Parallelisms in Attitude of Vietnam Veterans & Veterans of the Indian Wars as Reflected in Memoirs & Oral Traditions

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Charles E.

1974
PARALLELISMS IN ATTITUDE OF VIETNAM VETERANS 
AND VETERANS OF THE INDIAN WARS AS REFLECTED IN 
MEMOIRS AND ORAL TRADITIONS

A Thesis
Presented to
the Folk Studies Faculty of the English Department
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Charles E. Martin
May 1974
PARALLELISMS IN ATTITUDE OF VIETNAM VETERANS
AND VETERANS OF THE INDIAN WARS AS REFLECTED IN
MEMOIRS AND ORAL TRADITIONS

Recommended April 30, 1974
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Director of Thesis

Approved May 3, 1974
(Date)
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Dean of the Graduate College
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank Dr. Kenneth W. Clarke, not only for his help on this thesis, but also for all the good advice and encouragement he has given me this last year and a half.
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Oral narratives of Vietnam War veterans, collected at Ft. Campbell, Kentucky, were paralleled to the written narratives of the Indian War soldiers abstracted from existing diaries, journals and autobiographies. A statistical analysis was applied to the Vietnam War texts to discern the attitudes of the informants as a group. Informants' attitudes towards the enemy and the enemy's guerrilla fighting style were shown to be similar to the attitudes of the Indian War soldiers in both areas. Both sets of similar attitudes resulted in high levels of frustration which produced occasional atrocities.

By the application of folklore and folklore fieldwork, in the form of instruction on the enemies' rites, customs and beliefs, and a statistical analysis of the oral lore of the American soldiers, an atrocity-producing situation may be detected beforehand, and corrected.
INTRODUCTION

At dawn on November 27, 1868, Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer led the 7th Cavalry down through the long, snow covered valley towards a Cheyenne village situated on a bank of the Washita River. This particular group of Cheyennes was not hostile, but it was enough that they were Indians. The 7th Cavalry struck the village from four sides and rode through, shooting, slashing, yelling, and cursing. In a matter of minutes over one hundred Indians were dead, the majority being women and children. Custer reported 105 Indians killed, fifty-three women and children captured. In wording his report, Custer implied the dead were all warriors. Subsequent reports listed the dead warriors at no more than thirty-eight.¹

A century later, on March 16, 1968, the men of Charlie Company, First Battalion, Twentieth Infantry, walked along a road from their helicopter landing zone to a Vietnamese village known to the military as "Pinkville" or My Lai 4. It was about eight o'clock in the morning. My Lai 4 was a suspected Viet Cong stronghold. Any Viet Cong that were there left at the first sound of a helicopter. Those left in the village were not hostile, but it was enough that they were Vietnamese. Charlie Company went through the village shooting, slashing, and burning. By ten o'clock in the morning between 450 and 500 of the village's inhabitants were dead. Most of them were women, children, and old men.

The first reports out of My Lai 4 listed 128 Viet Cong killed and three weapons captured.  

The comparisons are obvious. American soldiers attacked non-hostile villages, massacred the inhabitants, and attempted to cover the atrocities up by distorting the casualty lists.  

But what were the like causes that precipitated these massacres? Could these soldiers have shared similar attitudes, frustrations, and conditions one hundred years apart? What could the G.I. in Vietnam have possibly shared with the soldier of the American West? They shared more than would be believed. They shared like attitudes and frustrations toward the enemy, the army, and their own ability to cope with both. This resulted in the massacre of innocents in both wars. These attitudes and frustrations can be discerned from the oral and written narratives of both groups. Examination of the lore of each group reveals similar patterns. It is the object of this thesis to show these similarities in lore, and the patterns that emerge, by first introducing a collection of oral narratives from the Vietnam War and applying simple statistics to them to show the attitudes that can be abstracted. A comparison of narrative subjects and attitudes from the Vietnam War will be compared to the narratives and attitudes of the Indian Wars by examination of the diaries, journals, and autobiographies that still survive from that period. A conclusion will follow which will suggest some ways that folklore and folklore fieldwork may be applied to future conflicts of this type, perhaps resulting in the avoidance of future massacres.

---

In the Spring of 1973 I taught English to members of the 101st Airborne Division at Ft. Campbell, Kentucky. Most were veterans of combat in Vietnam who wanted to pass the General Education Development Test. This qualifies them for their high school equivalency diploma. I taught three classes a day, one hour a class, twice a week. Towards the end of the six-month course, when we became familiar enough with each other, I asked them to become my informants for a sample of G.I. lore of the Vietnam War. Most agreed, and some who were suspicious when they first saw a tape recorder soon seemed to forget about it. The collecting sessions were set up the same as the classes. Each was about one hour in length with three or four informants in a session. Sometimes I would have three different sessions with three different groups of informants in one day. That number of informants in one session seemed to work well. They told stories to each other more than they told them to me, and they unconsciously seemed to pick the subjects. After a few collection sessions, I perceived certain subject patterns beginning to form. I suggested some subjects when things began to quiet down, but my suggestions were mostly ignored. I have retained these subject patterns in dividing the narratives in Chapter I. The ages of my informants ranged from 18 to 30, and the ranks from E-1 (private) to E-6 (sergeant). Their educational backgrounds were about the same in that all but one were high school dropouts. The ten informants, including two blacks, represented a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and geographic areas. Most of my informants had combat experience (the informants' biographies at the end of the introduction will give evidence of this).
Twenty percent of my informants were black (a result of chance). At some periods in the war, blacks were being drafted at a rate of fifteen percent (they make up eleven percent of the population), and contributed twenty-two percent of the total casualties. In areas of education those who did poorly on the various army qualification and aptitude tests upon entering the service were usually assigned to combat units. GI's scoring higher were usually assigned to the rear as clerk-typists or computer technicians. Most of my informants were helicopter crew men who flew combat missions daily.

My informant group is approximately representative of the national group of veterans in terms of black-white ratio and educational level.

---


4 Hersh, "My Lai 4," p. 57.
BIOGRAPHIES OF INFORMANTS

NAME: Gerry Bahur
ADDRESS: 4830 Doyle Road
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Allegheny County
AGE: 18 SEX: Male
BIRTHPLACE: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
RACE, NATIONALITY OR ETHNIC BACKGROUND: Russian
OTHER COMMUNITIES IN WHICH INFORMANT LIVED: None given
SIGNIFICANT TRAVEL: New York
Ohio
Pennsylvania
West Virginia
Virginia
Maryland
Maine
Kentucky
Tennessee
Georgia
North Carolina
South Carolina
Florida
Arkansas
OCCUPATION: U.S. Army
EDUCATION: Eleventh grade
RELIGION: Russian Orthodox

NAME: Joseph H. Goray
ADDRESS: Route # 5
Talladega, Alabama
AGE: 23 SEX: Male
BIRTHPLACE: Atlanta, Georgia
RACE, NATIONALITY OR ETHNIC BACKGROUND: English
OTHER COMMUNITIES IN WHICH INFORMANT LIVED:
United States 1950-1970
Vietnam 1970-1971

SIGNIFICANT TRAVEL: Sydney, Australia
Bangkok, Thailand

OCCUPATION: U.S. Army

EDUCATION: Eleventh grade

RELIGION: Baptist

NAME: Kenneth L. Guy

ADDRESS: Route # 2
Richton, Mississippi
Perry County

AGE: 23 SEX: Male

RACE, NATIONALITY OR ETHNIC BACKGROUND: Caucasian

OTHER COMMUNITIES IN WHICH INFORMANT LIVED:
Ft. Benning, Georgia
Ft. Rucker, Alabama

SIGNIFICANT TRAVEL: Vietnam 1968-1969
Vietnam 1971-1972

OCCUPATION: U.S. Army

EDUCATION: Seventh grade

RELIGION: Church of God

NAME: Charles Johnson

ADDRESS: Ft. Campbell, Kentucky

AGE: 23 SEX: Male

BIRTHPLACE: Orange, Texas

RACE, NATIONALITY OR ETHNIC BACKGROUND: Black
OTHER COMMUNITIES IN WHICH INFORMANT LIVED: None given

SIGNIFICANT TRAVEL: Vietnam
   Hong Kong

OCCUPATION: U.S. Army

EDUCATION: High school graduate

RELIGION: None given

NAME: Michael W. Jones

ADDRESS: Turmann, Arkansas

AGE: 19      SEX: Male

RACE, NATIONALITY OR ETHNIC BACKGROUND: Caucasian

OTHER COMMUNITIES IN WHICH INFORMANT LIVED: Not given

SIGNIFICANT TRAVEL: Ft. Polk, Louisiana
   Ft. Campbell, Kentucky

OCCUPATION: U.S. Army

EDUCATION: Eighth grade

RELIGION: Not given

NAME: Willie Joseph

ADDRESS: 3043 C Hammond Hqt.
   Ft. Campbell, Kentucky

AGE: 30      SEX: Male

BIRTHPLACE: Columbus, Georgia

RACE, NATIONALITY OR ETHNIC BACKGROUND: Black

OTHER COMMUNITIES IN WHICH INFORMANT LIVED:
   Europe 1967-1968

SIGNIFICANT TRAVEL: Taiwan
OCCUPATION: U.S. Army
EDUCATION: Eleventh grade
RELIGION: Baptist

NAME: Paul D. Sprout, Jr.
ADDRESS: 69 Maple Street
          Clarksville, Tennessee
          Montgomery County
AGE: 22   SEX: Male
BIRTHPLACE: Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
RACE, NATIONALITY OR ETHNIC BACKGROUND: Dutch and German
OTHER COMMUNITIES IN WHICH INFORMANT LIVED:
          Germany 1970-1971
          Spain 1969-1970
          Vietnam 1971-1972
SIGNIFICANT TRAVEL: Paris, France
          London, England
          Mexico City, Mexico
OCCUPATION: Helicopter crew chief
          Diesel mechanic
EDUCATION: Eleventh grade
RELIGION: Lutheran

NAME: Bobby Ray Tharp
ADDRESS: Route # 1
          Loganville, Georgia
AGE: 19   SEX: Male
RACE, NATIONALITY OR ETHNIC BACKGROUND: English and Cherokee
OTHER COMMUNITIES IN WHICH INFORMANT LIVED:
          Marietta, Georgia
NAME: Ernie L. White
ADDRESS: Gassaway, West Virginia
Braxton County
AGE: 26 SEX: Male
RACE, NATIONALITY OR ETHNIC BACKGROUND: Dutch and Irish
OTHER COMMUNITIES IN WHICH INFORMANT LIVED:
  Cleveland, Ohio 1966-1967
  North Ridgeville, Ohio 1967-1968
SIGNIFICANT TRAVEL: Korea 1969-1971
OCCUPATION: U.S. Army
EDUCATION: Eighth grade
RELIGION: Baptist

NAME: Calvin L. Zigler
ADDRESS: 1178 Primauern
Nipomo, California
AGE: 21 SEX: Male
BIRTHPLACE: Oreville, California
RACE, NATIONALITY OR ETHNIC BACKGROUND: German, Dutch and Portuguese Hawaiian
OTHER COMMUNITIES IN WHICH INFORMANT LIVED:
Pismo Beach, California
Santa Maria, California
Santa Barbara, California
Arroyo Grande, California
Malibu, California

SIGNIFICANT TRAVEL: Hawaii
Vietnam

OCCUPATION: U.S. Army helicopter mechanic

EDUCATION: Eleventh grade

RELIGION: Baptist
CHAPTER I

THE VIETNAM WAR TEXTS

INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXTS

The texts in this chapter are sometimes partial ones. Space necessitates this. I have abstracted those parts that are vital to the narrative and that will help give the reader some idea of the kind of stories told in each subject area. Army Life is essentially the miscellaneous subjects that were not large enough in number to warrant a separate subject heading. The complete texts may be found in the Western Kentucky University Folklore and Folklife Collection in Bowling Green, Kentucky. These texts will be classed as either "A" or "B". It is the policy of the Western Kentucky University Folklore program that class "A" texts be an accurate verbatim transcript of the informant's conversation. Class "B" texts are not verbatim but are still very close to the informant's exact words and phrasing.

SECTION A - Basic Training

Basic training is the ritual the new recruit must go through to pass from civilian to soldier. These stories were told by the younger men who had never been overseas. It seemed that even though basic training was as close to the war as they were going to get, it was still close enough. It gave them their own brand of war stories
and gripes to tell. Those that had been overseas almost never mentioned basic training. They were obviously too far removed from that after being overseas. The use of profanity among the younger soldiers was more noticeable than among the older ones. While this might not be evidenced by the examples given, it was noticeable in most of what they told me. The older men seemed to use profanity for stylistic effect while the younger men seemed to use it to compensate for just being young.

Number 1.

Gerry Bahur, Age 18
Kenneth L. Guy, Age 23
Class "A" text

Bahur: "The best part of basic is escape and evasion. You got a POW camp. Barb wire fences, and they play for real. They beat the s--- out of you."

Guy: "They tie you up and pour water over you, and slap the hell out of you."

Bahur: "And I was the aggressor. And you know, they got a mirror there you know, so your company commander can sit there and watch you and if you say anything, you know, he goes in there and beats the s--- out of you."

Number 2.

Gerry Bahur, Age 18
Class "A" text

"Those drill sergeants are sick. They like them weird airborne songs. Over hill, up hill, down hill, around hill, five miles, ten miles, airborne! Everybody is going, 'F--- man. Goddamn, you stupid bastard! I joined this army to be a clerk, not airborne!'"
Number 3.  
Kenneth L. Guy, Age 23  
Class "A" text

"When we was in that camp they made us come around and with their hands they put rice and old chicken, you know, it wasn't cooked and they threw it on the ground and they got p-----, you know, and made us pick it up. And if they find one grain of rice they really get you."

Number 4.  
Bobby Ray Tharp, Age 19  
Class "A" text

"They had a big galvanized pipe about that big around [five feet], and they make you crawl through it, and then beat it while you was in there. You try to run out of it either way, you try to get out either way and you run into big, deep, gunky mud."

Number 5.  
Gerry Bahur, Age 18  
Class "A" text

"They knock you in little crates in the ground and slam the lid and bury you out in the sun."

Number 6.  
Bobby Ray Tharp, Age 19  
Gerry Bahur, Age 18

Tharp: "They got a table. They lay them flat down and tie them down and let that water drip right between your eyes too. Drive you crazy!"

Bahur: "You can't do anything about it. You can't complain to your congressman, nothing. Because it's part of the training. You have to go through basic."
Tharp: "These guys, some of them come out of there after awhile, after talking and everything. And it like they were paralyzed. For awhile."

Number 7. Gerry Bahur, Age 18
Class "A" text

"Yea, they got some weird songs. I was telling you about this one, talks about a guy walking down the street looking for a whore and he couldn't stick it in. He got another one and he couldn't find it. And finally he got one and he got the clap. Like they sing that around Thursday or Friday, so when you do get to go out, you know, you're going out that weekend. And you won't go out and get the clap. They try to scare you. Everybody's heading for the whorehouses and and everything."

Number 8. Paul D. Sprout, Age 22
Class "A" texts

"The fifth week of basic we got a series of shots. Well, they give them to us with the air gun. And the dude giving the shots, well, one dude in our company, in my platoon, platoon leader. He was 6'8" and had to go before a special board to get in. A big dumb son-of-a-bitch. And ah, he came in there, the dude took the gun like this, and come down like this. Just laid his arm wide open. That air gun will just lay your arm wide open. And he says, 'What'd you do that for?' And, just, boy I mean he knocked him head over heels. Broke his jaw here, and ah, there's a bone that comes down here. Broke that. And then he smacked him again. Smacked him right up in here and broke his collar bone. They put him out! They got him out!"
He was discharged. It just p---- him off that he cut him open like that. That was it."

Number 9.  

Gerry Bahur, Age 18  
Class "B" text

"Them f----- never go to combat, you know that. Once they're a drill sergeant, they never go into combat. S---, cause you know, alotta dudes see that bastard in combat, they might shoot him."

SECTION B - Section-8 Stories

A section-8 is a medical discharge from the army. G.I. lore has it that one is able to obtain a section-8 by pretending that he is crazy. I have collected variants of section-8 stories from other wars and possibly some new ones. The one readily noticeable thing about this particular section is the numerous self-mutilation stories. Self-mutilation has also shown up recently in the lore of the draft resister. This type of lore, a product of the Vietnam War, mostly concerned the ingenious ways of failing the army physical examination. I found little evidence of this type of lore because all my informants obviously passed the physical. Failing the physical was no longer a humorous possibility for the G.I., but a section-8 was. Hence the enormous popularity of this section.

Number 1.  

Bobby Ray Tharp, Age 19  
Class "A" text

"We got a new one. We got a new one. Guy took a dog collar and a leash and put wire through it and he walks around with this invisible dog all the time. He walks around with this dog all the
time. Walks up to me. 'See my dog.' 'Yea, I see your dog. Nice little old dog.' The dog eats with him, sleeps with him, everything. Everywhere he goes, that leash and dog goes. It really looks real too."

Number 2. Kenneth L. Guy, Age 23
Class "A" text

"I knew one guy that shot his foot on purpose. Took a .38 and blew three of his toes off. And they still didn't let him out."

Number 3. Charles Johnson, Age 23
Class "B" text

"He ain't got no motorcycle. He's running around W-O-O-O-M-M. He's running around like that for about a month. W-O-O-O-M-M. So they couldn't keep him. Nutty. So they discharged him. And ah, the dude left the hospital. W-O-O-O-M-M. Rode up to the front gate where the MP's were. Got off his motorcycle. Cut it off. And started walking out the gate, man. MP yelled, 'Hey, you forgot your motorcycle, Dude.' He said 'I don't need it now. I got a discharge.'"

Number 4. Kenneth L. Guy, Age 23
Class "A" text

"A couple of years ago, it's been four or five years ago, my uncle was in the army and he's talking about this guy that was trying to get a discharge anyway. And they put him in charge of the latrines, and he had this one certain commode there, cleaned it spotless and didn't let anybody use it. And he'd go in there and drink water out of this thing. Anything to get a discharge."
Number 5. Charles Johnson, Age 23
Class "B" text

"We had this one dude that had this fishing rod. He'd put a big safety pin on the end and put a piece of Spam on it and go fishing in the commode."

Number 6. Paul D. Sprout, Age 22
Class "A" text

"Dude walking around, picking up paper and looking at it all the time. So ah, D.I. [drill instructor] thought he was crazy and got him a discharge. And the D.I. finally asked him what the hell he was looking for, and he says, 'Right here. I found it.'"

Number 7. Willie Joseph, Age 30
Class "B" text

"This guy told me this story. There's this cat over in Vietnam, and he just didn't want to go out in the field. So every time the first sergeant get everybody to pack their gear to go into the field, you know, this guy would go outside, and they had these bushes in front of the company area, you know. So, he'd go out and start beatin' them bushes. Like the bushes had something on them. He'd go out and beat them bushes."

Number 8. Willie Joseph, Age 30
Class "B" text

"A guy just shot himself. Shot himself in the leg. The back part of the leg. In the calf part of the leg. They sent him to the hospital. I don't know whether they let him [out of the army] or not. He wanted out."
Number 9. Calvin L. Zigler, Age 21
Class "A" text

"Did you hear about the guy walking through the hall with the chain? He said his dog was at the end of it. He was just walking down the hall. The chain, you know those great, big ones. The links were about like that [3"], thrown over his shoulder walking down the hall. Every once in a while he would play Caesar. Stand out on the porch and give the Caesar speech. You'd walk by and he wouldn't pay any attention to you. If you stepped across the chain he'd yell at you for stepping on his dog. It was a real small dog."

Number 10. Bobby Ray Tharp, Age 19
Class "A" text

"I heard this story from a guy in the barracks talking about this guy who thought he was a filling station. All the time he was filling up people's cars, ya know, right there on the base."

Number 11. Joseph E. Goray, Age 23
Class "A" text

"I was thinking about the time when I was over there [Vietnam]. Everybody thought he was really crazy, you know, but he was just putting on. I know he was, cause he told me he was going to do it that night. He went to the club. He went in and got plastered, you know. He said he was going to get out of his mind. So, he went to the club and did it. Came up to the rear, to the company area, and went to the arms room and told the arms room man that he was the officer of the guard. I guess you could call it that. So he walks in and grabs him an M-16, gets him a magazine of ammo, you know. Goes right through the hooch [living area], and KUKUKUKU everywhere, you know, everywhere. And
beds, top, look like Swiss cheese, man. Holes everywhere."

SECTION C - Awol Stories

AWOL means "Absent Without Leave." It is a popular subject among the GI's. The longer one is AWOL, and the more he escapes when caught, the better the audience reaction in a tale-telling situation.

Number 1. Charles Johnson, Age 23
Class "B" text

"Did you hear about this dude, 1938, dude walked up to the MP at the front gate. He been AWOL from 1938 to 1954. But they couldn't do nothing to him except pay him his back pay. The dude wasn't AWOL. They didn't have him on report. And ah, the dude told them, you know, you come in and you don't go to your company. You go home and they send you your orders there. That's what he did, and he was home from 1938 to 1954."

Number 2. Joseph E. Goray, Age 23
Class "A" text

"That's still not as bad. I haven't found out why they haven't caught me yet. Gone for thirteen months. I come back from Vietnam, you know. And I called Ft. Hood, Texas. Where I was supposed to report to, you know. And I called up and I was talking to this major, you know. And I said, 'Ah, I'm supposed to come to the 518th Training down there, Ft. Hood.' And he said, '518th Training. Where in the devil is that?' I said, 'It's at Ft. Hood.' He says, 'No, it ain't here.' And he looked up in the army, in the list the
army, all the parts of the army. And it didn't even exist. And I had orders to go there, you know. So I told them I was going to be a day late, anyway. So he told me, said, 'Well, you can come out here, but we're gonna have to assign you to another unit.' And so, instead of going out there I just stayed home, you know. I stayed home for nine months. So, I go round and talk to the MP's and everything, you know. They never did say anything. I had hair down to here, you know. So, I come up here, you know. Well, they carry me to Ft. McClennan first. And they couldn't find none of my records. They was gonna discharge me down there, you know, cause they couldn't find my 201 file down there. So they sent my rear up here, and ah, they stuck me in the stockade for a week. I started raising Cain and all that kind of junk, and ah, some high ranking official from here told them to get me out of there. Said I could be a civilian for all they know, you know. Simply because they couldn't prove I was in the service. So they put me in the daggone Delta Company in the 101st. And I went in one day. Well, I got there on a Friday. Supposed to get married on a Friday night. So I asked Mr. McMillian, 'How about leave to go home and get married on?' He said, 'When you getting married?' I said, 'Tonight.' He says, 'Well, all I can give you is two days,' I said, 'Naw, you can give me more than that.' He says, 'Naw, that's all I can give you is two days.' And the day before I wanted to go they give a guy two weeks to go home and get married. So they give me a three day pass. And I took two months and thirteen days. Got an Article 15 [possible loss or rank and pay], busted one rank and no money out of my pay check. And, you'll never guess where I stayed the whole time I was up there? We never, we never did leave this
area. Right around Ft. Campbell. Never did. You know where I stayed at? Right outside of Gate 6. Stayed right there for two months and thirteen days. And went home Alabama and the dadgum MP's picked me up."

Number 3. Joseph E. Goray, Age 23

"One guy at Ft. McClellan. Everybody called him 'Hippy.' And so they, at Ft. McClellan they carry [drive], they wouldn't handcuff you or nothing. They just carry you out and let you work on the road, or something like that, during the day time. And so this Hippy guy, he lived in Birmingham. So they carried him out to this ditch and it had one of those big drain pipes in it. And so, the MP walked around behind (I was with him, you know). Walked around behind the truck. Said, 'Go boy!' WOOOSSS! He was gone! To this day they still haven't caught him."

Number 4. Joseph E. Goray, Age 23

"At Ft. McClellan they's this big mountain, you know. The road winds around this mountain. You go down the big hill and you're in Anniston, you know. And we're standing as far as from here to the gate and the MP said, 'Take off!' So, that Hippy. He does, you know. They caught him, but he come back again, you know. MP told him to duck. So he ducked. And I don't guess they still caught him today."

Number 5. Willie Joseph, Age 30

"We had one guy in the company. He's seventeen years old and
he married a girl about sixteen. So he comes in the service and he wants to get out now. So he goes AWOL and comes back and they say they're gonna give him an Article 15. So he's trying to get out with a 212 [unfit for military service], something like that. So, they give him an Article 15, you know. Starts over again. Goes AWOL again, you know. So he got the idea from somebody that if he give them enough trouble that they'll put him out, you know. So, they give him an Article 15 and he goes AWOL again. So ah, he comes back. No, he don't come back. His father finds out about it, you know, and his father calls the army and raises a whole bunch of sand that they're not treating his son right. So he comes back and they keep him about two weeks, you know. Then he goes AWOL again, you know. And now he's in Ft. Leavenworth! He's in Ft. Leavenworth! He got what he wanted."

SECTION D - The Vietnamese

There seemed to be much noticeable racism towards the Vietnamese on the part of the white G.I. Slang terms used by whites for the Vietnamese were, for example, "dink," "slant," and "gook." I never noticed these terms used by my black informants. The first two stories included in this section are basically the same. The first is told by a white G.I., the second by a black. Notice the difference in attitude toward the Vietnamese.

Number 1. Kenneth L. Guy, Age 23
Class "A" text

"Tell you what. The women over there wear men's underwear. They like them. They go on over there, they do your laundry. My
hoochmaid [female servant] did my laundry and everything and I come up missing a lot of T-shirts and undershorts, you know. And one of these days I go to get me a piece of ass off of this girl and find out she has my damn undershorts on. I beat her ass.

Number 2. Charles Johnson, Age 23
Class "B" text

"That's funny. I'm with this girl and she takes her clothes off and she's standing there and she got a pair of green undershorts on. You can't do nothing but laugh."

Number 3. Charles Johnson, Age 23
Class "B" text

"We had pappa-san [male Vietnamese] find him a cat, big cat, and he cooked him and ate him... He found him a cat and guess how he cooked it. He cooked it over burnt manure and ate it."

Number 4. Kenneth L. Guy, Age 23
Class "A" text

"That ain't half as bad as taking a dadgum chicken and cutting his head off and draining the blood in a cup. You know, this rice that they got over there. They got this dry, this rice in a cup, and dump the blood in and eat it... Either that or take eggs right before they're hatched, and take the little chicken out and eat'em whole."

Number 5. Calvin L. Zigler, Age 21
Class "A" text

"They [Vietnamese women] just sneak through the perimeter."
I was on Long Bin Post for awhile, and that post was so big they'd sneak through the perimeter wire. And they're all over anyhow. And the guy (the pimp) would sort of grab them and sort of organize them, you know. Feed them a little, and find them a place to hide, you know, when they try to find where they are. People would just sit there and watch them too. The guards and stuff, they know what's going on. They know they ain't VC [Viet Cong] or nothing. A lot of them would just stay on post, you know. They come through and get fake I.D.'s. Come through like they're working for some outfit, you know, as KP's or something. And they stay on post that night and hide somewhere.

Number 6. Calvin L. Zigler, Age 21
Class "A" text

"You see women that are pregnant 365 days a year, you know. It's only supposed to last nine months, you know. The whole year they're pregnant every morning. They leave, they're pregnant, too. That's because they, in the morning they bring grass [marijuana] and different stuff in. Sell it. And at night they'd steal everything, everybody, underwear, anything. They put it back and try and get out the gate with it."

Number 7. Willie Joseph, Age 30
Class "B" text

"I see a Vietnamese, what you call them, a RF's and PF's. Regular Forces and Popular Forces. Popular Forces guard the villages and hamlets. Regular Forces to out in the boons [woods]. So we went out, and we were to secure this village at one time. We went on a re-con, you know. Them PF's start to question them cats, you know."
They went after them. Took the butt of his weapon, man, BOOWWW!
Right in his daggone face, you know. With the gun, dead in the face.
Dead in the daggone face. WOW! That cat started rapping [talking],
man. Bloodied his face, bloodied his face all up. That cat started
rapping though."

Number 8. Gerry Bahur, Age 18
Class "A" text

"A lot of them [Vietnames women] who don't like it over there
probably want to come here just to get away from there. You know, if
she's a good looking chick she can come over here and make out good.
They hear how big and nice the United States is. All the good things."

Number 9. Calvin L. Zigler, Age 21
Class "B" text

"The Vietnamese used to do things, like if they had a cold
they'd get this medicine and spread it all over their back and take a
quarter or something and have another Vietnamese rub up and down their
back until their back turned red. For a cold!"

Number 10. Charles Johnson, Age 23
Class "B" text

"I remember one place we had to go. We had to go to one of
these villages. If you take a picture of a Vietnamese or Cambodian
they hang around you. Cause you captured their soul. Real weird."

Number 11. Charles Johnson, Age 23
Class "B" text

"I heard this and I believe it's true. Do you know that a
Vietnamese girl, do you know who takes her virginity? Her father."

SECTION E - Making Money

Making money is another popular subject. In this category the more money one made illegally the better the audience reaction—especially from profits made smuggling narcotics. As evidenced in popular culture, the hustler reigns supreme.

Number 1. Calvin L. Zigler, Age 21
Class "A" text

"One of them a G.I., some of them would get Vietnamese whores and pimp them off to everybody, you know. Make, like pimp them off for five dollars for a short time, and give them a couple of dollars and keep three dollars for himself. Stuff like that."

Number 2. Calvin L. Zigler, Age 21
Class "B" text

"I've heard about people taking junk [heroin] and taking Mennen's powder and taking it out and dumping the powder out, and filling it about three-quarters full with junk. And then putting Mennen's powder in with it, you know, the other quarter full with Mennen's powder, so it smells like Mennen's powder, and it is. Now it would be cut one-quarter with Mennen's powder, but it wouldn't hurt you. When you got it back it would be worth about ten or fifteen thousand dollars. Even more if he cut it outright himself. He could make close to a million dollars off of it."
Number 3.  
Paul D. Sprout, Age 22  
Class "A" text  
"We had a couple of guys that brought some hard s--- [heroin]. One dude got a hold of some lead. Made him a lead box. Had this guy in sheet metal melt it down. Made a box out of it. A thin layer, a real thin layer. And he put a hole in the top. Drilled a real small hole in the top. Filled that son-of-a-bitch full. About that big. Six or seven inches. And it weighed quite a bit. And he went downtown and told pappa-san to make a ceramic cast of a, some kind of Buddha. Made a thing of Buddha and put that thing inside of him. It wasn't hollow at all. It was solid ceramic so the thing was super heavy. Like a hundred and thirty pounds, you know. And he sent it back. And he got it back and he'll probably make a handful of dough on that. That's a lot of horse [heroin]. That's a lot of stuff."

Number 4.  
Charles Johnson, Age 23  
Class "B" text  
"Take cellophane and wrap grass in it and put in in an amplifier. Send it home. Some guys when they ready to come home cut their shaving kits, the plastic on the inside, cut that and stick grass up in there. There was many ways to take stuff out of there, but now you can't hardly take anything out of there. They search you so thoroughly and they got the dogs and all that stuff."

Number 5.  
Calvin L. Zigler, Age 21  
Class "A" text  
"There'd be, they'd steal, you could take cigarettes. At our price they're pretty cheap, and beer, whiskey, and stuff like that and trade it for just about anything over there. Stuff like that. If you
could get hold of American money. Five dollar bill. Some places it could get you twenty dollars of MPC. MPC is military payment over there. You can't use normal money so they have this other kind of money they make. We call it 'Funny Money.' If you could get hold of a five dollar bill, American money, you could trade it for about twenty dollars MPC. Which you could take down and trade back for twenty dollars in American money. In other words, you could triple your money's worth over there."

Number 6. Willie Joseph, Age 30
Class "A" text

"We got what we call 'TSP Packs.' Toilet Sundry Pack. Ten cartons of cigarettes, right. Ten cartons of cigarettes. Enough for several hundred men. There were cartons of cigarettes, candy, soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, writing paper, pens. You could get a sundry pack, s--- man, you make a hundred dollars easy. Vietnamese people. You could make more than that. You could make three hundred dollars off of a sundry pack."

SECTION F - The Enemy

Where my informants would speak with less than full respect for the South Vietnamese, they had much admiration and some noticeable fear for the fighting ability of North Vietnamese. The North Vietnamese (NVA - North Vietnamese Army) and VC (Viet Cong) seemed to retain some aura of the unknown. They were never quite understood by my informants.
Number 1. Calvin L. Zigler, Age 21
Class "B" text

"We had areas we didn't even want to get close to. We had a place called the 'Mushroom,' where you didn't want to fly over. The Iron Triangle, and The Mushroom is a place where the river goes around like that and looks like a mushroom. There's only one way into it. And there's millions of them [Viet Cong] in there, you know, and they just smile at you. Cause they know you can't, they bomb the s--- out of it, everything, and it doesn't even faze them. They just sit there and brush their teeth and look at you. If you fly over it, like, anybody that flew over it usually flew under 500 to 1,000 feet, which is a dead man's flying zone over that place. If you flew in there it was the last they ever heard of anybody, usually. Cause there's 51's [anti-aircraft weapon] and SAM's [missiles], and all kinds of stuff in there. The Iron Triangle was the same way. Place with a river running right here and it branched off and made a big triangle. You just didn't fly over that either. You had the feeling everybody else that did it never comes back."

Number 2. Calvin L. Zigler, Age 21
Class "B" text

"We had the 101st NVA Division by us. They were really bad. They're hard core. They been down there for I don't know how many years. Since the war started, I guess. And they just became really hard core. They're the ones that held the Iron Triangle and I think the Mushroom they held. There weren't anybody could get in there and get them out. Just being able to survive down there makes you hard core. Through all the s--- that goes on. B-52 strikes all the time."
The South Vietnamese go in and try to get them out and can't get them out. They're why everybody tries to stay away from those areas.

Number 3. Joseph E. Goray, Age 23
Class "B" text

"The 4th NVA Regiment. They had an underground school. An underground hospital. Marble Mountain. They had lawn chairs. They had picnic tables. They cleared trees, big enough trees, big enough area, that they had their flag, a duplicate of their flag on the ground, a flag pole, and a flag flying on it. They don't care. If you want to go in and get them, you was welcome. They were just bad."

Number 4. Willie Joseph, Age 30
Class "B" text

"Tiger Mountain was a place you didn't want to do too much traveling in because it was infested with booby traps. It was a hard area to patrol, you know, or work near, you know, because of unseen Charlie [Viet Cong], you know. He would always set these booby traps. The G.I. wouldn't like to go near there, you know. Even the best point man would go in there and sometimes hit a booby trap."

Number 5. Willie Joseph, Age 30
Class "B" text

"You got the hard core which really didn't give a damn about the G.I., you know. He didn't care if he got killed or if you had better weapons, better training, or nothing. He was just hard core, you know. He would just stand there and fight. When you saw him, that was it. You had to fight him. I think it was dope. Most of them. They run right at you. They run right up to you. When you
kill a hard core, an NVA, something like that. He have dope on him. They seemed like they knew they was gonna die. We machine gunned one NVA. We was sitting up there and the machine gun fire hit him in the leg. He kept running. He kept running and firing."

Number 6. Paul D. Sprout, Age 22
Class "A" text

"It [not changing clothes] also gives you that body odor that slopes, NVA, or something. Slopes? Slopes are the same as a dink [Vietnamese] or whatever you want to call them. Say you're out in the field for a month or so and then get to come back and take a bath or something. They stink. When you're out in the boonies, if you smell the same way. In other words, if you wash with soap the dinks can smell that. They can pick that same scent right up. They're just like dogs. Deodorant or soap or something, they can smell that a mile away. And if you don't wash, your body odor is going to be the same as theirs. Units that got resupplied everyday and took baths. ZAP!"

Number 7. Calvin L. Zigler, Age 21
Class "B" text

"They [Viet Cong] probably just carry you [a POW] along with them. Wherever they're going. Cause they don't have no certain place. If you got shot down in the North, which they don't take helicopters, they take you to a POW camp or something. But in the South they're always on the move so they just have to drag you along. A lot of the POW's that are missing now. A lot of times they [Viet Cong] run out of food and they let you starve to death before they starve to death."
Joseph: "Just like we wanted to supply, by the time we got to the resupply area. It was up in the mountains. Up in the mountains. Charlie [a Viet Cong] started firing. Nobody seen where Charlie firing from. Nobody seen him. So, we call in an artillery strike and they pound the hill, pound the hill, and pound the hill. We got him. So they call a re-con to see whether or not they got him. We were more concerned about getting resupplied than we were about Charlie, because he was only one guy, you know. Everything quiet down, you know, and all of a sudden, all the artillery thrown on the hill, you know. He popped up. POW!POW!POW! Everybody down, you know. They call an artillery strike again, you know. Pound the hill. Just pounded it. So, they know they got him this time. So, just about that time, 11:30 or 12 o'clock, they come in to get resupplied. Secure the area. They come in, resupply comes in. POW!POW!POW! Resupply ship takes off. We told them to call another air strike. Pound the hill, pound the hill, pound the hill, and pound the hill. They know they got him this time, you know. Well, we're gonna resupply, you know. By the time Charlie get a chance to come up the other way, we be gone. Be up out of there. But Charlie up again. POW!POW!POW! Up again, you know. And it went on and on and on. Until they left that area. They never did still get that dude out of there. One old guy, and he'd wait just for that good second. That good minute. POW!POW!POW!"

Zigler: "Sometimes you just let them go. You have enough respect that he made it, you know. You just let him go."
Joseph: "Impossible that he could live through that."
Zigler: "We'd just shoot at them all day and they'd pop their heads right back at you. You know you got him. You're up there where you can see all these rockets right there where he's standing, you know. All of a sudden, BAW! BAW! BAW! I don't know where they go, but they sure in hell get out of there."
Joseph: "It's amazing how those cats can get out of a firefight. We pound the hell out of them, man. You run into a dude, man. Say you run into a small party, you know. You fire their asses up, you know. M-16, M-60, mortar round, everything. In that one location. You know damn well you're gonna kill them with all that, you know. You get up and get ready to move out, and some son-of-a-bitch open up on you again. POW! POW! POW! POW! Goddamnit! Hours trying to knock these dudes out, you know. Some way or another they get away."

SECTION G - Combat Superstitions

Combat superstitions have remained relatively constant despite which war it has been. What the G.I. did in World War II to bring luck, he did in Vietnam. The belief in luck to aid survival has remained a steady subject.

Number 1.
Calvin L. Zigler, Age 21
Class "A" text

"You can't light three cigarettes. When you're up [in flight], or at any time, you know, people would think if you light three cigarettes, the first one you light loads the gun, the second cigarette you light cocks the trigger, and if you light the third guy it goes
off, you know. So, if you go out you get shot. So you light two and put out the match" (D1273.1.1.1).  

Number 2  
Joseph E. Goray, Age 23  
Class "A" text

"There was one guy there, a little while while I was there. All he would wear, he had this one T-shirt, and he'd always wear it. He'd wash it every night and wear it. He never would, he just wore IT! He was crew chief" (N135).

Number 3.  
Calvin L. Zigler, Age 21  
Class "B" text

"A lot of us wouldn't fly in any ship but ours. You always thought you had better luck in your own ship. You could fly in somebody else's ship, like in our company we had different missions. If you fly in somebody else's ship you're on a different mission. You don't know what's going on. Your luck was bad on a different ship" (N135).

Number 4.  
Paul D. Sprout, Age 22  
Class "A" text

"There were days when I knew I wouldn't make it back. Days I'd know I wouldn't make it back at all. I'd get back. What a relief! I'd work my ass off on my bird [helicopter] that night, you know. So finally this guy was getting short [ready to return to the United States] and he had, well, we called it his 'Harpo Hat.'

1 Motif numbers as presented here and elsewhere in parentheses are to Stith Thompson, Motif-Index of Folk-Literature, 6 vols. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1955-1958).
That's what we nick-named him. 'Harpo.' A big, red velvet hat. And it was droopy like this and it was real fancy at one time. Real droopy, you know. And to initiate new guys, we'd make them drink beer out of it. So I used to take that along with me whenever I was flying. If I felt kind of worried about the day, you know. If I got that feeling I'd take the hat along, stuff it in my pocket. Take my hat along. If we had to go down somewhere, at an LZ landing zone, I'd wear my hat under my helmet" (N135).

Number 5. Willie Joseph, Age 30
Class "A" text

"I wore, say if I got, say if I got resupplied on a day, you know. I wear, no matter what happened to that uniform, I wear it until I get resupplied again, you know. If it got torn, if it got ripped off my body, I would try to contain it until I got resupplied. Four or five days. I wouldn't shave. Seem like the rougher I made myself feel the luckier I got, you know" (N135).

Number 6. Willie Joseph, Age 30
Class "B" text

"Some wore headbands, you know. Vietnamese headbands. They wear the headband, no matter what happened, you know. Wear them under their helmet. Some had beads. For luck, right. Some had beads. Some had bracelets. Necklaces, stuff like that. And they believe it" (D1392.1)!
SECTION H - Flying Stories

Here are tales of fantastic flying skills which could be paralleled to tales of the skilled manipulation of any vehicle, in war or in peace. Other types found here are tales of miraculous survival.

Number 1. Calvin L. Zigler, Age 21
Class "A" text

"We had one ship that went in, that had to make the first run into An Loc. Went in and got around twenty-five or thirty holes. And when it landed a mortar went off next to it, and blew the whole side, the cargo door, it almost blew it off. Everything! It came back in and it had something like forty-five or fifty holes. And he flew the mission the rest of the day because none of them hit anything of importance except for a fuel cell. A slick [a model of helicopter] has five fuel cells in them and every one of them had a hole at least in them. No holes in nothing of importance. The engine wasn't touched. The tail or drive shaft, or nothing. Had one hole in the blade, but that's minor."

Number 2. Willie Joseph, Age 30
Class "A" text

"One time we were losing altitude. On a combat assault, we was losing altitude! This chopper, it scared me to death, you know. I was in there. We started losing altitude and we got down to, less than tree top level, you know, because we were flying right through something—like a dike area. But this cat, he was flying real low to the ground, you know. All of a sudden, he picked up altitude some and he pulled us out, you know. And all Charlie had to do was just shoot."
You could see the trees passing along, and all that. It was scary. Cats [pilots] can really fly, you know."

Number 3. Paul D. Sprout, Age 22
Class "A" text

"When I first got there he was getting ready to [unintelligible] out of there. He had about a month and half left. You name it. You tell him to do something with that bird, he could almost do it. He could almost do everything but invert it and bring it back. We'd go down and low level across some of your rough ground, rough terrain and stuff. Get on this road, couple of hills to the road. Going down the road and he might be, oh, three or four feet above the highway. And we'd hit this hill, say there's a knob in the highway, and he'd just pop the clutch and [snapping fingers] right over just like that. Really cool, you know."

Number 4 Willie Joseph, Age 30
Class "A" text

"I remembered we were getting resupplied, you know. We used to get resupplied, you know, the things we need with a transport helicopter. We had to chop down an LZ [landing zone]. But we got some dynamite and some demolition charges dropped in to us. We chopped down a few trees. We blew a few trees. We finally got it squared away. Enough for that chopper to get in, you know. So, there was a certain way that chopper could come in there, you know. And from my understanding, you know, the way the chopper was flying, you know, it was just about impossible for it to get in there, you know. This guy, he was coming in, you know, coming in to the LZ, and he got just over the
LZ. He came in just over the LZ and he went all the way up, right over the LZ. It looked like the chopper was going to fall, but all of a sudden it come down and came right into the LZ. It was just amazing the way it was done, because the way that chopper flying."

Number 5. Willie Joseph, Age 30
Class "A" text

"This happened once. We had a chopper come into the area, and just as it hit the ground, the whole chopper blew up. It hit a booby trap. They [Viet Cong] tie string so high up from the ground, you know. And the chopper come in and land and his skids hit the trip wire. And not a damn thing left!"

Number 6. Calvin L. Zigler, Age 21
Class "A" text

"I had a crew chief, I mean a pilot that got shot once through the chest low-leveling through the place. But it wasn't that bad. He got shot up pretty bad but the armor-piercing-round made clean holes. Came through the chin bubble, through the cycling stick, through his chest, bounced off his armor seat, and through his shoulder and out through the roof. But it made nice, clean holes cause armor-piercing-round won't spread or nothing like that, you know. Just nice, clean holes all the way through. Like, he was in the hospital and three days later he was sitting up, laughing, and carrying on like nothing happened."

SECTION I - Army Life

This miscellaneous area covers stories about suicide, mix-ups
in orders, war, ghosts, folk cures, army gripes, etc.

Number 1.  
Joseph E. Goray, Age 23  
Class "A" text

"One guy just shot himself. Just pulled, you know, on guard duty up in the tower, you know, the tower room. This guy just had a .45 sitting on his side. Went to guard one night and about 8:30 that night he just pulled the .45 out and PPBBBBUU! Killed himself right in the tower. And he just got married one month before he got over there [Vietnam] and that was in January, and we got over there in December."

Number 2.  
Willie Joseph, Age 30  
Class "B" text

"...I knew of a guy that was promoted to E-6, but he never made E-5. They found out two or three years later."

Number 3.  
Willie Joseph, Age 30  
Class "A" text

"I used to have a buddy over there who would tell a lot of war stories. Used to talk about his rusty M-16, you know. I forget how it goes. 'There I stood with a cliff to my back, and my rusty M-16. Pulling pins out of grenades with my teeth. Grenades in one hand and my rusty M-16 in my other hand. And my rusty M-16 ceases to fire. I throw the rusty M-16 down and say, "Clean!" My rusty M-16 jumps up and says, "Clean!" I load my rusty M-16 up and start firing. Automatically I continue to throw grenades. Pull pins with my teeth. Throw grenades with my right hand and fire with my left hand.' He just made it up, you know, while he was over there. Like he was
John Wayne or something."

Number 4. Michael W. Jones, Age 19
Class "A" text

"He took a bayonet and cut one [an incendiary device] in half and it WEEOOUU, caught him too. He had it about a foot and a half away from his face and, he was black and he's white now. Solid black! He ain't got no hair at all."

Number 5. Joseph E. Goray, Age 23
Class "A" text

"Man, them white devils running around everywhere. Them white jokers running around everywhere. Ghosts. Every night somebody go up to the club and get drunk and come running back yelling, 'Ghosts!' Run out the door and fall over the sandbags and s---."

Number 6. Joseph E. Goray, Age 23
Class "B" text

"I thought I saw one sure enough. That weren't no joke. Well, going through this pass, there's a graveyard. A French graveyard. They buried everybody standing up in the graves. Facing France. So we were flying over it about 2:30 or 3 o'clock one Friday night. And we was flying over there and to this day I can't figure what was it made me look out the door. But something told me to look out the door, and I wasn't drunk and I wasn't stoned. That's for sure. But there was something white floating around over the graveyard. I never could figure out what it was. And you have to fly over it at about 5,000 feet because there was a .51 positioned up there."
Number 7. Willie Joseph, Age 30
Class "B" text

"I remember one time this guy had an infection. We used to have these Vietnamese go out in the field with us. He [the Vietnamese] got some kind of leaf. I don't know what kind of leaf it was. He just chopped it up, you know, and put it on the guy's arm. Put a bandage around it and it just drew all this stuff out of it. I don't know what kind of leaf it was."

Number 8. Charles Johnson, Age 23
Class "B" text

"If you got sick. I forget the name of it now. There's a plant that you can get, that you can take in the Asian countries that you can get the juice out of it and it will bring your temperature down" (D2161.1.2).

Number 9. Ernie L. White, Age 26
Class "A" text

"If you got a piece of metal under your skin, you could put a piece of raw meat over it and it would draw the metal up to the top of the skin and you can get it out" (D1500.1.33).

Number 10. Willie Joseph, Age 30
Class "B" text

"S---, we were screwed by our own battalion, you know. Really did, you know. We go into the area, you know, and kick ass all damn day, you know. All damn day out there kicking ass. Giving it to Charlie and Charlie giving it to us sometimes. You got some other damn company back in the damn rear, you know, they're supposed to come out there and relieve you, you know. Okay, we got a time set the day
to be relieved, you know. We supposed to go back to the rear for a couple of days, you know. Everybody thinking this. 'I'm gonna go back and have me a big steak. See my hoochmaid. See some girls.' You just think, 'I'll get drunk.' And they call out there and say, 'Well, you'll have to cancel pickup until tomorrow.' You get p-----off. You been screwed. You think, 'What the hell is going on back there.'

Number 11.

Charles Johnson, Age 23
Class "B" text

"Here's a riddle. Here's a riddle. How do you get Korea and Vietnam together?"

"Give them five dollars to get together."
CHAPTER II

A STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE VIETNAM WAR
TEXTS TO DETERMINE ATTITUDE

Statistics are rarely, if ever, applied to oral narratives, and since statistical analysis is the nature of this chapter, some explanation of this practice should be included.

What I have done in this chapter is to identify the attitudes of my informants, as a group, by applying some simple statistics. These attitudes will later be compared with the attitudes abstracted from the narratives of the soldiers of the Indian Wars. I thought I should have a better judge of what these attitudes are than my own prejudices. I do not want to imply that statistics are the last word in analyzing attitudes. This is simply an effort to lessen the subjectivity involved.

Ms. Carol L. Reagles, an instructor of mathematics with a specialty in statistics at Western Kentucky University, set up a simple form of statistical analysis that could be applied to all the subject areas except Army Life, which was too vague. It was also impossible to apply this type of analysis to the written narratives of the soldiers of the Indian Wars. A control group of some sort was needed, but was of course impossible to assemble. The reader may feel that he can judge the overall attitudes from the oral narratives as well as any statistical analysis. This may be so, but the analysis that follows may alter that opinion.
The way this analysis works is to first judge the informant's response to the subject of his story as being positive, negative or neutral. There would of course be a certain amount of subjectivity in this aspect of the analysis, but it is unavoidable. Next, the positive, negative and neutral responses are grouped together according to subject area, and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov One-Sample Test is applied. The reader should note, in reading this analysis, that if the computed value of $D$ is greater than the cutoff value of $D$, there exists a significant bias in one direction or another, whether it be positive or negative. It is from this bias that the group's attitude on any of the subject areas is abstracted. To find which way the bias is directed, look for the highest number across the $f$-line. For example, the computed value of $D$ in the subject area of The Enemy is .5417. The cutoff value of $D$ is .328. Since .5417 is greater than .328, a significant bias exists. The highest number across the $f$-line is 14, which is listed under "positive." This means that my informants, as a group, showed a positive bias towards the enemy's fighting ability in the stories they told. If the computed value of $D$ is less than the cutoff value of $D$, no bias exists in the subject area. It may exist in one or two isolated stories, but not in the subject area as a whole.

I am including all formulas and working figures so that the reader, if he chooses, can check this analysis to be sure of the attitudes abstracted. For a complete description of this statistical analysis see Sidney Siegel's Non-Parametric Statistics.¹

Remember that my group of informants was small, and the statistical analysis used is extremely simple.

SECTION A - Basic Training

<table>
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<tr>
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My informants, as a group, showed a negative bias towards basic training in the stories they told.

SECTION B - Section-8 Stories

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My informants, as a group, showed no bias either way towards section-8's in the stories they told.
SECTION C - AWOL Stories

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>$S_{16}(X)$</td>
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Cutoff Value of D - .328
Value of D - .2292

My informants, as a group, showed no bias either way towards AWOL in the stories they told.

SECTION D - The Vietnamese

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Cutoff Value of D - .25
Value of D - .3333

My informants, as a group, showed a negative bias towards the Vietnamese in the stories they told.

SECTION E - Making Money

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Cutoff Value of $D$ - .391
Value of $D$ - .5757

My informants, as a group, showed a positive bias towards making illegal money in the stories they told.

SECTION F - The Enemy

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Total Number of Stories - 16

$F_0(X)$

$S_{16}(X)$

$F_0(X) - S_{16}(X)$

Cutoff Value of $D$ - .328
Value of $D$ - .5417

My informants, as a group, showed a positive bias towards the enemy's fighting ability in the stories they told.

SECTION G - Combat Superstitions

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Total Number of Stories - 7

$F_0(X)$

$S_{7}(X)$

$F_0(X) - S_{7}(X)$

Cutoff Value of $D$ - .486
Value of $D$ - .5238

My informants, as a group, showed a positive bias towards combat superstition in the stories they told.
### SECTION H - Flying Stories

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Cutoff Value of D - .375  
Value of D - .4167

My informants, as a group, showed a positive bias toward the flying skills of the helicopter pilots in the stories they told.
CHAPTER III

SOLDIERS IN THE INDIAN WARS AND A COMPARISON
OF THEIR ATTITUDES WITH THOSE OF
SOLDIERS IN VIETNAM

Deducing attitudes from the narratives of the Indian fighters poses some difficulties. No collections by a trained folklorist exist, and because of the span of years since the Indian Wars, no known informants are available from whom one can collect oral narratives. This limitation narrows the available narratives to those abstracted from diaries, journals and autobiographies. I had hoped to secure the written narratives of enlisted men only, since I collected the oral narratives of the Vietnam War only from enlisted men. This was not to be the case. The diaries and journals of enlisted men do exist, but in small numbers. They are usually poorly written and often not reprinted, making the original editions rare and not available through inter-library loan. Those diaries and journals that are reprinted in newer editions are usually written by the more educated officers in years of retirement, for the enhancement of their own reputations, and are not used here. Exceptions do exist. H. H. McConnell was an enlisted man for his five years of service, and was articulate, educational, and most entertaining in his writings. Captain John G. Bourke, an officer, and a past president of the American Folklore Society, surveyed his years in the West and his Indian counterparts
with uncanny observations. In spite of the limitations of this type of narrative I was still able to abstract attitudes and parallel them to the attitudes of the Vietnam War veteran. Non-attitudinal parallelisms, such as living conditions, habits, education, and ethnic background also exist. These are abstracted from the narratives as well as from books and articles written about both wars.

The reader, without ever reading a book about the Vietnam War, has a general knowledge of the GI's conditions in Vietnam from television and magazine coverage. But what does the reader know of the conditions of the Indian War soldiers? Because of the possible lack of knowledge on this subject a description of their everyday living conditions will be included. There may be no direct parallels to the conditions in Vietnam, but I feel some background concerning the soldiers' everyday lives and frustrations is still needed.

The soldier of the American West suffered from fear, bad food, and little appreciation from his countrymen. The country's interest in the army had sunk almost to zero after the Civil War. One war in America's home ground was enough, and the problems of the West seemed remote. The apathy became so bad that Congress, in 1871, lowered the soldier's pay from $16 to $13 a month. Few men ever saw even that amount. Most were in debt to various sergeants and storekeepers who took advantage of the remoteness of the western outpost and doubled as loan sharks. Yet, these soldiers were long suffering men. They were underpaid and undertrained. Many were neither good horsemen nor riflemen. They never acquired the skills to track and live off the land as the Indians did. Although most never approved of the nation's confusing Indian policy they still did what they were told and got the
job done. They were put on the plains to walk "forty miles a day on beans and hay," hoping they would never see an Indian, yet wishing they could find the enemy, fight it out once and for all, and go back home to the East.¹

They came from all levels of American life. Major George Forsyth noted in his diary that on one expedition his troops included "a bookkeeper, a farm boy, a dentist and a blacksmith, a young man of position trying to gain a commission and a salesman ruined by drink, an ivory carver and a Bowery tough."² These were boys who were caught up in the romantic images of the West portrayed in the dime novel. They were fresh from reading the "Leather Stocking Tales" and imagined they knew more about the "Indian signs" than men who spent their lives on the trail.³ Captain John G. Bourke lamented about our recruiting policies when he wrote,

"Under our then system of recruiting from the slums of the great cities our army often got very inferior material, and generally any candidate was accepted whose chest measurement, weight, and stature were in accordance with official requirements. I know that many an officer's heart sank within him when, on glancing over the muster-roll of a detachment of recruits assigned to his troop he read some legend as this: 'Maloney, age 29. Height 5'11"; born in Clonakilty; occupation when enlisted, umbrella-maker. . . .', and reflected upon the amount of instruction and setting up of every kind the man would require before he could be trusted with even

² Ibid., p. 25
the apparently unimportant duty of riding from post to post with despatches [sic]."^4

Blacks also enlisted as soldiers. To the Indians they were respected antagonists whom the warriors called the "Buffalo Soldiers." The term came from the resemblance the Indian saw between a buffalo's coat and the black soldiers' hair. Scholars maintain that because the buffalo was a sacred animal, the Indians did honor to the blacks by linking them with it. The members of the all-black 10th Cavalry were proud enough of the name "Buffalo Soldier" to include a buffalo on their crest.~6

Although they might have looked a little raw as individuals, they were physically tough as a group. Perhaps they were usually ignorant, but their pleasures were simple and their attitudes straightforward. Like other soldiers in other wars they griped, but most accepted their lonely, perilous lot.~7

The soldiers' housing was usually something less than splendid. The barracks were constructed of logs, chinked with a mixture of sand, lime, and mud. Major Forsyth described some typical barracks as "too small, poorly constructed, illy ventilated, frequently overcrowded, generally cold in winter, hot in summer." An officer named Philippe

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^5 Nevin, The Soldiers, p. 25.
^7 Nevin, The Soldiers, p. 25.
^8 Ibid., p. 47.
^9 Ibid., p. 57.
De Trobriand, stationed in the Dakota Territory, noted in his journal that, "The officer's quarters are cabins of squared logs, chinked with clay; one storied, whitewashed inside, and of very poor appearance." He remembers once lighting the stove in his cabin and

"First the mud came away in chunks from the walls, and roof. Second, a hail of little pebbles, which, warmed in the pockets of mud which held them captive, hastened to profit by their independence in obeying the laws of gravity. Third, cracks, at first unnoticed, reveal themselves, fissures opened and the outside wind pushes in streams of snow which burst in sheaves and powdered my floor. It rains in my new lodgings; with the rain, the snow, the drafts, the little avalanches of dirt, they bid me welcome. Will all this last long?"

H. H. McConnell remembers that in one house the army built, "The weak point about the mud roof was that in continued to rain for forty-eight hours INSIDE after the rain had ceased to fall out doors."

While out on the plains chasing Indians each officer enjoyed his own private shelter. The enlisted men slept two or more in a tent, and sometimes they had no tent at all.

Food was among the most bitter of the soldiers' complaints. A joke among the enlisted men was that cooks killed more soldiers than the Indians ever did. One sergeant gave his description of a standard day's meals: "For breakfast we had beef hash, dry sliced bread (no butter) and coffee (no milk); for dinner, sliced beef, dry


12 McConnell, Five Years a Cavalryman, p. 54.


14 Ibid., pp. 64 and 66.
bread and coffee; for supper, coffee straight—just dry bread and coffee." 15 Hardtack was considered a main staple. One soul remembered that it

"...was dark and stale. It was hard, so that when I tried to bite it I could not make the least impression on the unruly stuff. Holding it in the palm of my left hand I struck it with my right fist, but only succeeded in skinning my knuckles. Then I tried to break it in two by holding it in both hands, as I had formerly broken apples, but it resisted like a rod. Then I brought it down hard on my knee several times, but it only bruised my knee." 16

Amy Mulford, a trumpeter, assessed hardtack by asking, "Did you ever attempt to eat a hardtack! If not, try to bite a piece out of an old fire-brick." 17 Every post made an attempt at a vegetable garden, but still the poor diet caused a high rate of illness. Scurvy was rampant up until the mid-1870's and in 1867 the commander of Fort Stevenson reported 51 of 200 men contracted scurvy and one died. 18

The weather often became a hardship. The cold of winter or the heat of summer frequently compounded the miseries of the soldier whether on campaign or at the fort. An entire day's entry in Philippe De Trobriand's diary reads: "Thursday, November 28: Prisoner in my cabin. Always the snow, always the north wind and the thermometer below zero Fahrenheit." 19 Another entry reads,

15 Ibid., p. 66.
17 Ibid., p. 67.
18 Ibid., p. 68.
19 De Trobriand, Army Life in Dakota, pp. 161-162.
"Here it never rains from June to November. In revenge from time to time there are terrible wind-storms. Last week, the entire camp just missed being blown into the river. Nearly all the tents were beaten down, furniture was upset, china broken, and a cast iron stove was rolled by the wind right into the foot of the bench."20

Stories circulated at the posts in the southwest "that the heat had one time become so excessive that two thermometers had to be strapped together to let the mercury have room to climb."21 Another story of exaggerated heat concerns a dead soldier who comes back from Hell to Fort Yuma to fetch his blankets because he finds Hell too cool to suit him.22

Army discipline was extremely hard. Any breach of conduct required a court martial. In one year, the Department of the Platte was the site of 2,056 military trials. Only 3,008 soldiers were stationed there. Men who committed such small infractions as sleeping through roll call could be fined a month's pay or forced to spend up to a month in the guard house. Custer designed his own prison for such offenders—a hole in the ground fifteen feet deep, covered with boards (see section A, number 5, Vietnam War Texts).23 Violence on the part of the soldiers was sometimes the response to this type of treatment. Bodies of sergeants were sometimes found, apparently killed by their own men. An officer was caned to death while attempting to


22 Ibid., p. 35.

23 Nevin, The Soldiers, p. 69.
arrest three drunken soldiers in Austin, Texas in 1870. Another officer once whipped a man with the flat of his saber to keep the man in formation. Later the man tried to shoot the officer in the heart but the gun misfired (see section A, number 9, VNW Texts).\textsuperscript{24}

It is no wonder that the combination of poor food, bad housing, low pay, and harsh discipline caused massive desertions. John Bourke remembers soldiers solving the enlistment problem "by 'skipping out' the first pay day that found him with enough money ahead to risk the venture."\textsuperscript{25} Philippe De Trobriand marvels at the desperation of two men who have escaped from the stockade, "they have the triple chance of dying of hunger or cold, of being killed by the indians, or of being retaken at Fort Totten. A hard prospect! But nevertheless, they are gone."\textsuperscript{26} One sergeant took thirty men out on patrol, and when they were about thirty miles away from the post he informed them that they were all deserters, bid them goodbye, and rode off for the mining regions. The bulk of the deserters usually left within the first year after enlistment. Disenchanted, the new recruit went over the hill with $300 worth of government horse, rifle, and equipment. Chase was usually given, but the deserter who got far enough away was usually safe.\textsuperscript{27}

Desertion was not the only way out of the army. Some men made the attempt of obtaining a "surgeon's certificate of disability." A

\textsuperscript{24}Nevin, The Soldiers, p. 64.

\textsuperscript{25}Bourke, On the Border With Crook, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{26}De Trobriand, Army Life in Dakota, pp. 180-181.

\textsuperscript{27}Nevin, The Soldiers, p. 68
recruit named Farrelly once went around the post singing at the top of his voice and addressing officers by their first names. When no discharge was given, Farrelly took to fishing on the parade grounds with a crooked pin attached to a string (see section B, number 5, VNW Texts). He would sit there for hours staring at his fishing line and muttering to himself. He was soon taken to the hospital, examined, and discharged. With his discharge in hand he headed for his quarters and was met by the commanding officer coming across the parade grounds. "Ah! Farrelly," said the officer, "why aren't you fishing this morning?" "Your honor," replied Farrelly, holding up his discharge, "I've got what I was fishing for this long time" (see section B, number 3, VNW Texts). 28

Those who didn't desert used alcohol as their chief diversion from the rigors of army life. In the 1880's at least four percent of the American soldiers were hospitalized as alcoholics. At that time a man had to be suffering from delirium tremens to qualify for such care. 29 John Bourke notes once when "The paymaster had come and gone; the soldiers had spent their last dollar; the last 'pay-day drunk' had been rounded up and was now on his way to the guard-house." 30 The soldiers themselves saw some humor in their use and abuse of alcohol. H. H. McConnell remembers when the Adjutant asked his best clerk, "How is it, Kelly, whenever I get a clerk worth anything, he is a drunkard?" "Sir," replied the soldier, "If it wasn't for whiskey, ___________

28 McConnell, Five Years a Cavalryman, pp. 166-167.
29 Nevin, The Soldiers, p. 73.
30 Bourke, On the Border with Crook, p. 21.
there wouldn't be any clerks in the army."31 One soldier taking part in the "'pay-day drunk' was found away out on the prairie endeavoring to lariat grasshoppers."32 Another story of the old soldier's love for whiskey concerns a soldier named John Burns who, while cutting weeds along the edge of a stream, was bitten by a venomous snake. Because no surgeon was handy, Burns was told to drink a healthy portion of drinking whiskey with the belief that one poison counteracts another. Burns was soon out of danger, and another soldier named Paddy Maloney was seen with his pants rolled up, barefooted, tramping back and forth among the weeds, apparently looking for something. An irate officer asked Maloney what he was up to. "'Ah sir,' was the reply, 'I saw the treatment John Burns got for the snakebite, and I thought it was worth me while to try to get one meself [sic]."33

In 1881 the sale of liquor was no longer allowed on post. Rather than reduce alcoholism this ruling produced the off-post saloon, a combination saloon and whore house known to the soldiers as a "hog ranch." When a hog ranch opened for business the rate of venereal disease soared. In the 1880's some eight percent of the soldiers were infected.34

There were other ways to wile away the hours around the post. John Bourke remembered one way of killing the hours "that interested everybody for awhile was the battles which we stirred up

31 McConnell, Five Years a Cavalryman, p. 54.
32 Ibid., p. 110.
33 Ibid., pp. 110-111.
34 Nevin, The Soldiers, pp. 73 and 75.
between the nests of red and black ants."\textsuperscript{35}  

When the soldiers were out on campaign the day's entertainment came after the evening meal. It was time for them to settle down for poker-playing, letter writing, diary keeping and much talk full of jokes, gossip, and endless gripes about the officers, the campaign, and country, the universe."\textsuperscript{36}  

At this point in the soldier's narratives, certain parallelisms may be drawn to the oral narratives of the Vietnam War. What should be noted, though, is that these comparisons are applicable for the narratives of any two conflicts, not only for the Vietnam and Indian Wars.  

In both conflicts the recruits came from all strata of society. Those of the higher levels became officers, those on the lower, infantry. Both sets of recruits were sometimes the victims of outside influences, whether it be the dime novel or the John Wayne movie. Desertion (now called AWOL) was rampant in both wars. The murder of superior officers (called "fragging" in the Vietnam War) was not uncommon in either conflict. Whereas narcotics was a major problem in Vietnam, alcohol was a major problem in the West. Even the popular section-8 stories of Vietnam were known, over one hundred years ago, to the soldiers of the West. Both sets of soldiers, like all other soldiers in history, shared the "endless gripes about the officers, the campaign, the country, the universe." It is the attitude toward the enemy and his

\textsuperscript{35} Bourke, \textit{On the Border With Crook}, p. 35.  

\textsuperscript{36} Nevin, \textit{The Soldiers}, p. 103.
fighting style that makes the narratives of these two sets of soldiers unique. It is here that the uncommon parallelisms may be drawn.

In the West the two highest ranking generals, Sherman and Sheridan, believed in the innate inferiority of the Indians. To them the white men's advance into Indian territory was righteous. In Sherman's words, the Indians were "a class of savages displaced by the irresistible progress of our race." He later added that "treachery is inherent in the Indian character." 37 Sherman once told President Grant that "We must act with vindicitive earnestness against the Sioux, even to their extermination, men, women, and children." 38 The soldiers were, of course, influenced by the attitudes of their superior officers. This attitude, coupled with their contempt for the Indian's mystical culture, was forever fixed in their minds when they found for the first time the remains of a comrade mutilated beyond recognition by the Indians. 39 The Indians stripped and mutilated the bodies of the soldiers as a form of double vengeance. The Indians believed the spirit of the dead man would be helpless because of the disfigurement. They tore out the white man's eyes to blind the spirit. They cut off noses, ears, fingers, and feet, pulled arms out of the sockets and laid them next to the body. 40 John Bourke found the remains of a man who had "his heart cut out, but also thrown back near the corpse." 41 Private Frank Myers, in one encounter with the Indians in the 1860's rememners

37 Nevin, The Soldiers, p. 33.
38 Ibid., p. 36.
39 Nevin, The Soldiers, pp. 33 and 36.
40 Ibid., p. 142.
the "anticipations of becoming objects of the fiendish delight of these savage brutes by a horrible torture at the stake." The soldiers interpreted the Indians' rites and customs as primitive and savage (see chapter 11, section D). Philippe De Trobriand notes in his diary that "Nothing has been able to force them to renounce these voluntary sacrifices, almost all of them atrocious, and in the efficacy of which they seem to have an unbreakable faith." The soldiers were particularly repulsed by the Indian practice of cutting off the nose of an adulteress female. John Bourke remembers seeing for the first time "a squaw whose nose had been cut off by a brutal and jealous husband. The woman was not at all bad looking, and there was not a man at the post who did not feel sorry for the unfortunate who, for some dereliction, real or imagined, had been so savagely disfigured." The soldiers need not have been too repulsed. The army, until 1874, permitted the branding and tattooing of deserters. The Indians who made peace with the white man and lived near the army post were singled out for a particular kind of contempt. De Trobriand writes, "To say 'Indian' is to say 'thief.' These same redskins who are truly friends of the whites never fail when they are near a fort or post, to hunt for the opportunities on every occasion to steal there whatever they can." Later he notes that the Indians

43 De Trobriand, Army Life in Dakota, pp. 62-63.
44 Bourke, On the Border With Crook, p. 17.
45 Nevin, The Soldiers, p. 72.
46 De Trobriand, Army Life in Dakota, p. 163.
"send their women and children to loiter around the warehouses and find just how they might steal in their foray in the night." 47 Finally it became necessary "to forbid to all the Indians entry into camp but particularly to the women who swarmed around the camp" (see section D, number 6, VNW Texts). 48 It was also the belief of De Trobriand, and I am sure other soldiers, that, "The great ambition of a young squaw is to become the wife of a white man, for she is infinitely better treated than if she were the wife of no matter what Indian" (see section D, number 8, VNW Texts). 49

Yet in spite of the contempt for the Indian's rites, customs, mutilations and thievery, the soldiers had much respect for the Indian in the area of fighting ability (see Chapter II, Section F). John Bourke writes that for the Apache "War was his business, his life, and victory his dream." 50 In a fight with only one Apache, Bourke notes that his side suffered "One horse laid up, three men knocked out, and another man killed" before the Apache was killed. (see section F, number 5, VNW Texts). 51 The Indians were looked upon as superb horsemen who "launch themselves headlong in pursuit; and are most expert in handling the bow without stopping or slowing down the pace of their horses." 52 Once an Indian on horseback was said to have galloped all

47 Ibid., p. 164.
48 Ibid., p. 165.
49 De Trobriand, Army Life in Dakota, p. 66.
50 Bourke, With General Crook in the Indian Wars, p. 34.
51 Bourke, On the Border with Crook, p. 45.
52 De Trobriand, Army Life in Dakota, pp. 51-52.
the way through a large army encampment and out the other side, unhurt, while the soldiers fired some 500 shots at him. The Indians seemed to derive great pleasure from feats of this kind (see section F, number 8, VNW Texts). But bravery would seem to have been a prerequisite for a war of this type. The Indian was losing his home, his land, and his way of life. He fought hard, asked no quarter, and gave no quarter.

In Vietnam in 1967-1968, General George S. Patton III once told his staff: "The present ratio of 90 percent killing to 10 percent pacification is just about right."

Patton's Christmas cards in 1968 had the message "Peace on Earth." Attached to the cards were color photographs of dismembered Viet Cong soldiers stacked in a pile. As in the Indian Wars, this type of attitude would eventually work its way down the ranks and have some influence on the enlisted men. I am not saying that the elite of any group can shape the attitudes of the common man, but the attitudes of the elite may give the common man some indication of what type of attitude is openly permissible. A joke that circulated among the Marines in Quang Ngai was that the loyal Vietnamese should all be put out to sea in a giant raft. Everyone left in the country should be killed, and then Vietnam should be paved over like a parking lot. The giant raft should then be sunk. One G.I. lamented that the trouble in Vietnam was that "the people aren't straight

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54 Hersh, "My Lai 4," p. 55.
55 Ibid., p. 55.
56 Ibid., p. 55.
like we were." The Viet Cong did not mutilate the GI's in the fashion of the Indians. There was no spirit of the dead involved. The Viet Cong used booby-traps that when tripped would blow off one or more of a man's limbs if it did not kill him. One G.I. remembers hearing the sound of a booby-trap, running over, and finding one G.I. dead, and another one who lost his eyes, an arm, and a leg. There were screams and calls for medics. "It was kind of a gruesome thing. We were good and mad." The GI's lack of understanding of Vietnamese customs was also responsible, in part, for the hostile attitude toward the Vietnamese. GI's would claim that "you can't help these dinks. They live like pigs in hovels, and even when you build them new houses, they won't live in them." What the G.I. did not know, however, was that according to the custom in that area, married women were supposed to live in houses with double-sloped roofs. Because most of the G.I. built houses had a single slope, the women refused to move in. When the attitude toward the Vietnamese had disintegrated enough, indiscriminate killings began to take place. Vietnamese civilians were sometimes mistaken by the GI's for Viet Cong and shot. Another joke that circulated in Quang Ngai was that, "Anything that's dead and isn't white is a VC." Before Charlie Company entered into history as the perpetrators of the My Lai Massacre, one member remembers that the men

57 Ibid., p. 59
58 Hersh, "My Lai 4," p. 61.
59 Ibid., pp. 54-55.
60 Ibid., p. 56.
in the company treated the Vietnamese "like animals. A lot of guys didn't feel that they were human."61 This type of attitude can perhaps best be seen in a portion of the court martial of Lt. William Calley. The following exchange took place between Calley and Prosecuting Attorney Captain Aubrey Danial:

"Q What were they Charlie Company doing?
   A They were on line moving through the village.
   Q Were they firing?
   A Yes, sir.
   Q What were they firing?
   A At the enemy, sir.
   Q At people?
   A At the enemy, sir.
   Q Were they men?
   A I don't know, sir. I would imagine they were, sir.
   Q Didn't you see?
   A I wasn't discriminating.
   Q Did you see women?
   A I don't know, sir.
   Q Did you see children?
   A I don't know, sir.
   Q What do you mean you weren't discriminating?
   A I didn't discriminate between individuals in the village, sir. They were all the enemy, they were all to be destroyed."62

61 Hersh, "My Lai 4," p. 60.
It was more than a simple case of racism that the American soldier felt for the Indians and Vietnamese. It was the elusive fighting style of the enemies that frustrated the American soldier to the point of fighting the war with non-hostiles. These were the only "enemies" the American soldier could catch.

The soldiers were new to the West. In this harsh country, with its undefinable boundaries, the new recruit could easily perish. The greatest asset the Indians possessed was their lifelong knowledge of the country. They always knew where they were headed. They knew every canyon, hill, and water hole. Rather than adopt new modes of warfare to fit the country, the officers maintained the tactics and practices of the Civil War which had been fought in rich, wooded terrains in set-piece battles. The officers had only contempt for the Indians who struck and ran, who never faced up to battle, and who refused to die in droves as the Civil War forces had done back east.

John Bourke remembers that the Indians

"would not fight when pursued, but scattered and then hovered on the flanks of the whites, and were far more formidable when dispersed than when they were moving in compact bodies. This was simply the best military policy—wear out the enemy by vexatious tactics, and by having the pursuit degenerate into a will-o'-th'wisp chase."  

Bourke also remembers that these chases "ended in disappointment and disgust."  

64 Ibid., p. 6.
65 Ibid., p. 136.
66 Bourke, On the Border With Crook, p. 36.
67 Bourke, With General Crook in the Indian Wars, p. 20.
Philippe De Trobriand, obviously one of those disgusted, says the Indians "never fight in the open unless they are at least ten to one, recognizing in spite of themselves the superiority of the paleface." When the Indians did outnumber the soldiers they avoided the frontal assault and massed defense because they could not afford the losses. The soldiers could call up new recruits; the Indians could not. It was the Indian ambush that the soldiers held most in contempt. Frank Myers remembers that on one campaign in the 1860's, "The Indians seemed to hover around, ever watching for an opportunity to practice their sneaking mode of warfare from behind a cover." On another campaign the threat of ambush brought Myers and his party into a rough country, full of precipices and deep ravines, a veritable fortress for the Indians with their peculiar and treacherous mode of warfare. We left our horses saddled and bridled at night, placed our picket and camp guards, and prepared to sleep on our arms, with revolvers and sabers buckled to us, expecting an attack at any moment. Not being permitted to bring our tents, no lights were allowed; we ate cold grub and rolled up in our blankets. As the advance guard of Dakota scouts had a little brush with the reds just before camping, it is safe to record not many of us tried very hard to sleep.

Every mountain and mesa was a watching post for the Indians who would relay the soldier's movements with puffs of smoke in the still air. The Plains Indians were masters of decoy. Because the soldiers

70 Myers, *Soldiering in Dakota*, p. 20.
held them in such contempt, and because all they could do was to chase the Indians wherever they led them, they were frequently trapped and ambushed. A few Indians beyond rifle range likely meant that many more were behind the next hill. 73 But even to get this close to hostile Indians was rare. Many soldiers marched for months without seeing an Indian. If they did meet in combat it was likely to be frustratingly inconclusive. The Plains Indians were among the best light cavalry in the world and the soldiers could not keep pace with them. The Indians kept slipping away. 74 John Bourke writes of one long campaign that took his command 300 miles out, and

"the men were fatigued and disheartened by constant but profitless skirmishing with an enemy who seemed proof against all wiles and blandishments to coax him into a general engagement; everybody was in rags, and in the thinnest of rags at that, since the movement had begun during the heat of summer, and the freezing snows of early winter were now falling; horses and mules were worn down, rations were about exhausted, and there was nothing to show for it but twelve dead Indians." 75

Philippe De Trobriand takes even Custer to task for his abilities against the elusive enemy.

"Surely General Custer is a good cavalry officer, brave, active, intelligent; he served brilliantly through the war and accomplished a great deal against the Confederate cavalry. What has he done against the Indians? Nothing. He has worn out men and horses in vain pursuit of them, and his best reports amount to only four or five of the enemy killed." 76

73 Ibid., p. 114.
75 Bourke, With General Crook, pp. 23-24
76 De Trobriand, Army Life in Dakota, p. 56.
But the soldiers marched on. The trail may have ended with no Indians even sighted, or it may have ended in a sudden battle, begun from ambush, and finished quickly with some soldiers wounded and dying, and the others frustrated while the enemy vanished again. 77

In Vietnam, the enemy tactic was never to attack except in overwhelming strength and never to risk defeat by giving battle in adverse circumstances. The enemy depended on retaining the initiative by being mobile. 78 The Viet Cong was a free agent who moved about at will. He picked his time and place of attack, and if the Americans were ready to defend, he simply decided not to attack at all. 79 The Viet Cong had an intimate knowledge of the country. They lived in the forests and mountains, and shortly before a battle they would unite, breaking up into small groups of two or three men afterward. Sometimes a single Viet Cong could hold up an entire U.S. detachment or at least keep it on edge. For the American G.I. traditional strategies were useless. No matter if the G.I. dropped bombs, deployed troops, the enemy was not there. 80 The Viet Cong almost always succeeded in creeping up on their objective, attacking, and then vanishing. Rarely did these clashes last more than half an hour. The enemy would

77 Nevin, The Soldiers, p. 31.
quickly reunite and withdraw. Rarely could the GI's block their withdrawal or destroy the retreating enemy. The fighting style of the Viet Cong was always the same—frustrate the G.I., wear him down, and make the only tangible symbol of the war his own casualty list.

The American G.I. was shipped to a strange country where the people and customs were totally alien to him. He was unfamiliar with the terrain, and as a doctor once stationed in Vietnam says, "The land belonged to the VC. You couldn't kill them unless you found them, which for the most part meant they had to find you." The land that was home to the enemy was frightening to the G.I.

"The enemy can be in that field ahead, littered perhaps with land mines; the enemy can be in that grove of trees, booby-trapped to kill or maim anything and anyone coming within its range; the enemy can be that turn in the dim road ahead, where an ambush may be waiting. If you are an American soldier, young and inexperienced, you will be afraid and filled with hatred. And everyone will soon become your enemy, the object of that fear and hate, for you soon feel that none can be trusted—and hate everyone, maybe you will survive."

One G.I. remembers an incident that perhaps gives insight into the frustrations the G.I. must have suffered in this type of combat.

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84 Richard Hammer, One Morning in the War (New York: Coward-McCann, 1970), pp. 64-65.
"Alpha Company was fatigued and angry leaving My Lai 5. Another futile search of a nearly deserted village, another fat zero turned up through interrogation. Moving north to cross the Diem Diem River, the company took continuous sniper fire, and it intensified into a sharp thunder when we reached the river and a bridge, seventy-five meters long and perfectly exposed, the only way across. One man at a time, churning as fast as the rucksacks and radios and machine guns allowed, the unit crossed the Song Diem River, the rest of the troops sprayed out protective fire, waiting their own turn, and we were scared. It was a race. A lieutenant was the starter, crouched at the clay runway leading into the paddy, hollering 'Go' for each of us, then letting a burst of fire to cover the guy. The captain, first man to win the race, was at the finish line. He gave the V sign to each man across. It may have signalled victory or valor. It did not mean peace. The men were becoming angry, and there were no enemy soldiers to shoot back at, only hedgerows and bushes and clumps of dead trees."85

One of the GI's involved in the My Lai Massacre remembers the attitudes of the men in Charlie Company changing day by day in the weeks before the My Lai assault: "It just started building. I don't know why. Everybody reached the point where they were frustrated. We weren't getting any action, yet the only thing on our mind was survival."86

James M. Cavanaugh, a delegate from the Territory of Montana to Congress, epitomized the frontier attitude toward the Indian, and pushed a phrase into popular culture, when he declared before the House of Representatives, "I have never in my life seen a good Indian (and I have seen thousands) except when I have seen a dead Indian."87 That


86 Hersh, "My Lai 4," p. 62.

phrase has been modified through the years to fit a thousand different situations, most all of them humorous. It reappeared again in Vietnam, only when one G.I. or another was heard to say that the "only good dink is a dead dink," the humor was gone. Again the attitude was the same, as was the result of that attitude—massacre. The American soldier, in both wars, had moved into someone else's land and developed an attitude that assumed the inhabitants of that land were something less than human. The soldier was then frustrated by both this sub-human's ability to make war on his own terms and the apathy at home towards the soldiers' efforts. Because of the enemy's elusiveness, the American soldier could not make war on those that made war on him. He chose then to make war on those he could find—women, children and old people. Gordon Livingston, writing in *War Crimes and the American Conscience*, ties both massacres together, and notes America's attitude towards these massacres, when he says,

"The belief in the essential humanness and good will of Americans, even in time of war, is ingrained in our national mythology. The events in our history which contradict the myth are neither widely known or celebrated, but they are there. For example, in the 'incident' at My Lai some observers heard echoes of another day in 1890 when at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, soldiers of the U.S. 7th Cavalry massacred about three hundred Sioux, most of them women and children, in what was the last event in the ignoble conquest of the American Indian."

88 Hammer, *One Morning in the War*, p. 205.

CONCLUSION

This has been an exercise in applied folklore. I had originally intended to compare the oral narratives of the Vietnam War with the lore of other recent wars and note the similarities and differences. But in examining the lore of the Vietnam War, I discovered that attitudes are more prevalent than the jokes, humorous tales and patriotic war stories that military folklore is traditionally made of. I wondered if this particular type of lore was just limited to the war in Vietnam.

By chance I read a book on the soldiers of the Indian Wars and noticed that the attitudes and situations of the soldiers seemed to parallel the attitudes and situations of the GI's in Vietnam. Other parallels in the two wars were the massacres that infected each. Could these similar attitudes and situations have played any part in the massacres? I have attempted to show that indeed they did. But what part does folklore have to play in any of this, other than perhaps being a reflection of the feelings that dominated both wars?

I maintain that folklore and folklore fieldwork can be applied to future conflicts in two ways. The first is to fully acquaint the U.S. soldier with the rituals, customs and beliefs of the inhabitants of the occupied land. This was done in Vietnam, but only to the extent of one or two lectures on the country and its people while the G.I. was
in training. It should of course be much more extensive than this. The G.I. should be shown that rituals, customs and beliefs also exist in the United States. "Superstition" is not reserved for "primitive cultures." It is inherent in all cultures (see chapter II, section G). This folklore training would hopefully give the G.I. a better understanding and more tolerance of those he is dealing with, and perhaps help diminish the racism and the attitude of the soldier that the inhabitants are somehow "sub-human."

The second way folklore may be applied is in the area of fieldwork. An atrocity-producing attitude can be foreseen by collecting the oral narratives of the soldiers. If a statistical analysis is a valid way to determine attitude, it should then be applied to see if the lore is reflecting an attitude that could result in an atrocity. If this attitude is present, the army must somehow take corrective measures. If there had been only one conflict like Vietnam this attitudinal survey would be hard to validate, but the study of two similar situations, even though they are one hundred years apart, definitely shows a pattern beginning to form. Folklore could play a part in altering this pattern.

1 Hersh, "My Lai 4," p. 54.
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B. JOURNALS


C. MAGAZINES


D. NEWSPAPERS
