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About Face: The Odyssey of an American Warrior

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as much to lose the war as the communists did to win it. "The counterinsurgency programs of the government and of the American military advisers did not address the grievances of the people, which were among the most important factors in the rebellion, but instead added new causes for resentment. . . ." As examples, he cites the abuses in land reform, corruption among GVN officials and the attempts to eliminate non-Vietnamese ethnic groups. The GVN left no blunder untried in its twenty-year history of mismanaging the war. Then there were the atrocities: My Lai in 1968 and the senseless bombing exemplified by the attack on Binh Hoa in 1962. Reporting on the latter, Roger Hilsman noted "that it helped to recruit more Viet Cong than it could possibly have killed."

There were bright spots and lessons for future warriors to remember. Lieutenant General Lewis W. Walt gets high marks for the Combined Action Platoons (CAPs) developed by units of his III Marine Amphibious Force in the mid to late sixties.

Wiesner has filled a gap in the history of the conflicts that have racked Vietnam for over sixty years. He has documented in detail the successes and failures of thirty-one years of refugee management in South Vietnam. The annotated bibliography and detailed notes justify the cost of the book. But more than that, he lists the lessons learned that policymakers and commanders

can apply to future small wars. Two examples:

"Some killing, injury and displacement of civilians are inevitable . . . however, the amount of damage to civilian populations and their property . . . are controllable by the belligerents. . . . Furthermore, if the harm done is perceived by the victims as excessive or disproportionate to legitimate military purposes—which people on the spot are often quite capable of judging—it produces resentments that may make an operation or campaign unproductive.

It is generally best to leave people on their land, even in enemy-held areas. Although they will be used . . . by the enemy, such exploitation, especially if it becomes excessive, will probably alienate the people from their oppressors. . . .

Refugees are part of the landscape of war. Wiesner has devoted his life to them. Through his book, he may reach the victims of conflicts yet to come. For their sake, he deserves our attention.

JONATHAN T. HINE, JR.
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U.S. Navy (Retired)

Hackworth, David and Sherman, Julie. *About Face: The Odyssey of an American Warrior*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989. 875pp. \$24.95

This is the story of a soldier who began his career as a 15-year-old, NCO-raised warrior. His early

experience in Trieste after World War II and as a street gang leader in Los Angeles was the bow release that guided the arrow of his life. In watching the U.S. troops occupying Trieste he became imbued with high standards of appearance and the outward signs of military discipline: both confirmed that being tough and willing to risk his neck brought better rewards than education and the inner discipline of character.

About Face reveals a classic example of the military bureaucracy tolerating assertive bad temper and rationalized moral lapses because the author had authentic combat credentials. Perhaps the greatest appeal of this book to a civilian readership is that Colonel Hackworth's killer-instinct extends far beyond foreign enemies; it includes the reputations of those he dislikes—including persons of high rank and political leadership.

There is much use of "barracks room" language and attitudes that might have passed for part of the catechism of a career enlisted man in any era, if it were not for the fact that this language has become common coinage in all walks of life. It no longer shocks—maybe no longer offends.

Not that the language he uses is incongruous. There is a hard practicality in the soldier mind that is suspicious of refinements. It is a mind that simultaneously envies and rejects privilege, and is absolutely contemptuous of anyone of any rank who cannot stand the test of combat. It expresses itself in pungent, aggres-

sive language—an assault with words.

Colonel Hackworth is drawn into the political side of military life by his well-advertised combat performance, and he brings all his critical powers and personal rancor to bear on what he considers to be military stupidity coupled with lust for high rank, abetted by the accumulation of unearned medals for valor. Many of his targets include men of high position and large reputation—some of whom he alleges sought his support and approval.

In the chapter titled "A Law Unto Himself," he describes setting up a unit brothel, a gambling house and other unauthorized money-generating activities. These and illegal transfers of money out of Vietnam led to the end of his career. This chapter is the watershed of the book, for when it is not engraving him as a born leader and bold warrior, it is etching his moral courage with frequent anecdotes of his defiance of those in power and position, and getting away with it because he is right or lucky. In 1971 his luck ran out: the illegalities plus an in-uniform TV interview that was highly critical of every aspect of U.S. political and military leadership led to his retirement.

This is a theatrical book. The coauthor is a screen writer and the maverick turned martyr is a temptation to stretch opportunism to the point of giving occasionally what Poo Bah in the "Mikado" called "verisimilitude to what might otherwise be a bald and outright lie."

However, it would be tedious to untangle the indisputable facts which are interspersed with exaggerations and one-sided recollections of conversations with those once in high place but now conveniently dead.

In the conventional sense, there is nothing new or illuminating in this book. But it is fascinating in its passion, and as a portrait of a wounded warrior—wounded in every sense. While many may consider the book to be Colonel Hackworth's way of getting revenge for having to leave the army under a cloud, it is more than that. Like Hackworth the man, the book has juice and no one who lived through his era in the U.S. Army will be neutral. But what might have been a sensation in the seventies is now just another layer of Vietnam sadness.

Be that as it may, nineteen years after the end for him in Vietnam, Colonel Hackworth's war is not yet over, and he is not letting either the issues or his antagonists rest in peace.

WILLIAM FRED LONG
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Gray, A.M. *Warfighting: Fleet Marine Force Manual 1*. Washington: Dept. of the Navy, 1989. 88pp.

This small book is a classic on war. General A.M. Gray, Commandant of the Marine Corps, intends its message to be taken to heart. He has issued a copy to each of his officers to read—and reread. “The thoughts

contained here,” says Gray, “represent not just guidance for actions in combat, but a way of thinking in general.” Gray’s “way of thinking” can be extended to any field of endeavor where opposing wills conflict.

Military conflict is clearly the focus, however. One is immediately drawn to compare Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War*, both in congruence of philosophy and brevity of thought. Sun Tzu teaches “Now an army may be likened to water, for just as flowing water avoids the heights and hastens to the lowlands, so an army avoids strength and strikes weakness.” General Gray, with obvious reference to Colonel John Boyd’s often repeated lecture, “The Patterns of Conflict,” fully embraces the fluid doctrine of maneuver warfare, “to circumvent the enemy’s strength and strike him where he is not prepared.” Were it so easy we might all be generals!

In its pithy way, however, *Warfighting* goes much further in defining maneuver warfare, which has both spatial and temporal dimensions. It also includes a moral dimension that must be calculated carefully in order to achieve a focus of effort against the enemy’s critical vulnerability. The process—a combination of mental, moral and physical—constitutes Boyd’s OODA loop, an acronym for the four-step process: observation, orientation, decision, and action. By observing the enemy and evaluating or orienting to the situation, a decision and ensuing action can present the