

Book Reviews



Lost in Translation — Vietnam — A Combat Advisor's Story. By Martin J. Dockery. Published by Presidio Press, 2003, 252 pages, softcover, \$6.99. Reviewed by Sundi Rose, *Infantry Magazine* editorial intern.

Martin Dockery, son of Irish immigrants, recounts his tale of his life as a combat advisor to Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) units in a remote part of the country during the early part of the Vietnam War. The account of his experience is “not about closure; [his] hope is that by putting all of this in writing, [he] can make some sense of it.” It is that sentence that sums up the entirety of his story.

The narrative is written with an unpretentious earnestness that cannot be dismissed as trite or contrived. The beginning chapters include a warmly nostalgic recount of his childhood and some revealing anecdotes about his large Irish-Catholic family. Dockery is successful in being concise, diplomatic, and yet still endearing; a style he successfully maintains throughout the entire book even as he attempts to handle some very controversial ideas.

The book is not an editorial or a commentary about the controversy surrounding Vietnam, although Dockery is not without opinion. Instead, the book attempts to convey Dockery's personal story. He very evenhandedly deals with his conflicting feelings concerning his charge as an officer and his personal regard for the mission. He is gracious in his assessment of what was, in reality, inadequate training, and he never once passes judgment on his superiors for their choices. Although he clearly disagrees with some of the ideology of the conflict, he is very adept at being fair and accommodating.

Despite this book's obvious military content, it has a very wide civilian appeal. Dockery easily punctuates the narration with history and handles military jargon with both levity and agility. As a civilian reader, I enjoyed the way in which he explained the intricacies of the Vietnam situation but never condescended to my lack

of knowledge about history. His disclaimer in the acknowledgment states that, although he did some research for background, all the events recounted in the book are solely from his memory. His candor when speaking of his own work is charming, and it is this charm that is one of this book's greatest assets.

The book is not without its imperfections, however. In his effort to keep his writing conversational, Dockery tends to wander off on tangents. There are several occasions when he digresses from the subject at hand to spend two or three paragraphs on topics unrelated, or at best marginally related, to the current discussion. The results of his wandering pen are not all that distracting, as his book has such a poignant memoir quality to it, but it is nonetheless apparent.

The book is quick paced and will keep even the most military ignorant person entertained for most of a reading. Dockery is so equitable in his retelling of events that readers of any opinion about the conflict will benefit from his memoir.

Across the Dark Islands: The War in the Pacific. By Floyd W. Radike. New York: Presidio Press, 2003. 261 pages, \$24.95. Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Harold E. Raugh, Jr., U.S. Army, Retired.

This candid and powerfully written book is Floyd W. Radike's story of his combat service in the Pacific during World War II. It is a saga of mud and mayhem, of chaos and cruelty, and the reality of small unit combat leadership.

Radike was initially a lieutenant and rifle platoon leader in the 161st Infantry Regiment, a National Guard unit in the Regular Army 25th Infantry Division (ID). The ill-prepared and inadequately trained 25th ID was diverted with two days' notice to combat in the dank and disease-ridden jungles of Guadalcanal. During this campaign, the strength of Radike's company was reduced from five officers and

195 men to two officers and 11 men.

After operations on Guadalcanal, Radike lauded the effectiveness of the M1 rifle as “the best thing that had ever happened to an infantryman.” Tactical and logistical shortcomings, however, included the continual lack of information, the failure of logistics to provide adequate water to the Soldiers, a shortage of maps or aerial photographs, no jungle boots or uniforms, and the lack of hot meals and fruit juices – the latter being commonly available to rear echelon Soldiers.

The 161st Infantry Regiment also fought fierce battles on New Georgia and later on Luzon in the Philippines in 1944-1945, during which time the unit suffered 135 percent casualties. The infantry fought against fanatic Japanese soldiers who had built strong defensive positions, supported by tanks and artillery, in the ridgelines and mountains of Luzon. The 25th Division was designated to participate in the invasion of Japan, but the dropping of the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki canceled those plans.

This excellent book contains a fast-paced, highly readable, and earthy narrative. In many respects, it can serve as a primer of World War II-era infantry leadership. The fighting at Guadalcanal, and later at New Georgia and the Philippines, according to Radike, was “deadly, debilitating, and offering constant tension and fear, as well as mixing in mud, blood, and despair.” While Radike bemoans the incompetence of senior leaders and the relative comfort of rear echelon units, he knew from experience that “the U.S. Soldier had courage as well as sense.”

A Marine's Tale. By Bob Nolan. 2002, 293 pages. Reviewed by Kathy Honea, *Infantry Magazine* editorial intern.

This remarkable text is the account of a United States Marine Corps veteran of World War II, a member of that heroic band of Americans whom Tom Brokaw aptly

named “The Great Generation.” At a time when America faced a greater peril than she had at any point in her history, these men and women set aside their security, hopes, and dreams and stepped forward to answer the call. Bob Nolan is one of their number, and *A Marine’s Tale* is his story.

This short book is a heartwarming account of the events and motivation that impelled a young man to enlist in the Marine Corps on June 2, 1942. It traces his adventures — and his misadventures — as he travels across the United States, undergoes the life-changing experience that is boot camp, joins his unit, and is transferred to the Pacific theater of operations where he was to serve in the 1st Battalion, 12th Marines, 3rd Marine Division, as an artilleryman in combat against a bitter and determined Japanese enemy. For the first time, he bore the pain of losing friends with whom he had trained, celebrated, and fought in defense of our nation.

Nolan offers insights into the communications equipment, the officers and NCOs they had, and the weapons they used that could only have come from the pen of one who has been there and done it. He learned the Marine’s trade in places most of us have only read about: Guadalcanal, Bougainville, and Iwo Jima, to name only three. Reading *A Marine’s Tale*, even today’s warriors can learn much, because Nolan’s rite of passage six decades ago is much the same that which today’s men and women in uniform must undergo as they too prepare to serve.

The author cites the support of big-name entertainers such as bandleader Kay Kayser, Eddie Cantor, Dinah Shore, Marlene Dietrich, and many others from movies and sports to illustrate America’s total commitment to her armed forces. One cannot help noting the few American entertainers today who have stepped forward themselves to support today’s men and women who are fighting in the global war on terror.

The book is set in large, clear type which makes it an easy read, and the format of chapter headings could be set in smaller type without detracting from its legibility. The book has a number of photos and maps which are useful but suffer because of the manner in which they were reproduced. Should the author decide to issue a second printing, I would recommend that the new

printing be done working with a printer who can offer digital typesetting and photographic reproduction. The few typographical errors do not distract the reader from the author’s message, and would no doubt be corrected in a second printing.

A Marine’s Tale is well worth reading. It is not only Bob Nolan’s account of a young man growing into adulthood during an intensely stressful time, but is also a compelling narrative of his survival — and the survival of those around him — by means of his own relationships with family, friends, peers, and superiors who are all trying to deal with the effects of a world at war themselves. Nolan allows the reader a glimpse into the mind of a youth who weighs the obligation of military service and his intense sense of loyalty to his family, something familiar to many of us who have served in uniform, or who are serving today.

***Red Coats to Cams: A History of Australian Infantry 1788 to 2001.* By Ian Kuring.** Reviewed by Z. Frank Hanner, National Infantry Museum director.

Warrant Officer Class Two Ian Kuring has written a first class account of one of the world’s finest infantry organizations. The Australian infantryman has proven himself in battle generation after generation. Kuring explains just how the military history of Australia began and traces this epic story from its first Infantry units to today’s SAS squadron deploying to Afghanistan in December of 2001 as a result the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. He is able to explain through charts and maps where the Australian infantry units originated in Australia and where they were sent to fight in various campaigns from the first time an Australian colony provided assistance for the defense of the British Empire in the fighting in the Sudan in 1885 to the steaming jungles of the Pacific. If you would like to have a better understanding of one of the U.S. staunchest allies and how this country that is large in territory but has a small population has been able to protect its sovereignty, then this book is the one volume that will provide you with the most insight. I found the information

provided about the Australian infantry in World War I to be the most significant in establishing a record of combat that was so inspiring that the infantryman that have followed these brave men have always wanted to make sure that they would never put a blemish on the fighting record that had been earned with so many shattered lives. Kuring’s book is not just about battles. He goes to great lengths to explain training and the equipment used as well as the types of weapons that were issued for each time period. He also discusses the tactics and organizations and why and how they came to be used. As with all infantry organizations it seems that their sacrifices, especially in the 20th and 21st centuries, are sometimes overshadowed by other branches. As in most wars, it is the hard-living and hard-fighting infantryman that has, and continues to sustain, the most casualties in battle for his country and so it is with Kuring’s story of the Australian infantry soldier. If the book has any flaw at all, it would be that Kuring was unable to go and use the primary sources for this book because of limited funding. He has done a superb job, and with all the additional organizational charts for Infantry and his list of the various infantry units, it is the most complete history I’m aware of on this subject. It is a book that all infantrymen should take the time to read!

If you would like to obtain a copy The National Library of Australia ISBN: 1-876439-99-8 The book was first published in Australia in 2004 by Australian Military History Publications, 13 Veronica Place, Loftus 2232 Australia, Phone: 02-9542-6771 Fax: 02-9542-6787.

***Forts of the United States.* By Bud Hannings.** McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers: Jefferson, North Carolina, 2006. 738 pages, \$125. Reviewed by Russell A. Eno, *Infantry Magazine* editor.

Bud Hannings has hit another home run. His earlier works, *A Portrait of the Stars and Stripes* (1988) and *A Portrait of the Stars and Stripes Volume II—1919-1945* (1991) established his skill at crafting exhaustively researched and meticulously documented chronologies of the warriors who have fought to first establish and then preserve this nation from 1770 through the

end of the Second World War. Even while working on his defining work, a history of the Korean War, he has found time to compile yet another superb text, *Forts of the United States*, which he describes as “an historical dictionary, 16th through 19th Centuries.”

In 738 pages, Hannings describes virtually all of the fortifications by state and name, including the establishment dates and reasons, uses and modifications, and the disposition of each of them. Because of his precise descriptions of the forts’ location, future researchers, historians and archeologists should have little trouble locating the sites. He also backs up his text with an exhaustive, detailed bibliography that affords access to yet more sources.

Of particular significance are those forts that no longer exist and hence are not widely known as tourist attractions. These forgotten sites — in virtually every state of the Union — reveal each state’s contribution to the early settlement of America, her fight for independence, and her extensive preparations for the common defense. We are a nation at war, and Americans can look with pride to vestiges of America’s commitment to defense of life and liberty from the earliest days of the Republic.

As in his earlier books, Hannings retains an evenhanded approach to history, neither slighting nor favoring States or the factions that are now interwoven as the fabric of our military history. He ignores the often divisive parochialism born of interservice rivalry, choosing instead to present the facts as we need them: unvarnished and undistorted. Lest he omit anything that could be useful to those interested in our history, Hannings even includes military hospitals of Washington, D.C.; forts activated during the Florida Seminole Indian War; Pony Express Depots; and Spanish missions and Presidios.

This is a remarkable book, and one that deserves to find a far broader audience than in the libraries and history departments of universities. Middle and high school students will gain an appreciation of their own local history by completing assignments and reports that draw upon Bud Hannings’s sources, and in so doing will reinforce their own pride and sense of identity as citizens of this great nation. Buy it, read it, treasure it, and pass it down to your children and grandchildren.

***Jayhawk! The VII Corps in the Persian Gulf War.* By Stephen A. Bourque. Washington, D.C.: Center for Military History, 2002. 514 pages, CMH Pub 70-73-1. Reviewed by Brigadier General (Retired) Curtis Hooper O’Sullivan.**

Desert Shield/Storm was a limited war in terms of both duration and geographical coverage. There are those who consider it as Act 1 of a conflict which was renewed in 2003 and continues today. *Jayhawk* covers one segment — and does so extremely well! VII Corps was one of five somewhat similar organizations in the chain of command on the front lines.

Though I plunged into and enjoyed the Army Green Books as they rolled out after World War II, I find the current generation of official histories far more attractive. It’s hard to tell whether the selection and presentation of material has improved. Advances in information technology may have helped. This was the first conflict of the computer age and a flood of documents was created - maybe too many to deal with easily. The declassification process seems to have been a problem for the author. The appearance has been vastly improved. There are 144 well-chosen color pictures; 27 maps of excellent quality and appropriate scale; 10 charts which help clarify the text; and three appendices which serve much of the same purpose. The only minor quibble is that the map symbols at the back of the book might have attracted more attention in the front.

Bourque is a “whiz kid” who was one of the elite few to be selected for the second year at Leavenworth, the School of Advanced Military Studies. The foundation of this book was his PhD dissertation from Georgia State University. He served as a night operations officer and duty officer at the 1st Infantry Division’s command post during the operation so he was personally acquainted with many of the messages which formed the framework of the battle.

The battle is considered the payoff, other phases may be equally vital — even if less exciting. The book is well balanced in covering the status of VII Corps before the war, the movement into the theater of operations, the preparatory phases, the actual fighting, continued missions at the front, the unit’s return home, and then finally its deactivation.

This is a great work for serious scholars but not for devotees of “whodunits” or revisionist history. It warrants retention in the permanent collection of anyone with a real interest in warfare as waged at the corps level.

***The Big Red One at D-Day, 6 June 1944: Recollections of the Normandy Campaign and Beyond.* By Major General Albert H. Smith, Jr., U.S. Army, Retired. Blue Bell, PA: Society of the First Infantry Division, 2003. 442 pages, softbound. Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Albert N. Garland and Patricia Weekley.**

There really is no single description that would do justice to this book. It is part narrative history, part personal memoir, part photographic history, part documentary history. It contains a good amount of each, and one who served in or is now serving with the division could not ask for more.

The author (who recently passed away) had written previously on the division’s other World War II exploits, i.e. North Africa and Sicily. For this work, he gathered up a large amount of material concerning the division’s 6 June 1944 landings in Normandy and the days immediately following. Then, with the assistance of his wife, he arranged that material into a readable and useful military history.

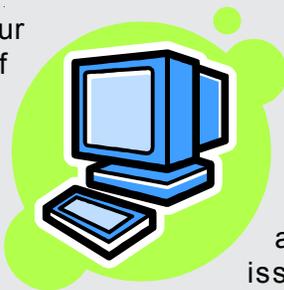
General Smith joined the Army right out of college in July 1940. He was promptly assigned to the 1st Division’s 16th Infantry Regiment. He was a brand new Infantry second lieutenant. He served with the regiment for the duration of the war; by 1945, he had reached the rank of major. (In later years, he had several tours as the honorary colonel of the regiment.) In brief, the 1st Division was “his unit.” The table of contents that list the titles of nine chapters, ten appendices, General Smith’s notes and writings, and an addendum identify the book’s contents.

I know he had other writings in mind. But it was not to be. He has received his last set of PCS orders; the division will not soon, if ever, see his like.

Infantry Magazine Web Site Being Restructured

We are an Army at war, and our enemy will make full use of any lessons learned articles and other open-source materials available on the Internet and in any DoD publications that discuss our own tactics, techniques, and procedures; vulnerabilities; and U.S or allied casualties.

As the Infantry's branch magazine, we must avoid revealing anything that will endanger U.S. and coalition forces' personnel or missions. Operations security (OPSEC) is as important today as it has been at any time in our nation's history, and we will do our part to deny the enemy anything that could help him.



Because of this, the back issues of *Infantry* that have been posted to our Web site were removed from the site effective May 22, 2006, are now being screened for any potentially sensitive material, and OPSEC sanitized information will be made available at a later date. Future printed issues of the magazine will have been scrubbed to avoid unauthorized disclosure.

A version of the magazine with the author's full article content will also be available at a later date, through a password-protected site which affords a greater degree of security than that formerly possible on the Web site.

Any questions or concerns can be e-mailed to Inf.MagazineDep@benning.army.mil.



Sergeant Ryan Matson

Iraqi Army troops and U.S. Soldiers air assault from a CH-47D Chinook helicopter in Iraq.