

In Memory

There is a dramatic moment in the famous movie epic, *The Bridge Over the River Kwai*, where the British senior POW Colonel Nicholson, played by the remarkable Alec Guinness, ruminates over his career. Looking down over a gorge, Nicholson says

“there are times... when suddenly you realize you're nearer the end than the beginning. And you wonder, you ask yourself, what the sum total of your life represents. What difference your being there at any time made to anything - or if it made any difference at all, really. Particularly in comparison with other men's careers. I don't know whether that kind of thinking's very healthy, but I must admit I've had some thoughts on those lines from time to time.”

I am sure all of us beyond a certain age have had those thoughts. If our friend Wick ever had these ruminations, I am quite confident that he realized that in his tidy mountain of some two dozen books, that he had made an enormous contribution to military history and the strategic studies community. Both the volume and substance of his scholarship are noteworthy, even more so when you realize that much of it diligently pecked out by two stubby fingers.

Moreover, for those of us who had the privilege of working with Wick on government studies and commissions, you must realize the sizable influence he

had on American policy and strategy. He surely made a difference. Whether the topic was *Making Strategy*, *Military Innovation*, *Adaptation*, *Successful Strategies*, *Grand Strategy*, *World War II*, or *The Making of Peace*, Professor Murray brought his prodigious research and his sharp wit to bear. His books bend the top shelf of my personal library and are pulled down regularly for their invaluable advice. We have all gained from that enormous output, his lectures, and his quite colorful and frequently irascible charm.

Regardless of his prolific and methodically generated output, nearly a book every other year over the 25 odd years that I knew him, Wick's largest contribution remains in the minds of the seemingly countless students and mentored officers that he educated in the classroom and in tutoring sessions. In addition to decades at Ohio State, Professor Murray taught at the Marine Corps University, the Naval Academy, the Naval War College, and the Army War College. At these schools, Wick always found and cultivated students of history as his carefully designed bridge from the past to the present, instilled with his love for historical insights and his accumulated wisdom. I represent just one of many devoted students who have benefited immeasurably from his dedication to history, his sharp distaste for passive tense, and his generous dispensation of amber-hued liquor from Scotland's bogs.

The sum total of Wick's life is reflected amongst his fiercely loyal friends and former colleagues, by an even larger pool of students and professionals, amongst the dark stacks in many a library, and the abiding admiration in our hearts. He was exceedingly generous with his time and assistance, consistently giving advice on sources and arguments to many students, especially me. He need not fear having made a difference. The sum total of his life is reflected in both books and the prepared minds of many a student of the profession of arms.

Looking back at his career, I suspect Wick wouldn't have had it any other way either. He was one of a kind and incorrigibly unique. If present, he would reproach me for highlighting *The Bridge Over the River Kwai* due to its many historical inaccuracies. But I would also like to think he would find the comparison to Alec Guinness quite flattering.

To my ever constant and true friend, I wish eternal peace amongst the Catskills mountains he found so comforting. I am certain that Wick is now roaming over the big Archives, and gazing down over my meager articles, and growl at my habitual passive tense. Some students cannot be reformed, even by one unfailingly patient with young minds. It is said that a good historian makes the unfamiliar familiar. But a great historian makes the familiar unfamiliar. Wick excelled at

the latter, and we are all the wiser for his scholarship and teaching.