

# Naval War College Review

---

Volume 29  
Number 3 *Summer*

Article 22

---

1976

## Wine and Bitters

Don Higginbotham

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

---

### Recommended Citation

Higginbotham, Don (1976) "Wine and Bitters," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 29 : No. 3 , Article 22.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol29/iss3/22>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).

## PROFESSIONAL READING 131

similar methods) to assess the performance of Congressmen in the area of defense matters. Moyer's hypothesis is that "ideological factors" determine House voting on defense questions and that constituency and "idiosyncratic factors" are of only secondary importance. The evidence presented is convincing, but, again, I am not persuaded that enough attention has been given to the terms around which so much of the study revolves. It may seem disputatious, but it appears as if Moyer has amply demonstrated *something* (although precisely what escapes me because of his failure to be clear about words which themselves resist clear definitions).

Douglas Rosenberg's "Arms and the American Way" is a stimulating essay. If the three preceding articles attempt to achieve mathematical clarity about issues, Rosenberg's essay bravely explores one of the haziest areas in contemporary military affairs scholarship: What is the relationship between the national myth and the national might? It is intriguing that an essay of the type written by Rosenberg appears in a book the bulk of which is quantitatively oriented. Only very rarely does one find in military affairs scholarship reference to such concepts as political culture, the myth, and the noble lie; it sometimes seems as if students of military affairs want to close themselves off from consideration of all the great questions in Western civilization. In fact, it may only be in the heat of battle that someone may find that as men have lived and thought as civilians, so will they fight as soldiers.

Rosenberg and Major Alcalá have prepared one of the best research bibliographies I have seen. The bibliography runs about 175 pages and contains more than 2,500 entries, cross-referenced. The bibliography is organized by categories, which are in turn subdivided. For example, if a student at a service (or civilian) college wishes to investigate or

research the topic, "The Military Mind," he will find in this bibliography a separate subheading just for that topic (which includes about 50 entries). It is a remarkably comprehensive bibliography—even including entries from such sources as *Berkeley Tribe*, *Black Panther*, and *Village Voice*. This excellent list of sources should be of great value to military instructors, authors, staff officers—and to anyone with a serious interest in military affairs and international relations. It alone is easily worth the price of the book.

In short, the entire collection is a valuable addition to the literature. It is well worth a close reading, and well worth, too, the price of purchase.

JAMES H. TONER  
University of Notre Dame

Savell, Isabelle K. *Wine and Bitters: An Account of the Meetings in 1783 at Tappan, N.Y. and Aboard H.M.S. Perseverance, Between George Washington and Sir Guy Carleton, Commanding Generals of American and British Forces at the Close of the American Revolution*. New York: Historical Society of Rockland County, Publishing Center for Cultural Resources, 1975. 60pp.

This slim, readable monograph is an excellent example of what good local history can be. Isabelle K. Savell and the Rockland County Historical Society provide us with a clear, well-researched account of "the only time that the military leaders of the conflict . . . met in peace and on an equal footing." The time was 6 and 7 May 1783; the place, Tappan, N.Y., and on board H.M.S. *Perseverance*, anchored in the Hudson off Sneden's Landing. The subject of the meetings—when Washington served his guest wine and bitters—was the details of the British withdrawal from New York City. As the author says, the conference sessions resulted in little of substance, for Carleton was uncertain of

## 132 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

his orders from London and, in any case, he was too short of vessels to complete the evacuation for 6 months. Yet the protocol displayed was of the highest significance. Great Britain, represented by Sir Guy, "accorded to the commanding general of an independent United States of America, all the honors due a sovereign power."

PROFESSOR DON HIGGINBOTHAM  
U.S. Military Academy

Stivers, Reuben Elmore. *Privateers & Volunteers, The Men and Women of Our Reserve Naval Forces, 1766 to 1866*. Annapolis, Md: Naval Institute Press, 1975. 397pp., Appendices.

In this volume, Reuben Elmore Stivers has attempted to provide a history of America's irregular naval forces—forces which he believes to have had a history distinct from that of the professional navy. His dual theme is first, that the efforts of naval volunteers, usually enlisted for the duration of a crisis, made a significant contribution to America's naval prowess in three wars—the American Revolution, the War of 1812, and the Civil War—and second, that these volunteers were "the predecessors of the modern, uniformed, naval force that supplements the U.S. Navy" today. The book apparently is intended to inspire enthusiasm for today's U.S. Naval Reserve among an audience of general readers. As a result, it is not as thoroughly objective as it might be and it suffers from Stivers' insistence that all irregular naval forces of whatever character or motivation be labeled "naval reservists."

Rather than explore the century-long debate between the proponents of a regular navy on the European model and those of a militia navy founded on the minuteman concept, Stivers has chosen instead to write a somewhat glamorized compendium of the contributions made by "privateers and volunteers" from colonial days through the

Civil War. While on the one hand he ridicules the opponents of naval expansion, such as Thomas Jefferson (whose ideas are described as "ill-conceived"), he praises their arguments in favor of a reserve naval force. He finds himself in such a dilemma because whereas Jefferson saw a militia navy as an *alternative* to a regular naval force, Stivers sees it only in its modern context as a *supplement* to the regular navy. Unable to accept the essentially anti-navy viewpoint of the proponents of a militia navy, Stivers solves his dilemma by relegating Jefferson's important proposals to a footnote while concentrating instead on the more glamorous achievements of privateers in the War of 1812.

Stivers claims that the privateersmen in both the American Revolution and the War of 1812 were motivated by patriotism rather than by pecuniary incentives. While this may have been true in many cases, he offers no quantitative corroboration for statements like: "their sole objective" was "to fight the enemy." The privateersmen are depicted as being unable to resist attacking British men-of-war because of their ferocious hatred of Englishmen, and of fighting with "a spirited romanticism" more appropriate to the pages of a Kenneth Roberts novel than to a scholarly work of naval history. In describing a confrontation between an American privateer, the *General Armstrong*, and a British man-of-war (which took place, it should be noted, only because the man-of-war had disguised herself as a merchantman), Stivers writes that "The British cries of 'no quarter' gradually changed to death gurgles and bleating cries for mercy." Perhaps his most serious overstatement is his offhand claim that America "won" the War of 1812.

The much longer section on the Civil War is better, though constant references to "naval reservists" (even when the subject is a gang of unruly conscript soldiers) strain the limits of credulity.