Ropeyarn Sunday â€œSea Storiesâ€• and Open Trackbacks

Description

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Not so much of a â€œsea storyâ€• today as a â€œwar storyâ€• to put my context on some recent newsâ€¦.

The dispatch from the 5 NCOs in the 82nd Airborne Division was illuminating, but not necessarily in a complimentary light. The President and many other Government reports say the Surge is bringing results. The NCOs say they see daily problems. So, whoâ€™s telling the truth?

Both, I submit and hereâ€™s a little personal experience that leads me to this conclusion: I first became a pin cushion for the medics in 1962, in order to move overseas to Okinawa. Off my father packed us up for a two year adventure to see the world. We first lived just west of MCAS Futema, with a few families of Army sargents living next on the same street of a few concrete block houses. Thus began my â€œindocâ€• into military life. I played in the sugar cane fields and around the large above ground tombs, occasionally finding artifacts and ordnance left over from a massive conflict not quite 20 years past. We moved about a year later to live on Fort Buckner, housed amongst the Green Berets, the pride of John F, Kennedy.

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From our association in these neighborhoods, and the concentrated presence of the military, I began to absorb the first person history of the war in Vietnam. Being in 3rd and 4th grades, I wasnâ€™t much of a newspaper reader or news watcher, so the information came in listening to the adult discussions.

Back home we went for a few years, then off to Guam for 8th through 11th grades (67-71). More massive exposure to the military, this time the Navy and Air Force, with some Marines and Coast Guardsmen sprinkled in. BY now I had pretty much set my life study path on warfare and modern history, and, with the war in Vietnam being larger, I heard more, plus I watched the news and read the papers and news periodicals now. In Boy Scouts, and on sports teams, I had military men as leaders and coaches. I listened to their â€œwar stories.â€• Being overseas in a large concentration of military bases also brought me â€œStars and Stripesâ€• newspapers.

The net result of this is I grew up in the middle of first person accounts of the conditions in Vietnam, from the Special Forces A_Teams, to the Marine who had a three crossbow bolts go past the tree trunk he was sitting against, all the while thinking more mosquitoes were swarming, until he turned to look. Add to that the DoD press of the â€œStars and Stripesâ€• generally putting a detailed, yet rosy face on the war, and ladled on top, the stateside media that seemed to tell a story much different than what I was getting from my â€œother sources.â€•

Were any of these sources not telling the truth? For the most part, they all told it as they saw it, albeit through the filters they each put on it.Ã‚ No one author or story teller had access to the â€œbig picture,â€• even if they claimed to.Ã‚ Those filters, by default, cause even the most detailed oriented writer to miss the mark.Ã‚ I believe most people actually comprehend this concept, they just donâ€™t

acknowledge it often when they voice their opinions.

My long term reaction? For several decades, I voraciously read all things on Vietnam I could come across. There are many stories and itâ€™s not that they donâ€™t match up, but they tell stories as varied as the direct, uniformed troop combat in I Corps, to the SEALs skulking about in the night among the Viet Cong controlled villages in the Mekong Delta.Ã, To this day, itâ€™s almost like three separate conflicts to me, due to this multi-facted exposure.

The NCOs provide a valuable first person view of the villages they walk, but they do not see all of the story, nor does any one else, yet all of the reports, in this war from bloggers, from bloggers become published authors, to guys with digital video cameras becoming movie producers, and then, those â€œstandardâ€• reporting sources. One day, when we have the time, and the dust has settled and tempers cooled by decades of reflection, we will have a better chance to see what really is happening now, as word of mouth and first person stories at the top, middle and lower levels come forth.

It would be foolish, as Iâ€™m sure many with military experience, and those with historical perspectives, to base the overall progress of the war on the reports of 5 well spoken non-commissioned officers, but we would also be foolish to not make significant note of the problems they face daily, indicating there is more good work to be done.

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