

BOOK REVIEWS



Honorable Warrior: General Harold K. Johnson and the Ethics of Command. By Lewis Sorley. University Press of Kansas, 1998. 364 Pages. \$39.95. Reviewed by Major General Albert H. Smith, U.S. Army, Retired.

This is an excellent biography of a courageous, tough-minded, and talented Regular Army officer who always put "the personal into personnel matters" for which he was responsible. He respected soldiers, and they trusted him, in peace and war.

Author Lewis Sorley chronicles Harold K. Johnson's military career from the Depression of the 1930s, through World War II and the Korean War, to his four-year tour of duty as Army Chief of Staff.

Johnson was a recognized leader from his first assignment until his retirement from active duty. His military challenges were awesome; his contributions to his country's security were immense. He will be remembered as a great and good man.

The author's text is very well documented from start to finish. In addition to some 149 boxes of personal papers, Johnson's primary oral history is the most extensive at the Military History Institute, running to more than 600 pages. Sorley has supplemented these sources with another 200 interviews of his own—targeting contemporaries who knew or worked with Johnson at various stages of his career.

The first half of *Honorable Warrior* traces Johnson's professional career from 1933 until 1968. For example, Chapters 4 through 8 describe Johnson's achievements in the Depression Army and his horrific experiences during World War II. Captured in April 1942 when Japanese forces overran American defenses, he survived the Bataan Death March, Japanese prison camps in the Philippines, Japan, and Korea; and sea voyages on three "hell ships." Finally, on 7 September 1945, he and other survivors were able to rejoin American forces at Inchon, Korea. It had been 41 months since his capture in the Philippines; now he was on his way home.

Chapters 9 and 12 cover important milestones at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1946 to 1949—and 1960 to 1963. Johnson later wrote, "Our

happiest days were at Fort Leavenworth."

For combat veterans, the chapter on the Korean War has to be the most interesting. During the period August 1950 through October 1951, Johnson "commanded one battalion and two regiments of the 1st Cavalry Division, served as a corps operations officer, earned promotion to colonel, and was decorated four times, including award of the DSC for extraordinary heroism in action."

In the second half of this comprehensive work, Sorley focuses on the Vietnam era—those hectic years 1964-1968 when the Army prepared for and began to fight its "unpopular" war. As Chief of Staff, Johnson had to deal with an unfriendly President Lyndon Johnson, a relentless Secretary of defense McNamara, and an Air Force Chief of Staff's position "that everything that flies should be Air Force."

There was also a major problem in the conduct of the ground war in Vietnam. Generals Johnson and Westmoreland did not agree on strategy or tactics; but for obvious reasons, they had to be publicly supportive of Army combat operations.

Lewis Sorley is to be congratulated on this outstanding biography. *Honorable Warrior* is must reading for those who knew Johnson—and for scholars and history buffs who specialize in military leadership during the 1933-1964 period.

The Vietnam War: The Story and Photographs. By Donald M. Goldstein, Katherine V. Dillon, and J. Michael Wenger. Brassey's, 1997. 179 Pages. \$31.95.

Requiem by the Photographers Who Died in Vietnam and Indochina. Edited by Horst Faas and Tim Page. Random House, 1997. 336 Pages. \$65.00. Reviewed by Colonel Cole C. Kingseed, U.S. Army.

Nearly a quarter century after the fall of Saigon, images of the Vietnam war still captivate us. Amid the avalanche of monographs that memorialize the conflict, two recent photographic books bring the struggle in Southeast Asia to life.

The Vietnam War is the fifth in the Brassey series of photographic books enti-

tled *America Goes to War*. Dedicating the book to the Americans who served in the Vietnam War, especially to those who died, a superb team headed by Donald M. Goldstein, himself the author of numerous books on World War II, presents the war in the context of its political and diplomatic background. Divided into 11 chapters that range from the background to American involvement to photographs of Ho Chi Minh City today, the book concentrates primarily on the American fighting man.

Written primarily for the novice reader, the book illustrates the traumatic history of the war as the authors seek to remember those Americans who served well and faithfully during the conflict. Goldstein and his fellow authors are best in reaching younger readers who have only a rudimentary knowledge of the war. The simplicity of their narrative effectively communicates the major events of the war but lacks the detailed analysis normally associated with photographic essays.

For sheer photographic brilliance, *Requiem* is far superior in conveying a sense of the indescribable horror and the stark brutality of the wars in Southeast Asia. What makes this book so compelling is the fact that the photographs were all taken by 135 photojournalists who died or are currently listed as missing in Indochina, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. The list includes 72 photographers who died on the Vietnamese communist side, as well as Robert Capa and Larry Burrows, who were working in Indochina only days before their deaths.

Also present are photographs of Bernard Fall, whose *Hell in a Very Small Place* and *Street Without Joy* inspired a generation of journalists. Many of the photographs are in color and appeared in the leading periodicals and newspapers of the day. In a sense, *Requiem* is a lasting tribute by Horst Faas and Tim Page to the photographers from ten different nations whose courage and devotion brought the war into American living rooms and onto the world stage.

Frontsoldaten: The German Soldier in World War II. By Stephen G. Fritz. University of Kentucky Press, 1995. 299

Pages. \$19.00, Softbound. Reviewed by Christopher B. Timmers, U.S. Army, Retired.

This is a very disturbing book. It is exceptionally well written, meticulously researched, and easy to read. The author pulls no punches and makes no apologies for the brutalities inflicted by the Wehrmacht on its enemies, especially the civilians. But he reminds us that atrocities were committed on both sides and that the German *Landser*, or infantryman, was victimized at times by his own officers. In addition to facing the Russian winters, overwhelming Allied air power after 1943, and a crushing imbalance in tanks and artillery, German soldiers had to be mindful of the Gestapo and military police units that monitored their activities on the front, although from a safe remove; they were suspicious any time an Army unit had to retreat and were not above arresting troops as well as officers for "political crimes" or more simply, "cowardice." The Russian winter may have claimed tens of thousands of *Landser*, but the Gestapo and military courts executed over 20,000 German soldiers from December 1941 to the end of the war: almost two divisions' worth of men.

What makes this book disturbing is the simple examination of why so many young men so willingly threw their lives away for a butcher who, coward that he was, committed suicide in the end. Author Fritz answers this question by drawing on diaries, letters, and memoirs. The German soldier fought so well, so effectively right up to the end out of a sense of comradeship, of not wanting to let down his platoon mates when the going got rough. In that respect, he was like soldiers everywhere who may hate their commanding officers as much as the enemy but soldier on, even to the point of committing atrocities, because their sense of honor, however debased it may be, demands it. This comradeship could help a soldier make light of his suffering, give him a sense of optimism about the future, give him hope.

In the course of reading the accounts of these young soldiers, it is virtually impossible not to begin to feel a deep and profound sympathy for their individual situations. One can call Hitler vicious, homicidal, megalomaniacal, and still experience sympathetic emotions for the *Landser*. These young men had purchased a horribly flawed ideology with the price of their youth and, in many cases, their lives. Not all of Hitler's victims were enemies of the Third Reich.

On Many A Bloody Field: Four Years in the Iron Brigade. By Alan D. Gaff.

Indiana University Press, 1996. 499 Pages. \$29.95.

The Men Stood Like Iron: How the Iron Brigade Won Its Name. By Lance J. Herdegren. **Indiana University Press, 1997. 271 Pages. \$24.95.** Reviewed by Major Don Rightmyer, U.S. Air Force, Retired.

Civil War historical writing in the past five years has included an increasing number of regimental and larger unit histories. A large number of such unit narratives were produced in the 35 years after the Civil War by self-appointed "unit historians" who had served in the unit during some period of its war service. The Civil War Centennial, beginning in 1961, saw another large number of specific unit histories, such as James Robertson's *The Stonewall Brigade*. One of the most noteworthy unit histories published in 1961 was Alan Nolan's *The Iron Brigade*. As with many other histories newly written about Civil War personalities, battles, and related themes that have received historical treatment in earlier decades, the Union Army's Iron Brigade has been the recipient of new attention from two very capable authors within the past year.

The Iron Brigade, mainly composed of Westerners, was predominantly made up of Wisconsin regiments as well as troops from Michigan and Indiana. Organized in the rush to arms during the early days of the war, the Iron Brigade saw military action in the eastern theater with the Army of the Potomac throughout the war. The brigade saw combat action in most of the major eastern battles, such as Antietam, Second Manassas, and Fredericksburg, up through the action during the first day at Gettysburg. The unit had received its eternal title of "Iron Brigade" from its conduct and performance in the early campaigns of the war, and the army's commanders knew the brigade could be trusted with a heavy load when the need arose. After the heavy combat seen at the unfinished railroad cut on July 1 at Gettysburg, many thought the Iron Brigade had been "used up." One of its regiments had, in fact, suffered the heaviest casualties of any other that saw action in that battle.

Lance Herdegren, Director of the Institute of Civil War Studies at Carroll College, has brought to bear his extensive research into the Civil War careers of the Iron Brigade's members in providing a well-written narrative that fleshes out the bare bones facts of the battles and campaigns in which the brigade participated. Like many other excellent unit histories published within the past few years, Herdegren describes the

realities of the Civil War, not only for those who served in the ranks but also for those left behind on the home front. One poignant incident tells of a young lady who received a letter from her soldier beau saying that she would not be reading it unless he had been killed in battle. Four long days later, she learned that the person who was to mail the letter for him had either lost it or inadvertently mailed it. Her soldier beau and future husband had just come safely through action at Chancellorsville. Herdegren provides an excellent feel for both the combat front and the home front for those involved with the Iron Brigade's service in the war.

Alan Gaff's *On Many A Bloody Field* takes a more detailed look at some of the men serving in the Iron Brigade with an excellent study of Company B, 19th Indiana Volunteers. Gaff is very well qualified to write about the brigade, having published previous histories on the brigade at Brawner's Farm, a regimental history of the 2d Wisconsin, and editing *Adventures on the Western Frontier* by one of the brigade's commanders, Major General John Gibbon.

Both of these narrative histories of the Iron Brigade are highly recommended. Alan Nolan's *The Iron Brigade* is also well worth reading and is now recognized as one of the classic regimental histories. These more recent histories benefit from the additional materials and research information that have become available in the intervening 35 years to enhance our appreciation for and understanding of these men from the Midwest who, far from their homes and families, marched, slept, and fought on the hills and valleys of Pennsylvania and Virginia during the Civil War. These two books are well worth reading.

1915: The Death of Innocence. By Lyn MacDonald. **Henry Holt, 1995. 625 Pages. \$35.00.** Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Harold E. Raugh, Jr., U.S. Army.

British historian Lyn MacDonald is the author of four previously published books on World War I, most notable for her extensive and effective use of the letters, memoirs, journals, and interviews of participants in the various battles. This latest book, *1915: The Death of Innocence*, also records the combat experiences of soldiers and makes a most welcome addition to the literature of the First World War.

By Christmas 1914 it had become obvious that the war was not going to be just a short, "glorious adventure" but a long, drawn-out conflict requiring hitherto unimaginable casualties before any type of

resolution could be achieved. As the first full year of the war, 1915 also served as a watershed in another respect: Pre-war Europe was much simpler and less complicated than the continent that emerged from the conflagration. The theme of "the death of innocence," which flows through the book, thus refers not only to the individual soldiers, many of whom faced combat and possible death for the first time, but also to European society as a whole.

This volume covers the 1915 battles of Neuve Chapelle and Loos, the second battle of Ypres, and Gallipoli, the campaign staged in an attempt to break the stalemate of the Western Front. The author ably provides the diplomatic background to the military events of 1915, and activities at the operational and strategic levels. Official accounts, in addition to divisional and regimental histories, were used as source material for the operations of the various units. But one of the highlights of the book, and its most significant strength, is the number of individual narratives of participating soldiers that are interspersed throughout the text.

The first-hand perspectives bring the book to life. Soldiers, from riflemen and squad leaders to platoon leaders and battalion commanders, describe their hopes and fears, boredom and anticipation, and daily routines in and out of the trenches. It was seldom a pretty sight. Soldiers with their legs blown off, bleeding to death. Or victims of the first German gas attack, drowning because of their own fluid-filled lungs. Or bloated corpses, unburied for months in "no-man's land." It was war, and it was real.

Great Britain lost much more than just its innocence during 1915, the pivotal year of the war. Casualties were enormous and unprecedented. Of the 19,500 square miles of German-occupied France and Belgium, that year the Allies recovered only eight—an average of more than 200,000 casualties for each square mile of recovered territory. This interesting and highly readable book tells in great detail, often in the words of the actual participants, what it was like to serve and fight in those 1915 battles of "the war to end all wars."

Lyndon Johnson's War: America's Cold War Crusade in Vietnam, 1945-1968. By Michael H. Hunt. Hill and Wang, 1996. 146 Pages. \$18.00. Reviewed by Dr. Joe P. Dunn, Converse College.

To attempt any understanding of the long and complex evolution of American military involvement in Vietnam requires a com-

mand of factual detail, perspectives, and interpretations that are not easily reduced to a limited number of pages. Thus, even the shortest of the many outstanding texts and other accounts of American involvement are substantial volumes. Michael Hunt (University of North Carolina), one of America's premier diplomatic historians, has accomplished a significant task by telling the story accurately, judiciously, and insightfully in this brief essay. The slim volume is a service for the general reader and fills a genuine classroom need in both civilian and military venues.

Hunt's "Preface" is particularly interesting as it traces the author's personal involvement with Vietnam. As a young college student in 1961, he absorbed the book and the perspective of William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick's *The Ugly American*. But he soon began to question that view after reading Bernard Fall and Graham Greene while spending the summers of 1962 and 1963 with his family in Saigon, where his father was serving with the U.S. military mission. Hunt plays upon the Cold War theme that *The Ugly American* represents in the first chapter, and refers to it throughout the book.

The author's interpretation, a mainstream perspective, is that Lyndon Johnson's war was actually America's war, a product of the national identity, Cold War assumptions and consensus among the nation's best and brightest, and an American culture that claimed the right to speak for other people without knowing their history, language, or aspirations. Hunt charges that Johnson bore the greatest responsibility for the war even though his policy continued the trends of the Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy administrations. Although Vietnam was never of any greater importance than the fourth-rate country that LBJ labeled it, the United States plunged reluctantly but confidently and blindly into a situation that it did not understand. And frustratingly, America's awesome technology and vast military machine did not prevail against a people with the will, solidarity, and capacity to absorb the power that America spewed upon the land.

In the end, Hunt concludes that in comparative terms the actual costs of the war to America amounted only to a flesh wound in lives and expense, but the wound has been slow to heal because it is more psychic than physical. Vietnam has become a political and cultural reference point whose relevance and meaning remain a source of confusion and contention.

As a text, *Lyndon Johnson's War* fits with similar works by George Herring, Wil-

liam Duiker, William Turley, George Donelson Moss, Gary Hess, David Anderson, and others. However, in its valuable function as a resource essay, which will well serve for many courses where such a brief volume is needed, I am reminded of Martin F. Herz, *The Vietnam War in Retrospect* (1984), the only other source I know that packed such a comprehensive, balanced, and sprightly account in so few pages.

Colder than Hell: A Marine Rifle Company at Chosin Reservoir. By Joseph R. Owen. Naval Institute Press, 1996. 272 Pages. \$29.95. Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Michael F. Davino, U.S. Army.

Army Korean War expert Lieutenant Colonel Roy Appleman has called the 1st Marine Division of the Chosin Reservoir campaign "one of the most magnificent fighting organizations that ever served in the United States Armed Forces." The remarkable and inspiring story of the division at the Chosin Reservoir has been the subject of numerous books and several films. During their fighting withdrawal, the Marines inflicted severe losses on several divisions of the Chinese People's Liberation Army while at the same time fighting an exceptionally harsh winter.

Joseph Owen's book on the subject tells the story from the cutting-edge perspective of a rifle company. The author served as a mortar section leader and rifle platoon commander in Company B, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, from its activation in August 1950 through the Inchon-Seoul and Chosin fighting, where he was severely wounded.

Many reasons are given for the outstanding performance of the Marines in Northeast Korea during the winter of 1950. It is clear from this book that a large measure of the credit goes to the Marines and their leaders at the small-unit and rifle company level. Owen's narrative covers the hasty activation and training of the company, its brief participation in the fighting north of Seoul after the amphibious assault at Inchon and the details of its intense fighting at Chosin. He candidly discusses the mistakes made by the leaders and Marines of Company B, including his own. More important, he covers what they learned from these mistakes and how they used that knowledge to defeat the Chinese in a series of intense actions.

Owen's description of the activities of the company before its commitment and the organization and tactical employment of the 60mm mortars should be of great interest to today's infantrymen. The 7th Marines were

hastily assembled with regular and reserve component personnel and were in combat five weeks after the unit was activated. The seven lieutenants of Company B, however, were veterans with considerable experience and they, along with some excellent non-commissioned officers, made the most of the limited time they had to prepare their men for battle. One cannot help contrasting the experience level of Owen's contemporaries with that of today's Army infantry officers, products of a professional development system that moves company grade officers rapidly from one job to the next.

Owen was the only second lieutenant in the company and was initially assigned to its mortar section. His experiences reinforce what most infantrymen today know—the importance of the role the 60mm mortar can play in rifle company operations, particularly against an enemy force composed largely of dismounted infantry like the Chinese Communist Forces. They also point out what we also know, that the current two-gun, six-man mortar section has too few soldiers to accomplish the assigned tasks.

Although focused at company level, the author's story is framed with the overall conduct of the campaign. Refreshingly, unlike many books about the Chosin campaign, it is free of partisan sniping about the contributions made by the various services involved. Owen gives credit to the Army units that fought at Chosin as well as the contributions of naval and air forces and our British allies.

This book is rich in lessons about small-unit leadership, training, and combat operations. All infantrymen should read it and have it in their personal libraries.

Rifleman Dodd. By C.S. Forester. Marine Corps Association, 1996. 151 Pages. \$3.95. Reviewed by Captain Christopher M. Coglianese, U.S. Army.

This book is a novel, and not a new one at that, but it is well worth noting. Originally published in 1942, it was only recently reprinted, thanks to the Marine Corps, and made available outside of used book stores. Forester is the author of the better known classic indictment of higher-echelon ineptitude in World War I, *The General*. But he writes this story of loyalty and duty in the face of extreme odds from a totally different perspective—the individual Infantryman.

Private Matthew Dodd is a British regular fighting against Napoleon in the Peninsular Wars. He is one of Wellington's "scum of the earth." Yet, despite his lack of formal education and "proper" upbringing, he ex-

hibits a remarkable sense of duty, initiative, and tactical knowledge. These are traits born of many years of campaigning with his regiment.

Cut off from his beloved regiment during a small skirmish, and presumed dead, Dodd links up with Portuguese partisans and wages a vicious guerrilla campaign against the French. He inflicts casualties and, more important, disrupts French operations out of all proportion to the size of his band of men. He understands that anything he can do to hurt the French will help his comrades. He conducts his little war effectively, but always in his mind is his overarching desire to return to his regiment and the comrades he has soldiered with for so long. His story is a testimonial to the initiative of the individual soldier under difficult conditions and to the esprit de corps of highly cohesive units.

This is one of those rare books that are equally enjoyable to the newest private with a high school diploma and the oldest colonel with a doctorate. Our brother warriors in the Marine Corps chose it for two consecutive years as the Commandant's Selection for all grades. For the junior officer and soldier, it shows the value of regiment and how the individual and small unit can affect the battlefield at orders of magnitude above their small numbers. For the senior officer, it reinforces the idea that small units win wars and shows that the commander's intent was useful even before the term was doctrinal.

Five-Star Leadership: The Art & Strategy of Creating Leaders at Every Level. By Patrick L. Townsend and Joan E. Gebhardt. Wiley & Sons, 1997. 254 Pages. \$24.95. Reviewed by Colonel George G. Eddy, U.S. Army, Retired.

This book purports to put the practice of leadership in an implementing mode so that it comes to be a memorable word on the subject. Unfortunately for those who know something about leadership, either through even modest study or practice or both, what this book provides is a hodgepodge checklist series of quotes from military manuals, mostly Marine Corps, that extends from cover to cover on matters already long known.

There is little new in this book that is original. It is akin to painting-by-the-numbers; while you may end up with some sort of recognizable picture, this approach does not make you a great artist or even a competent one. Without the numbers, such a practitioner is hopelessly lost. I can just see a young lieutenant in front of his troops, holding this book in his hands, and flipping

the pages trying to find a pertinent checklist for that day. For the enthralled troops before him, he may even read a scintillating passage. Perhaps an emotional recitation of the 14 leadership traits or the 11 leadership principles as promulgated by the Corps.

The book also contains some commentary on love and leadership. I have been in several leadership positions, but I don't recall ever telling my troops how much I loved them. I did not love them, but I respected and admired them, and did everything I could to support and encourage them. In several instances, I went out of my way, at some risk to myself, to protect those I believed in, both officers and enlisted men, and who needed someone in authority to help salvage a career then on the rocks. This is not my definition of the word "love."

The bibliography and associated discussion in the text are woefully incomplete. There is no mention, for example, of the ideas of "intrapreneurship" as exemplified by Gifford Pinchot's book *Intrapreneuring*, or Stogdill's *Handbook of Leadership*, or Hunt and Blair's *Leadership on the Future Battlefield*, or Buck and Korb's *Military Leadership*, or Hunt and Larson's *Leadership Frontiers*, or the same authors' *Contingency Approaches to Leadership*, or MacGregor Burns's *Leadership*. The writings of Sam Sarkesian and Lewis Sorley also deserve mention.

Townsend and Gebhardt do, to their credit, correctly differentiate between leadership and management, but they offer little else.

RECENT AND RECOMMENDED

Elite Warriors: 300 Years of America's Best Fighting Troops. By Lance Q. Zedler and Michael F. Dilley. Pathfinder Publishing (458 Dorothy Ave., Ventura, CA 93003), 1996. 272 Pages. \$22.95.

Resumes and Cover Letters That Have Worked for Military Professionals. Edited by Anne McKinney. Seven Hills Book Distributors (49 Central Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45202), 1996. 256 Pages. \$25.00, Softbound.

American Evangelicals and the U.S. Military 1942-1993. By Anne C. Loveland. Louisiana State University Press, 1997. 356 Pages. \$55.00.

Before Their Time: A Memoir. By Robert Kotlowitz. Alfred A. Knopf, 1997. 195 Pages. \$22.00.

Walking Point: The Experiences of a Founding Member of the Elite Navy SEALS. By Chief James Watson with Kevin Dockery. William Morrow, 1997. 289 Pages. \$23.00.00