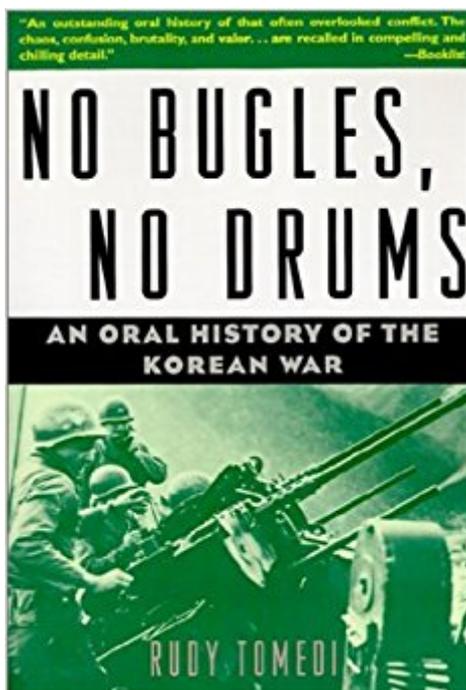


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No Bugles, No Drums: An Oral History Of The Korean War



Synopsis

"A vivid description of the Korean War as seen through the eyes of those who fought there. . . . Readers will find it easy to project themselves into the action, to be at the Pusan perimeter, on the ground at the Yalu River, at Pork Chop Hill, at Heartbreak Ridge or airborne in MiG Alley."--The Retired Officer Magazine "Those who survived the fighting and dying speak for themselves. . . . The gritty takes Tomedi compiled on a so-called 'forgotten' war pack a real wallop."--Kirkus Reviews "The oral testimonies here clearly convey what the war in Korea was like and how it differed from WWII and Vietnam." -- Publishers Weekly "No Bugles, No Drums will be a valuable addition to the military library of any student of history." -- Pointer View, U.S. Military Academy at West Point NO BUGLES, NO DRUMS In the foxholes and atop the fiery hilltops of Korea, men confronted the savage, all-too-human face of war. They were young, valiant, and largely forgotten by a public weary of waiting for victory. Sent halfway around the world, they were ordered to fight an enemy they didn't know, for political objectives they didn't understand. But they did their job and served their nation well. And now, forty years later, their story can be told.

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Customer Reviews

Thirty-one Korean War veterans talk about their experiences between 1950 and 1953 in this wide-ranging collection of reminiscences. They participated, variously, in the initial delaying action against the North Koreans, the defense of the Pusan Perimeter, the Inchon landing, the recapture of Seoul, China's entry into the conflict, the heroic withdrawal of the Marines from the Chosin Reservoir, the United Nations counteroffensive that drove the North Koreans and Chinese back

across the 38th parallel (Operation Killer) and the static trench warfare that lasted until the armistice in July of 1953. Tomedi, a veteran of the Vietnam war, tries to cover as much ground as possible. He includes recollections by a fighter pilot, a bomber pilot, a screening officer at a POW camp and a machinist's mate on a destroyer, but these are far less interesting than the memories of those who met the enemy in face-to-face combat. Nevertheless, the oral testimonies here clearly convey what the war in Korea was like and how it differed from WW II and Vietnam. Photos. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A principle virtue of this compact but affecting reprise of the Korean War is that it lets those who survived the fighting and dying speak for themselves. Having tracked down over one hundred veterans of the murderous police action, freelance journalist Tomedi relies on their reminiscences to carry the roughly chronological narrative as he gives his sources virtually free rein, providing just enough background information to keep the big picture in perspective. The stories range from the rude shocks endured by a young infantryman rushed into combat from the comforts of occupation duty in Japan through the apprehension felt by a tanker patrolling the main line of resistance on the eve of armistice over three years later. In between, dozens of aviators, marines, soldiers, and sailors offer vivid accounts of the roles they and their units played in the savage campaigns that convulsed the land of the morning calm from Pusan to Inchon, Seoul, Chosin, and beyond. Their ranks encompass a couple of POWs; an ex-NCO who served in graves registration; an Englishman whose regiment was part of the Commonwealth Division, which supported the UN's predominantly American forces; a carrier pilot who returned from over 70 missions in Mig Alley; and others with decidedly atypical tales to tell. While neither as detailed nor as comprehensive as Donald Knox's two-volume oral history (The Korean War, 1985 and 1988), the gritty takes Tomedi compiled on a so-called "forgotten" war pack a real wallop. (Fifteen b&w photos, drawn from personal collections) -- Copyright ©1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Excellent!

The author has compiled 34 separate firsthand accounts of combat from the port of Pusan to the hours before the Armistice. Largely unedited, the tales make interesting reading. I believe that such renditions from Soldiers on the scene make war most real, for each story, like each Soldier, is unto itself. The political books I review are great to read for the diplomatic and political intrigue, but the

raw reports from the trenches have an honesty which is heartrending. This book is similar to Donald Knox's texts since it consists of a series of short stories. But Knox's books are more effective because the stories are interwoven and tie the book together as a coherent whole. Tomedi's book and a few others like it are more disjointed, if still useful reading. Tomedi adds to the Korean War literature significantly with Bill Chambers' saga as a graves registration person. Few authors talk or discuss the role of these final scavengers of the battlefield, assigned the grim task of assembling and identifying human remains. Harry Summers--who has a bevy of books about the war himself--states that Ridgways' miracle was getting the US army off the roads [tankbound, he said] and up onto the hills and ridges where the enemy were. Ridgway concentrated on killing the enemy--not taking territory. Louis Millet is modest enough to admit that his famous bayonet charge was successful primarily because the Chinese decided to throw grenades rather than use their rifles. Sherman Pratt's views from Heartbreak Ridge, and a stern lecture from a French Legionnaire about the UN intervention, is a rare glimpse of how moral considerations reach the battlefield itself. Three chapters highlight the air war-- ground support, strategic bombing, and combat fighters. Ben Scotts' experience as a black officer in a white army should be required reading for all Korean war buffs. [Despite the "patronizing expectation of failure.... there was no better institution in American life, no better one anywhere, than the army for the black man in the forties and fifties."] So should Blaine Friedlander's experience with the ROKs, who many GIs held in contempt for bugging out or cowardice. ROKs were effective and disciplined fighters, once they were trained, as Jim Houlton makes clear in the a later chapter describing how they proved themself at White Horse mountain. Friedlander was, however, put off by the cruelty and severity of the ROKs; those were accepted characteristics of Korean society, apparently. [reviewers comment: they still are. Korea remains a very heavyhanded, authoritarian society.]It staggers the imagination that Stanley Weintraub, a college professor in charge of POW processing, was forced to use those very same POWs as translators. In fact the whole POW/internment/Koje uprising issue is such an example of post WWII cold-war naivete about the intentions, tactics, and style of communists that I am not surprised that McCarthy hysteria about spies reached the intensity that it did. Overall, a good book. Some unique stories and insights from folks on the ground in Korea.

Certainly ranks as one of the most sobering, factual, 'IN YOUR FACE', 'No-Punches-Pulled' accurate accountings of a crucial period of American History which all too many Americans refused to accept at the time of its happening and who have ignored it with a seeming vengeance, ever since. Our failure to have not learned lasting lessons from it, almost literally 'set the proverbial stage'

for us to repeat HISTORY since then. Anyone who feels they have an understanding of the complexities and multi-levels of inherent conflicts and WORLD-WIDE involvements and issues of that time and who haven't read this BOOK, had best read this stunning, eye-opening 'tour-de-force'! Jim Girzone

Very good Korean War story.

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