

Book Reviews



***Fighting The Breakout: The German Army In Normandy From 'Cobra' To The Falaise Gap.* Edited by David C. Isby. London: Greenhill Books, 2004, 255 pages.** Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Michael A. Boden.

The events of *Fighting the Breakout: The German Army in Normandy From "Cobra" to the Falaise Gap* are familiar to most students of World War II. As part of its series on World War II German military debriefs, Greenhill Books here publishes a collection of personal accounts from five German generals, all of whom were instrumental in the activities of the Seventh Army during the campaign. These firsthand accounts are presented in one consolidated collection for students of the era to study.

For the most part, the selections are from the after action reviews and post-war debriefs of Generalmajor Freiherr von Gersdorff (chief of staff, German Seventh Army) although chapters from German Generals Hausser, Fahrmacher, Eberbach and von Luettwitz are included. These men all figured prominently in the German defense against the expanding allied armies, and their accounts represent operational perspectives on the fighting during the critical period between Operation Cobra and the closing of the Falaise pocket — three weeks that sealed the fate of German hopes for a positive decision in Normandy. Most readers will be acquainted with these men, their units, and their stories from the hundreds of secondary sources covering this period of the war; all of these contributions have been cited regularly by scholars in the past half-century. Here, the accounts stand on their own and can be read without looking through the prism of another writer.

As with many primary source collections, however, there are drawbacks for the casual reader. These accounts all contain a great deal of detail and specificity which can prove difficult, presented in the respective authors' formal verbiage. The audience for such accounts is admittedly limited, but those who are studying any

aspect of the examined operations will reap great rewards working through these important and substantial accounts. Besides commentary on the positioning and movement of forces, these officers' stories address other aspects of the Normandy fighting, such as the impact of Allied air superiority and French partisan actions. These discussions are particularly interesting in light of six decades of hindsight, research, and historical knowledge.

Fighting the Breakout is a useful and informative collection, despite the sometimes thick reading. These reminiscences of German general officers serves as a valuable parallel to the trials and tribulations of the common soldiers of the war, and the perspectives here should not be forgotten.

***Lee & Grant: Profiles in Leadership from the Battlefields of Virginia.* By Major Charles R. Bowery Jr, U. S. Army. American Management Association, 2005. 262 pages, \$24 (Hardcover).** Reviewed by Command Sergeant Major (Retired) James Clifford.

The recent ascendancy of the military as an institution in the minds of the public has given rise to a spate of books designed to teach the rest of the world, especially the business world, the leadership lessons of our most revered leaders and organizations. A search of a popular bookselling website using the words 'leadership lessons of...' brings up thousands such books, most based on military examples. Virtual bookstore shelves are full of titles about the leadership lessons of Navy Seals, Army Rangers, Lord Nelson, Alexander the Great, Lewis & Clark, Patton and a host of others; and, of course, several on Grant and Lee. Add this book to the growing list.

Lee & Grant is published by the American Management Association and targets the business world. This, and all books of this type, is based on the widely

held belief that the military is the premier leadership laboratory in existence today. Such an idea ebbs and flows in the public mind, but currently the military is riding a long wave of admiration with no end in sight. Among the countless icons of stellar leadership, Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee are some of the most popular. The author, an active duty aviator, former history professor at West Point, and veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, focuses on the Overland Campaign of 1864, in which Grant fought Lee to the gates of Richmond, to illustrate his leadership examples.

He juxtaposes his points against current Army leadership doctrine as articulated in Field Manual 22-100, skillfully explaining the different categories of direct, organizational, and strategic leadership. Bowery points out that in the Overland Campaign Lee and Grant applied the interpersonal, conceptual, technical, and tactical leadership skills that are the basis of the organizational level of leadership.

While businessmen with little or no knowledge of military leadership may find *Lee & Grant* useful, it will also provide some service to Soldiers as the author uses examples to illustrate his points. In one such case, the author does a good job of using Grant's assumption of overall command of the Union armies as a demonstration of how one can take over business responsibilities, especially in a challenging situation. In another circumstance, he explains how leadership by example can redeem a bad decision such as in the well-known 'Lee to the rear' incident in the May 1864 Wilderness battle. The book is full of such well-illustrated examples that correspond with the tenets of FM 22-100. Bowery harvests these and translates them into business lessons that can be used with equal success by civilian managers and Soldier leaders alike. He also closes the book with a useful template for off-site visits to battlefields suitable for business leaders.

Students of the Civil War, however, may find some reason to take issue with the author's interpretation of events depending

on their view vis-à-vis the “Lost Cause Theory.” This is the theory that attributes the Southern defeat to several causes but places no blame on the Southerners themselves. The foundation of this theory is idolatry of Lee. Bowery does bow somewhat at Lee’s altar himself. His characterization of Lee’s betrayal of the Union as a show of Lee’s “inner strength of character that made him the great leader he was” (p. 20) made this student of the Civil War cringe. Additionally, the author makes a few other curious assertions about the war such as when he mentions that Union General George McClellan was a “very competent” leader whose petulance prevented him from “earning the credibility and freedom of action that he [McClellan] thought he deserved” (p. 27-28).

Other than those minor concerns, *Lee & Grant: Profiles in Leadership from the Battlefields in Virginia* is strongly recommended.

***The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years’ War to the Third Reich.* By Robert M. Citino. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005, 428 pages, \$34.95 (cloth).** Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Rick Baillergeon.

We have all heard the old adage, “Don’t fix it if it ain’t broke!” However, in today’s society it seems these words are rarely heeded as people continually try to reinvent the wheel. Fortunately, author Robert Citino is from the old school of thought. His most recent effort, *The German Way of War*, follows the same formula of the other superb books I have read by him. It is highly researched, superbly written, truly informative, and a book that is simply outstanding!

For years, we in the military circles have thrown out constant references to a “German way of war.” In developing courses of action or drawing parallels to tactics or doctrine, it was always vogue to throw out German historical references. Regrettably, for many, there was no clear understanding of what was truly this “German way of war.” Citino clears up these misconceptions and greatly broadens a reader’s understanding of the concepts

they used so freely in the past.

Citino answers three key questions for readers. First, “What characterizes the German way of war?” Second, “Why did they develop this style of warfare?” Finally, “What events and people shaped and influenced this style of war?” In answering these questions, he provides exhaustive research to his readers and a rare ability to put his keen insight into words that readers can comprehend.

Based on his research, Citino focuses his study from the Prussian First Northern War of 1655 to the collapse of the Third Reich attack into Russia during World War II. Readers will find detailed discussion on the wars, campaigns, and battles fought by the Prussian, Bismarckian, Weimer, and Nazi regimes during this nearly 300-year period. Additionally, Citino keys on the men who fought and led these conflicts and those who shaped doctrine and thought. These include Frederick the Great, Moltke (the Elder), Clausewitz, Schlieffen, von Seeckt, and Manstein. Of the men highlighted above, the author is especially effective in his treatment of Frederick, Clausewitz, and Schlieffen.

After reading previous volumes by Citino, I find there is always anticipation as to what intriguing insight or fresh comment may come up on the next paragraph or page. Certainly, within the pages of *The German Way of War* there is no shortage of excellent material that will make you think or question yourself as to why you never thought of that. One such example follows next. When surmising the overall career of Frederick the Great, Citino states, “He was perhaps, Frederick the Great, but he was certainly Frederick the Lucky. To which one is tempted to add: anyone who is lucky eventually receives an invitation to leave the casino.”

As in his past works, it is the added extras that truly set a Citino book from most volumes. In *The German Way of War*; he inserts dozens of pen and ink drawings of the men he analyzes and adds over a dozen maps to depict key battles and campaigns. Even more impressive, is the author’s note section at the end of the book. Citino provides more than 60 pages of notes discussing his sources and providing readers additional information if they seek further material on a specific subject. I

believe there is no better writer today in providing this valuable service to his readers.

I found Citino’s last effort, *Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm: The Evolution of Operational Warfare* to be, perhaps, the best book I read in 2004. Certainly, others agreed as it was awarded several prestigious awards and was highly acclaimed in numerous publications. However, I believe *The German Way of War* may be even better because of its specific focus and his utter command of the subject area. It is one of those rare books that allows Citino to not only teach his readers, but also facilitates future learning. It is truly highly recommended reading and I again look forward to his next project. What was that adage again? “If it ain’t broke...”

RECENT AND RECOMMENDED —
***Given Up for Dead: America’s Heroic Stand at Wake Island.* By Bill Sloan. Bantam Books, 2003.**

***Fighting for American Black Soldiers: The Unsung Heroes of World War II.* By Christopher Paul Moore. Ballantine Books, 2005.**

***Gunner’s Glory.* By Johnnie M. Clark. Ballantine Books - Presidio, 2004.**

***A Life in a Year: The American Infantryman in Vietnam.* By James R. Ebert. Ballantine Books - Presidio, 2003.**

***Hill 488.* By Ray Hildreth and Charles W. Sasser. Pocket Books, 2003.**

***Soul Patrol.* By Ed Emanuel. Ballantine Books - Presidio, 2003.**

***Recondo: LRRPs in the 101st.* By Larry Chamber. Ballantine Books - Presidio, 2003.**

***To the Far Side of Hell: The Battle for Peleliu, 1944.* By Derrick Wright. Fire Ant Books, 2005.**

***Visions from a Foxhole: A Rifleman in Patton’s Ghost Corps.* By William A. Foley, Jr. Ballantine Books - Presidio, 2003.**

***Down South: One Tour in Vietnam.* By William H. Hardwick. Ballantine Books - Presidio, 2004.**

***The Do-or-Die Men: The 1st Marine Raider Battalion at Guadalcanal.* By George W. Smith. Pocket Books, 2003.**

***Stalin’s War: Tragedy and Triumph, 1941-1945.* By Edwin P. Hoyt. Cooper Square Press, 2003.**



Specialist Christa Martin

Above, Soldiers with the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, come across a mortar tube during a mission in Mosul, Iraq. At right, a 10th Mountain Division Soldier patrols near Aranas, Afghanistan.

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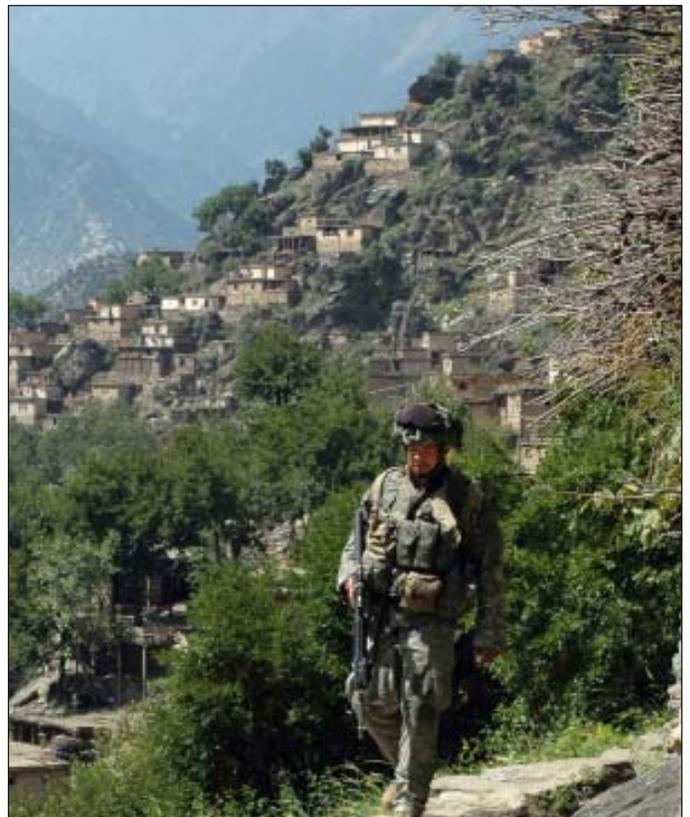
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