

# BOOK REVIEWS



## *Normandy: The Real Story – How Ordinary Allied Soldiers Defeated Hitler.*

**By Denis Whitaker and Shelagh Whitaker, with Terry Copp. Presidio Press, 2004. 400 pages, \$15.95.** Reviewed by Command Sergeant Major James Clifford.

Students of the American Civil War are familiar with the 'Lost Cause Theory' in which Southerners blamed their defeat on poor leadership, a lack of southern nationalism, and overwhelming odds. This theory was a force in Civil War historiography for the first 100 years or so of the postwar period and still finds many adherents to this day. A similar, although perhaps less prominent, phenomenon exists regarding the Allied victory over Germany in Normandy. According to the authors, many historians attribute this victory to a combination of Allied material advantages and Hitler's inept meddling in military affairs rather than giving credit to the martial prowess of the Allied Soldier. The authors point to such historians as B. H. Liddell Hart, S. L. A. Marshall, and others as propagators of this idea. One significant element of this theory is that the Allied Soldier prevailed despite being subject to universally poor leadership. This book purports to correct these misperceptions and finally give the common Soldier his due. Regardless of its lofty aims *Normandy: The Real Story* is an entertaining overview that fails to make the case of what may be a legitimate position.

Historian Terry Copp, who provided a well-written conclusion, joins the late Brigadier General Denis Whitaker, a decorated Soldier who participated in the events portrayed, and his wife Shelagh, a military historian in presenting this book. It is unfortunate that Copp's conclusions are not better supported by the main text. Readers may wonder if he might have joined the project after most of the work was done, perhaps after the death of Denis

Whitaker. His conclusion seems to be an effort to lend clarity to the book.

The narrative is smooth and entertaining but is no more than a loosely connected string of anecdotes rather than a thesis. Although the subtitle indicates that this is to be the story of ordinary Soldiers few junior officers, NCOs, and lower enlisted Soldiers make it into the story other than some tangential mentions. For most readers the term 'ordinary Soldier' conjures up ideas of captains, sergeants and privates, but in this book few Soldiers below the rank of lieutenant colonel are specifically noted.

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## *Faith of Our Sons: A Father's Wartime Diary.* **By Frank Schaeffer. Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2004. 276 pages, \$25.**

Reviewed by Major Keith Everett.

Frank Schaeffer's world was already upset when his son John joined the Marine Corps in 1998. On February 17, 2003, John Schaeffer turned the family's world completely upside down with a phone call. John was deploying to Iraq.

How does a family deal with a wartime deployment? How does anyone deal with the uncertainty, the stress and the long days and nights when a family member is serving in a combat zone? Frank attempts to answer these questions with his diary covering actually two deployments to Afghanistan (the deployment changed from the original destination of Iraq). The many e-mails and phone calls from family and friends brought a perspective from many angles. Even those friends who do not believe in the war, rallied around the Schaeffer family during the deployment.

Frank draws the reader into the day-to-day struggle to deal with the uncertainties of a loved one facing the unknown dangers in Afghanistan. The ebb and flow of feelings from anguish to relaxed uncertainty are chronicled. Frank

Schaeffer's report of the sleepless nights and the awakenings in the middle of the night with an uncertain feeling strike a common chord in the lives of servicemen's family members of any branch of the military.

The heart-stopping event of a late night phone call is no longer just a wrong number; it is the dreaded phone call of a problem with a deployed son. The Schaeffer family takes you on a roller coaster ride with each phone call from their Marine and each CNN report of another service member killed. The attitudes of each member of the Schaeffer family are challenged. Firm beliefs move from their rock foundations to floating on water and sometimes drifting off into space. Divergent views are suddenly shoved aside to make room for the unifying single wish and hope of John Schaeffer returning home safely. One thing is certain; the American flag is never observed the same way again.

As a correspondent for the *Washington Post* with the three published novels, *Portofino*, *Saving Grandma*, and *Zermatt*, the author is probably one of the least likely parents to send a child to war. John changed his father's view of wartime service forever by surprising everyone by first volunteering for the Marine Corps in 1998, and then deploying to the Iraq war in 2003. Frank and John Schaeffer joined ranks to write *Keeping Faith: A Father-Son Story about Love and the United States Marine Corps* about joining the military. *Faith of Our Sons* is the hard-hitting sequel, outlining service during combat operations in the Middle East. Every family support group and unit commander should recommend this book to the families of deployed Soldiers.

*Faith of Our Sons* is a timely book written straight from the fierce anxiety of a heart squeezed by the day-to-day uncertainty of war. Take a seat on the couch next to Frank and his wife, Genie, as they watch CNN and wonder each time a Soldier

is killed if it is their son. How can anyone deal with such anguish? A good place to start is by reading *Faith of Our Sons*.

***Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm: The Evolution of Operational Warfare.* By Robert M. Citino. University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, 2004. 418 pages, \$39.95 (cloth).** Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Rick Baillergeon, U.S. Army, Retired.

Robert Citino's *Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm: The Evolution of Operational Warfare* is a superb book, which will appeal to a diverse group of readers. Citino has crafted a book that is informative, well written, and most importantly, makes you think. Simply put, it is a book you will not want to put down.

The author has two distinct objectives in writing the book. First, he wants to provide the reader with a concise, yet highly analytical look at combined arms warfare and the evolution of operational art since the beginning of World War II. Second, with an eye on transformation and current operations, he makes his case for the U.S. Army to maintain a strong heavy force with a doctrine focused at the operational level of war. Certainly, Citino achieves his first objective with a combination of outstanding research, detailed analysis and answering the 'so what' that is often missing in books of this genre. In terms of his second objective, I will leave that up to future readers to determine if he made a valid case.

Citino, a professor of history at Eastern Michigan University is well qualified to pursue his objectives. In essence, *Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm* is his fourth book in a series focused on warfighting at the operational level of war. The first three books in the series were *Path to Blitzkrieg: Doctrine and Training in the German Army, 1920-1939*; *The Evolution of Blitzkrieg Tactics: Germany Defends Itself Against Poland, 1918-1933*; and *Quest for Decisive Victory: From Stalemate to Blitzkrieg in Europe 1899-1940*. Obviously, these books focused on the German Army and events in Europe. However, they do set the conditions for Citino's latest effort and consequently are highly recommended reading for those interested in *Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm*.

Although I have not read all of them, the ones I have read shared the same characteristics and strengths as Citino's current book.

In *Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm*, Citino analyzes the operational art exhibited by opposing sides in World War II, the Korean War, the Arab-Israeli Wars, the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War, the Iran-Iraq War, Desert Storm, and briefly touches on Operation Iraqi Freedom. In his discussion and analysis of each, Citino uses the same basic formula that he explains in his introduction. He states, "What is the role of mobility? Is it more or less important than firepower? What sorts of advantages does better, more realistic training bestow? How important is doctrine? What types of command and control mechanisms work best on the modern battlefield? Do victorious campaigns and armies that achieve them, share certain characteristics? The author successfully answers these questions and more throughout his pages. As stated earlier, Citino then uses the above analysis to craft his argument for the future of the U.S. Army. The author is extremely persuasive and his conclusions will make for excellent debate.

As can be surmised from my earlier comments, I found numerous strengths with this book. First, Citino has a very relaxed and readable writing style which can make complex material easy to comprehend. Second, throughout the book, the author not only explains what happened, but more importantly, why it happened and its complication. Third, Citino is not afraid to debate other authors' conclusions or analyses on particular events or leaders. For example, he questions historian Russell Weigley's treatment of U.S. Grant in *The American Way of War*. Perhaps, you may disagree with Citino's opinions (which I did in some cases), but it is refreshing and thought provoking. Finally, and in my opinion the biggest strength is the book's concluding notes section. Citino devotes almost 60 pages to discussing sources he used in writing his book. He gives his opinions on what books to read and which not to read if the reader wants more information on a particular subject. I found this extremely beneficial.

In summary, *Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm* is an exceptional read. It should be read

by those seeking a better understanding of operational art and those with opinions on the future composition and role of the U.S. Army. I look forward to his next project!



## CSA and Infantry Reading Lists Available Online

The Chief of Staff of the Army's recommended reading list can be found on the U.S. Army's Center for Military History's website at [www.army.mil/cmh-pg/reference/CSAList/CSAList.htm](http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/reference/CSAList/CSAList.htm)

The Infantry reading list, which includes suggested reading lists for lieutenants, captains, and NCOs can be found on the U.S. Army Infantry School and Center's website at [www.infantry.army.mil/catd/history/index.htm](http://www.infantry.army.mil/catd/history/index.htm)

A few of the books listed on the CSA's reading list are listed below:

### SUBLIST 1 — FOR CADETS, SOLDIERS, AND JUNIOR NCOs

***We Were Soldiers Once ... and Young: Ia Drang — The Battle That Changed the War in Vietnam*** — LTG (Retired) Harold G. Moore and Joseph L. Galloway

***If You Survive: From Normandy to the Battle of the Bulge to the End of World War II, One American Officer's Riveting True Story*** — George Wilson

***Closing with the Enemy: How GIs Fought the War in Europe, 1944–1945*** — Michael D. Doubler

***Patton: A Genius for War*** — Carlo D'Este  
***In the Company of Heroes*** — Michael J. Durant

### SUBLIST 2 — FOR COMPANY-GRADE OFFICERS, WO1-CW3, AND COMPANY CADRE NCOs

***America's First Battles: 1776–1965*** — Edited by Charles E. Heller and William A. Stofft  
***The Philippine War, 1899–1902*** — Brian McAllister Linn

***The War To End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I*** — Edward M. Coffman