyment when they were getting along. Like the story Henry Prunier told about training the Veit Minh on how to use weapons, etc. It's good to know that not everyone over in Vienam hated one another and that they were willing to help and teach each other for the better.

The stories in Part 2 made me upset and grateful and the same time. Parts of the stories I liked and then one sentence would completely change my opinion on the person. I would reread a lot of the stories so that I could see both points of view; American and Vietnamese.

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The most disappointing story for me to read was the story of George Watkins. He was a "grunt with the 196th Light Infantry Brigade." This statement made me think that the position the he held wasn't viewed by others, either civilians or people within the military, as one of great importance but his story has stuck with me since I first read it. At first I thought it was interesting but then I found it more disturbing. His last statement was "Fancy it up." This was his request to the author. What he saw and what he talked about was horrible. To experience something like that and then live to tell it is horrid. You can never get rid of that pain, those images, or the sounds of war.

At the end of Vo Nguyen Giap's there is a dialogue between himself and Robert McNamara. The two lines are, in my opinion, what sums up their views on the war. McNamara saw it as a "tragedy" , Giap on the other hand saw it as a "noble sacrifice". The lesson the I see in this exchange is that how the sides view war depends on which side your fighting on. As an America I would agree with McNamara. If you were to ask a Vietnamese person, they may agree with Giap. The hope that I see in these stories is that there are lessons we can learn. Knowing that I can never find out or know for sure exactly what happened, I feel that there is hope knowing that we can learn from their experiences and that we can avoid making the same mistake(s) twice. Although the way that we use and even if we use those lessons depends on us.

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I was disappointed in the section from Daniel Redmond. Here is a man who claims he is catholic, and thinks that he is doing something great for the vietnamese catholics, when he is only pushing an agenda to keep a corrupt and violent man in power. I understand that the United States might not have been aware of what kind of leader Diem might have been, they certainly did find out. How many people lost their possessions, or even their lives trying to flee from the north, only because we wanted what would best suit our needs for the south and how to control it. Why is it that as far as our own government goes, we have no problem only thinking of ourselves and what we think best suits us? Only to find out that we were wrong most of the time anyway.

I found a few positive parts in this story. One was from Henry Prunier when he is describing the men he had helped train and their love and admiration of Ho Chi Minh. Henry knew that he and his fellow soldiers had just basically trained the men, but he recognized their desire and will to win. from reading, I felt like he had admired them for their passion and commitment. He also recognized the wrongdoing of the United States and our position of not truly helping Ho Chi Minh or the people of Vietnam fight for their independence. How quickly people had forgotten that it was only 169 years before that we Americans had fought for our own independence. The other story that I found to be positive was that of Vo Nguyen Giap. While he was talking I could feel his sense of pride and devotion to his country. Here was a man who had been through so much, yet his spirit is still strong. Even after all that he had seen and done, he still later on in his life tries to help people learn and understand what happened in Vietnam, and how not to make the same mistakes again.

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Part1

In my opinion, I think the last story from Luyen Nguyen was the most disappointing for me and perhaps other readers. It's not about what he complained his own student commandos, but about the attitude of them, the students and the U.S. advisers. Like what he told us, the students were following the instructions from only the U.S. advisers but not their own people. They only think for themselves. They just want to get but doesn't want to give. They lost their patriotism, becoming disloyalty due to what the U.S. advisers told them- "we hired you, we pay you, you should obey us and ignore the Vietnamese" (pg.95). This is a reason why many South Vietnamese soldiers lost consciousness right after the final attack of Viet Minh on the April 30th, 1975.

Part 2

Over all, I found for myself a lesson and I bet many Americans want to learn it, too. That is whenever you step your foot on a different place which you have never been there, it's important to be careful what you do, and what you say. There is nothing easy, simple in this life. You need to learn the culture and the value of other countries. You always have to find a weak point from your enemy first before you want to pick a fight on them.

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So far the stories have been good but the Malcom Browne and Paul Kattenburg stories have been the most disappointing but for different reasons. I think the Kattenburg story, for me, summarized the whole American thinking of how we should deal with Vietnam. The new administration would come in and just keep on doing what the old administration was doing. I just can't see why we couldn't come up with some new ideas and why people who have never been to Vietnam, think what is good for one country is good for another, were making all the decisions, couldn't someone just think outside the box. But the biggest reason the story was disappointing was when one man, Kattenburg, says "I think it would be better we just left with honor" everybody looks at him like he is the black sheep and not even listen, and instead of listening and hear what he has to say, they send him to another job where they don't have to listen to him anymore.

The Malcom Browne story was disappointing in a different way, I thought the story, either the author or the story teller, didn't do a very good job of telling the story about the Buddhist monk, when he set himself on fire. The story told what happened and let us see the relationship between the Browne and the monks, I thought the monks were using him to get noticed by the press, but I thought the story lacked something. I have seen the pictures before, but the description of the event was not as good as I thought it could have been, so I was very disappointed.

The Kattenburg story even though disappointing, had some positive aspects or lessons to it. I was glad to see some new young people sitting in on the National Security Council Executive Committee meetings, it showed me that maybe the administration was looking for new ideas or a new perspective on Vietnam. It also was nice to see someone, Kattenburg, say something about Vietnam, even if he didn't mean too, that was different than just sending more troops or advisors. It's just good to see a new idea and that maybe some people are starting to think of new ways to look at and deal with Vietnam. I do wish he would have made a statement to Kennedy, but it takes more than one man to stand up to the American administration. So in all If you think something isn't right, stand up and say something, because if you think it isn't right, you are probably not the only one that thinks it isn't right and that is lesson that everyone needs to learn or know.

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Michael Bellamy

While reading Part Two of the *Patriots* book, I must say that there was not one entire story that disappointed me. As I made clear in our first journal assignment I have little previous knowledge of the Vietnam War; therefore, as I have been reading this textbook I have been more concerned about obtaining the knowledge presented in the stories rather than critiquing individual stories themselves. When I read what the speakers have to say I am initially drawn into their story and attempt to compare it and parallel it to the other accounts I have read. I do this to try and see the big chronological picture of the war. I have enjoyed the *Patriots* book because after reading each story, I feel like I can add one more piece to the puzzle and begin to visualize the war in its entirety.

I mentioned before that none of the stories as a whole disappointed me. However, there were certain facts, emotions, and instances within the stories that did not appeal to me. For example, Paul Hare's story is a prime example of how foreign Vietnam was to most Americans. Hare talks about the constant "sense of dislocation" and "uncertainty" that he felt all through his time spent in Vietnam. From what I've read this seems to be one of the most common feelings among the Americans stationed in Vietnam, there was a hanging cloud of insecurity that never seemed to fade away. In my opinion, the US was not prepared for such a war as this, there was too much over confidence. Being in a foreign land is one thing, one excuse, but the main reason the Vietnamese won is because of their dedication; it was more powerful than ours. Vo Nguyen Giap touched on this aspect in his story. He states, "We won the war because we would rather die than live in slavery...Our deepest aspiration has always been our self-determination. That spirit provided us with stamina, courage, and creativity in the face of a powerful enemy." My disappointment here is that once this was established midway through the war, the US was no longer fighting to win, but to simply prolong a Vietnamese victory. It's difficult to find honor in that, especially when countless lives were lost in the process.

Another disappointment for me is the media portrayal of the war. Daniel Redmond speaks of a doctor he met, Thomas A. Dooley, who wrote a best-selling book called *Deliver Us from Evil*. Redmond describes the book as being inaccurate and containing exaggerations. An example of this is represented by the book having a picture of a deformed Vietnamese man with a caption under it saying that he was a victim of one of Ho Chi Minh's torturers. Redmond says that this was far from the truth because he would see that man, a beggar, who was probably born that way and "never once did he ever hint that the Viet Minh had tortured him." When looking at the big picture of the Vietnam War this is merely a minor inaccuracy, but it still symbolizes the fact that the truth was often altered. As evidence to Robert McNamara announcing as he steps off the arriving plane from Vietnam: "...We're showing great progress in every dimension of our effort," when initially mentioning before the plane even landed that things were worse than they had been a year prior.

It is very difficult to find any positive lessons involving a concept such as war, especially Vietnam from an American standpoint. There was a significant amount of ignorance on the American side which did not provide any hope or potential for good. On the other hand there were some individuals who understood that sometimes the

right thing to do was completely opposite of what was being done. In Paul Kattenburg's story he accounts when he was attending a National Security Council Executive Committee meeting in 1963, he was astonished by the ignorance and lack of knowledge about the facts of Vietnam. People were talking about building nations and such but what they kept overlooking is the fact that the French had already been there, attempted that, and were defeated. Kattenburg was aware of this and boldly suggested that it would be better if they just left Vietnam with honor. He brought this up again and again but was shut down each time. The good surrounding this is that there were people like Kattenburg who were aware of the fact that continuing to intervene in the Vietnam War was not the smartest idea.

Another thing I found to be more on the positive side was Richard Olsen's story. He was a pilot who was not directly involve in fighting but aided the South Vietnamese troops by flying them into the field. He describes the glorifying feeling he had being able to assist the South Vietnamese troops, and that it was a necessity to have the Americans there to "show them how to do it."

Lastly, one lesson that I found personally that was not said outright in any of the stories, but is subtly hinted at, is the importance of never underestimating the enemy. The experiences that our nation had in Vietnam need to be remembered in case there is any similar type of war in the future. Nothing of this magnitude is ever as easy as it initially seems.

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One story I found rather intriguing was that of Vo N. Giap. His perspective on the war seemed to have both a positive and negative feel to it. In the negative aspect, he seemed to talk down the Americans quite a bit, as if we knew nothing. This isn't surprising in the least that North Vietnam's military architect would feel this way. However, as an American, it really is a blow to our pride as a world power and so called "Protector of Democratic values" to say we underestimated the Vietnamese. Which, in my opinion, is not true. I believe that we knew full well their potential, and their weaknesses, but we did not utilize those weaknesses. After reading Giap's story, I almost felt...talked down to, as if a parent to a child. He mentioned all these atrocities that the Americans inflicted upon the North Vietnamese, but seemed to have forgotten that it is war, and people perish. He is so quick to criticize us, but for the North Vietnamese it was a glorious struggle, or as he claims "a noble sacrifice"

In the positive aspect, he sees the war as a blessing. A sacrifice to be made for the good of Vietnam. For thousands of years the Vietnamese have always contested their independence with foreign powers. Which, for me, was a positive way to look at a negative situation. I have actually never thought about the war as something good, seeing as I'm an American. We viewed it as something of a tragedy, as a great mistake, something we don't talk about in a positive light. However Giap got me to thinking that the other side sees it as their war for independence, a war to be celebrated. If anything positive came out of Giap's testimony, it would be that it got me to think outside the box and look at something differently. One man's tragedy is another man's victory.

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To me, the most disappointing aspect of the chapter 2 readings is the reoccurring theme of missed opportunities. The essay from the former O.S.S. man showed just how differently history could have turned out had the United States supported the anti-colonial movement in Indochina at the conclusion of WWII. Instead, the Truman administration allowed the French back into their colonial possession and then the subsequent Eisenhower administration bankrolled the French effort as the conflict drug into the 1950's.

The other missed opportunity that seems to stand out from the readings in "Patriots" is the American support for the Diem regime. The essays from the reporter, Brown, and his Vietnamese wife highlight the brutality and ineptness of the of the Saigon government. The reading from the helicopter pilot, Richard Olsen, about his experiences in 1962 illustrates the Army of the Republic of Vietnam's (ARVN) utter lack of professionalism and resolve.

The positive elements of the essays revolve mostly around the youthful exuberance of the various American authors and going to an exotic land full of excitement and high adventure. Their optimism seemed to lack a realistic assessment of the facts on the ground. To their credit, most of the authors wrote that on looking back they recognize how flawed the American effort was from the outset. There is, however, one truly optimistic voice in the readings of Part 2; that of Gen. Giap. Seems rather logical considering his side won the war. I guess it pays to be a winner ...

(to the instructor. Seeing as how this is my first journal entry I would greatly appreciate any guidance you have about what is expected in the journals. Thank you for your time.)

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Due date: Saturday, 17 October 2009, 09:10 PM

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The Patriots book that we are reading has a few disappointing stories in it but the one that was most disappointing was Paul Kattenburg's. Paul Kattenburg had spent a lot of time in Vietnam so he probably had some decent knowledge of what was going on there and had some ideas of what needed to be done. Just because you have an idea doesn't mean it is going to work, but you should at least be able to share what you think and give it a chance. I was very disappointed when Kattenburg said that he went to the National Security Council Executive Committee meeting and he suggested that we pull out with honor, and Vice President Johnson said that there was no evidence that the war was going on a downward spiral. It is very easy today to say what we should have and could have done in the war, but I think that if every angle was looked at things might not have been as bad, but who knows?

I believe that ignorance was the biggest reason that we lost the war in the Vietnam. People were making conclusions while they didn't even know what was going on there. How is it possible to win a war when the people that you are trying to help aren't helping themselves?

I also believe that although the Vietnam produced many losses to many it also showed us that there was more to the Vietnamese than met the eye. I think that when you go to war with another country you need to have some background information about that country. The country of Vietnam has been through many wars and hard times and when they wanted independence bad enough they were willing to die for their country. Another thing that the U.S. could have learned is that just because Communism looked like it was going to start a domino effect doesn't mean they were going to. It is very hard to say what we should have done when we weren't there at the time.

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Due date: Saturday, 17 October 2009, 09:10 PM

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Journal Entry #2

Part 1:

When reading first hand accounts of people's experiences with war it can be a very emotional experience. One emotion that I have found myself experiencing often when reading some of these stories is disappointment. The story that frustrated me the most was the account by John Singlaub. There were two main reasons that I was so upset with this section. The first is how America as a country is depicted (and I think it is an accurate depiction). When you read of things like the kidnapping of North Vietnamese fishermen and their subsequent brainwashing you can't help but feel like something isn't right. When, as a country, you have to abuse people and take away their rights so that you can ultimately achieve, for them, "freedom", bells should go off somewhere. What might even be worse than how we treated the N. Vietnamese whom we were trying to brainwash is how we would use our "allies" in the south for this same pursuit. It isn't the fact that we, through bribery and coercion, recruited these "commandos" to be dropped into the North for a very dangerous operation that makes me the most frustrated. It is the fact that we did this knowing that it was doing little to no good! To me this smacks of pure racism. From the beginning we seemed to treat these people as lesser than us in almost every way, and when you dehumanize someone to a certain point, it becomes easy to sacrifice them for the sake of "good conversation at the cocktail parties in Washington". The second aspect of this story that really disappointed me was the attitude and obviously flawed beliefs of the speaker himself. To me this can be summed up by the maddening comparison he makes between the Viet Cong and the American Indian. What happened to the American Indians during our country's westward expansion is, indeed, a very sad story, but just for the opposite reason that he lays out. What happened to these people was genocide, and he is sympathizing with the conquerors. I do see some similarities between the VC and Native Americans, but certainly not as Mr. Singlaub does. These were both peoples fighting for their own self governance. The difference is that the Native American's never got it. All of this being said, however, I think this section of the book is invaluable. We simply have to hear it from all sides, no matter how much we might disagree with one side or the other.

Part 2:

There were also times when I read this section of the book that I felt more hopeful. In Paul Hare's account we see a thoughtful man who better represents me in the way that he saw what was going on around him. He was confused, ignorant and afraid, and he says so. "...I never felt sure about my understanding of where they stood with respect to this conflict". This is a question that should have been more at the heart of what the US government was asking all along. "I always was of the belief that whatever we were trying to do should be through the Vietnamese." This is a man that lived with these people as the only outsider for some time. He seemed to see these people as just that, people. I believe that his confusion is caused by the fact that we were not there for the people of Vietnam to begin with. The fact of the matter is, we, as a country, fight ONLY for our own self interests. What bothers me more than this fact is how vehemently we argue otherwise. Paul Hare seems to know something that John Singlaub never will.

Due date: Saturday, 17 October 2009, 09:10 PM

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One dissapointing story I read was by Paul Hare. The reason I was dissapointed in this story was because he mentions, "I spent four and a half years in Vietnam and I never felt sure about my understanding of the Vietnamese or where they stood with respect to this conflict." This felt very wrong to me because i believe that after spending four and a half years in a place, you should be very confident in your reason for being there and know what exactly you need to be doing. It must be very discomforting as a person involved in this war to be sent to fight and not know exactly what you're fighting for. This leads me to the fact that the government and politics must be so scattered and corrupted that even the people involved could not be told exactly what they were doing in this war. This also lead to the distractions of people such as he mentions cock fighting. Although this cultural interaction was a positive for the war efforts, i feel that it must be very awkward for the men to intermingle with the Vietnamese and not know why they are there. It is almost impossible to put your 100% effort into a war if you do not know what you're fighting for.

In the story of Rufus Phillips, i feel that i gained an amount of hope and optimism. His whole story he tells about the difficulties and hardships throughout the war. He mentioned that he was brought into the war to evaluate psychological warfare, and although he knew nothing, he spent time training and learning so he could put a bigger effort into the war. He says, "The South Vietnamese government existed in name only, a collection of French-trained civil servants who didnt have a clue what to do without the French giving them orders." Rufus also mentioned, "The Vietnamese had very little self-confidence. The French had put them down so much and never really let them get into decision-making positions. All the military operations were run by French officers." The reason i mention these quotes is because the Vietnamese were completely helpless without the French. The simple fact that a man like Rufus stayed in Vietnam for as long as he did is very comforting. He was a man that gave hope to the Vietnamese as well as the Americans because he invested so much time and effort into the war it was very encouraging not to give up. He erased all pessemistic outlooks on the war just by the emotional and physical support he upheld.

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Due date: Saturday, 17 October 2009, 09:10 PM

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I think that the story that disappointed me the most had to have been "The Emperor Has No Clothes". That article made it very clear how ignorant the Government of these great United States really where; and still are. You can see the mistakes of the of past repeating themselves just in a different part of the world. It boiled down to the US Government did not want to loose face in the international community. So instead of cutting our loses we went head first and head stronge into a hopeless war. The ranking people that actually went to Vietnam and educated themselves knew that we could not win. We could bomb every major city back into the stone age and all it would do is delay the inevitable. To read that the secretary of defense knew in 1965 we could not win that war but yet we still fought it is just unbeliveable.

The only good thing that I can see in his article was that we lost to superior communist forces. Looking back and knowing that more than three hundred thousand Chinese where in North Vietnam helping them. The fact that the Soviet Union provided over 5 billion dollars gives a little relief that we didn't loose to a bunch of peasant farmers.

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Due date: Saturday, 17 October 2009, 09:10 PM

Last edited: Saturday, 17 October 2009, 09:07 PM (545 words)

I was most surprised and curious when I came upon the interview with Vo Nguyen Giap had to say about his involvement in the Vietnam Conflict. After reading his interview however, I was disappointed in the vague display of his involvement in the Vietnam War. I saw his interview not of what he experienced and learned, but more of his opinions of how they victoriously won the war. He seemed to lay a lot of fault on the United States involvement in the war, but did not seem to talk about any fault on his side. I would have liked to have heard about his experience fighting the French at Dien Bien Phu. To me this was a great victory for his cause and I think he should have given a first hand account what happened that day. I do understand he might be a private man, and the maybe the only thing he would be interviewed on was his thoughts and opinions on how the Vietnamese won the war. I do however think, that he has so much knowledge and experience even if it is biased it would be so interesting to hear his perspectives about the war past and present.

The other story that I was disappointed with was Paul Hare. After reading some of the other stories it seemed that even after fighting in Vietnam that an American or Vietnamese years later would become friends or find a link to the culture and people. I think by reading his interview he seemed that he wasn't interested in knowing anything about their social structure. Instead he spent his time cock fighting. Spending all his time on training a cock how to fight and then when he finally gets the chance to fight him and he loses his cock. It seems like such a waste of time and energy. Instead of cock fighting he could be experiencing and learning why he was even there in the first place.

Finally I had to note the interview with Luyen Nguyen an his heartbreaking story. This interview didn't disappoint me, but it frustrated me. I didn't know that the South Vietnamese Commandos were captured between 1961-1968. The torture that they endured and the families that suffered. I can't imagine how Ngyuen survived after being imprisoned for twenty-one years, being a POW for that matter.

In reading these interviews, Even though there is a lot of political views and stories of war and horror, I do see that good can come out of the war. Daniel Redmond I see was a good man and helped in the evacuation of almost one million Vietnamese. He seemed to have a good sense of self and really felt as though he was helping people migrate to a safer place. I also feel there is "light at the end of the tunnel" when you read Luyen Nguyen interview. Even though he spent twenty-one years in prison eventually all of his pain and suffering gave him his family back and he got a master's degree and is now counseling students. Maybe he to is now helping students and sharing his experiences in ways to teach and learn about life and life's struggles.

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Though many of the stories were very insightful and interesting one of the stories caught special attention. I was appalled by Lyndon Johnson's comment regarding Vietnam, "Vietnam was just a Raggedy-ass, little forth-rate country (Johnson). The comment struck a chord because we had our soldiers located in Vietnam risking their lives for what they believed in. The comment to me seemed insincere and insensitive. If he sincerely believed it was simply a "raggedy-ass" country then why were we there (Johnson). The comment could have been more tactfully said. His dissatisfaction in the country should have been kept to himself; his comment suggests the country is not of importance demeaning the importance of placing our troops there.

I was very pleased to read the story by John Singlaub who spoke of the treatment of captives. He explained how they were well treated, needs were attended to and develop their views on the idea of freedom and equal pay. I wish I could say that this was a common practice for all captives but the unfortunate reality is that it was not. The idea of caring for the needs of captives shows a rising care of those in need. In my opinion, more wars could be won if both sides worked together showing compassion and educating the other side in peaceful tactics. I am not certain what the success rate of such a practice was, but never the less it is a good start.

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Due date: Saturday, 17 October 2009, 09:10 PM

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After reading the required text, I would have to say two stories kept coming back to me. The first was Paul Kattenburgs and Chester Coopers. The thing that disappointed and frustrated me in their stories would be that the people that were above them did not know much about Vietnam or its heritage. In Kattenburg's story, he had insight about Ngo Dinh Diem that spans ten years and knew more about what was going on in Vietnam than the National Security Council Executive Committee. I also found it frustrating that they would not listen to Kattenburg when he answered their question with that he thought that they should pull out. The council seemed to just dismiss his opinion even though he had more knowledge of the Vietnam situation. I found it heart breaking that they could only see their picture and not the best outcome for the United states and Vietnam. As for Copper's story, I would have to say that I could see alot of the same going on. When the war started in Vietnam no one in the American embassy in Saigon could speak Vietnamese. They also did not know anything about Buddhism. I find this both frustrating and disappointing. How could we expect to win a war were we could not speak their language or understand their heritage. I also found it hard to understand why an American would be writing Ky's speech. It seemed to me that both of these men tried to do what was best for the United States and Vietnam, but none of their superiors would listen or acknowledge their findings or facts and us them to end the Vietnam war.

As for the second part of the assignment, I do believe that we learned alot from the Vietnam War. I think that we do use all of the information that we can get in order to resolve a conflict before we go to war. I also think that we now try and learn as much about a country as we can. The biggest thing that I would have to say from these to stories is that we need to find a solution before we just jump in feet first. I also think that these stories shows how important it is to listen to people with firsthand knowledge and not just trust the opinion of those in charge. I think that we learned to use all the information that we can get our hands on and make an educated decision on how to proceed in a situation and use talks before war.

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