The Relationship Between Combat Journalist And Vie Essay, Research Paper

The combat jounalist in Vietnam gave Americans at home a different look, an honest look at the Vietnam experience. Though combat soldiers were often hesitant toward taking a civilian around, they became much more open and truthful as time went on. Their information from the grunts and observations in choppers and in field gave Americans a new respect for what was happening abroad. The combat journalist arrived scared and unprepared for what would lie ahead of him. As Herr says, there was no need for drugs to keep him awake because “a little contact or anything that even sounded like contact would give me more speed than I could bear.” The combat journalist’s lack of war knowledge even led them to ignore commanding officers without saluting. Fortunately the combat soldiers frequently opened up to the combat journalist and took them under their wing. With experience, journalists became part of the action almost as much as the soldiers did. Michael Herr describes a brush with the enemy in such a way that we should wonder if he is a journalist or a soldier: when we caught a bunch of them out in the open and close together, we really ripped it then, volatile piss-off, crazed expenditure, Godzilla never drew that kind of fire sometimes we put out so much fire we couldn’t tell if any was coming back or not. When it was, if filled your ears and your head until you thought you were hearing it through your stomach. This was the voice of a seasoned combat journalist, alive in the action. From this type of hard-nosed reporting, the American homefront got a taste of truth about what was going on in Vietnam. This transformation into the Vietnam experience was helped by the combat soldiers that were involved with the journalists. Though some thought of these journalists as “tits on a bull.” many soldiers welcomed the journalists and brought them directly into the action. Some journalists even carried weapons for “self-defense” and were let into the direct lives of the combat soldier. As for journalism work itself, many times the American media was used to cover-up various operations that our military was involved in. In Kafka, journalists were told that C.A.C. or Combined Action Companies, were in Vietnam for proection. The ironic part is that the C.A.C. was probably the only reason the Vietnamese needed protection. Simply put, no journalist ever believes what he is told without facts to back up their stories. Mayer was quick to find out the truth about the C.A.C. actually being brought in for intelligence reasons.

Of the combat soldiers, the grunts were the reporter’s best friends. They simply never had anything to hide, and “told it like it is.” Most combat soldiers were open in talking to the combat journalists. The journalists served as a place to vent their emotions and stories about what they had seen. Much like the nurses, the men couldn’t talk about death with each other; it was easier to talk to someone else about what they had seen or been a part of. Though the combat journalists many times became much like soldiers, they still had that separation from the frontline. Without a gun they simply couldn’t integrate totally. One reason that the reporters weren’t as close as they could have been is their lack of closeness to the frontline. For safety, journalists were often flown out of unsecure zones by helicopter when the heat got too hot. The helicopter became the reporter’s safehaven from fire. Unlike combat soldiers, journalists could fly out of any zone whenever a chopper was nearby. Combat journalists jobs were to fly over and cover a story for the American people or for an American publication. There job was to submerse themselves in the Vietnam environment and report about what they had seen. In fact, many times what they had seen and what they experienced went hand-in-hand. Instead of reporting about the firefight that they were in, they often reported about the firefight they were “involved” in. Too often what the journalists saw was not what the American people wanted to see. As Cronkite put it, “What the hell is going on, I thought we were winning the war?!” The combat journalist weren’t put into a position of hearing what was happening, they were actually experiencing what was going on. There was no way the officers or American media could lie about that. The combat journalist was now “in the trenches” talking to the grunts and the frontliners with the automatic weapons who had nothing to hide. In Kafka, Mayer sees American soldiers beat Vietnamese with their guns. No longer is the American jounalist getting his information from another source, they see it firsthand and report it firsthand.