Soldier Comparison Essay

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Comfort is a privilege. Being able to do things such as shower daily, have access to medicine that mitigates diseases, stay dry on a rainy day, eat food that doesn’t taste horrible, not have to worry about what happens with your excrements, and more, are enabled by people who endure those hardships. Throughout American history, the disgust and gore soldiers had to put up with is beyond anything some of us can imagine.

Through Martin’s, Sledge’s and Collopy’s accounts, there is no shortage of filth in war, regardless of the time period. During the American revolution, Martin states that “The army was not only starved but naked; the greatest part was not only shirtless and barefoot, but destitute of all other clothing, especially blankets” (88). This led to him procuring his own shoes to not bleed out from being barefoot. While Sledge and Collopy were better supplied with clothing, due to the nature of war, this wasn’t always enough. During Sledge’s time on Okinawa, he describes that “The insides of my boondockers gave me the sensation of being slimy when I wiggled my toes to try and warm my feet with increased circulation. The repulsive sensation of slippery, slimy feet grew worse every day… To me it was an unforgettable sensation of extreme personal filth and painful discomfort” (265). Collopy’s time in the Vietnam war wasn’t devoid of unpleasant experiences. He recalls having to sleep in bunkers full of rats, doing his business in 4-holers, and having to burn excrements every morning. Another thing all of these men had to deal with was nasty food. Martin describes the beef given to him as “not many degrees above carrion” (246), and Collopy had to deal with egg and ham C-rations.

The gore described by the soldiers in their experiences is something no one should have to see in their lives. Upon storming the beach at Peleliu, Sledge sees his first enemy dead with guts everywhere, saying “this can’t have been a human being, I agonized. It looked more like the guts of one of the many rabbits or squirrels I had cleaned on hunting trips as a boy. I felt sick as I stared the corpse.” On Okinawa, he was asked to dig a ditch, where “the shovel skidded into (a) rotting abdomen with a squishing sound. The odor nearly overwhelmed me as I rocked back on my heels.” While Sledge provides the most detail on the gore he experienced, Martin and Collopy had no shortage of it as well. While on mud island, an officer goes to raise the flag on the fort, when “The sergeant then came down and had not gone half a rod from the foot of the staff, when he was cut in two by a cannon shot.” Collopy also had to deal with gore of his own, as when retrieving the dead, the marines had to use gas masks if they didn’t want the odor to overwhelm them. While some details might be different, despite the men living two hundred years apart, enduring grime and gore was a core part of being a soldier.

Disgusting things soldiers had to go through during war

Martin

* Lots of sickness (smallpox and dysentery), eating disgusting food like when Joseph got some and tried to broil it, but it had gone so bad he had to spit it back up. Disgusting deaths such as when a guy got torn in half by a cannon ball when trying to raise the flag on mud island. Having to sleep in the rain when officers got houses. Having to be mostly naked at times
* Effects of the elements were exacerbated by the lack of clothing they had (rain, cold)
* nakedness

Sledge

* Seeing dead Japanese with their guts all over the place on the beach of Peleliu. Battle of Okinawa during the rainy period when he had to deal with the constant stink of dead bodies, feet being constantly waterlogged, mud everywhere

Collopy

* Rat Bunkers, general Stink, drinking stream water and getting dysentery, 4-holers, burning and stirring shit, eating eggs and ham c rations