

along with the camaraderie of the line companies.

The conversational tone of this book is deliberate for many of the interviews took place at various divisional reunions over a couple of drinks. Mr. Berry has good editing skills and each narrative flows smoothly. To help the reader get his bearings he presents a brief biography before each story. His transitions between narrators, however, are awkward. While sometimes they illuminate a specific phase of the fighting in the Pacific or a particular campaign, more often they distract rather than instruct or advance the narrative. But these are only minor irritations that detract little from an otherwise good work of oral history.

Many aspects of the Pacific theater of operations are covered in this book from slogging through knee-deep mud in the rain forests of the Solomons to frying in the stifling heat of a tank on Peleliu as well as beating back furious banzai charges by a determined enemy. There are beer busts and liberty calls. But the focus of this book is combat in all its horror as remembered by those who were there.

The memories of combat are often painful to the narrators yet they are always enlightening. Long dead buddies killed by the Japanese are sadly remembered as are the snafus, one of which caused a U.S. PT boat to sink an American transport off Guadalcanal.

This is a good book with some great stories; there are a few "Chesty" Puller remembrances that will enhance his ever-growing legend; and there's even a story of a salty Lou Diamond and his influence on a young Marine. Vignettes about Sterling Hayden as a DI at San Diego, Tyrone Power as a Marine transport pilot, and young Jimmy Roosevelt, the son of FDR, as a Marine raider graphically illustrate the commitment that all Americans felt toward the defeat of Japan.

For some, those bald-headed, bespectacled men with their spreading middles reminiscing over bourbon and beer are relics of a past era and should be forgotten along with penny postcards and nickel beer. But today's professionals should listen and learn from these voices from our past, for the Corps was able to mature into the mobile and formidable fighting force it has now become because of their courage and sacrifices.

AUTOGRAPH SESSION

Henry Berry, author of *Semper Fi, Mac*, will be at the Marine Corps Association Bookstore at Quantico on Saturday, 16 April (0900-1500) to autograph copies of his book.

Autographed copies may be obtained by mail if orders are received by 15 April.

SILENCE WAS A WEAPON, The Vietnam War in the Villages. By Stuart A. Herrington, Presidio, Novato, Calif., 1982, 222 pp., \$15.95 (Member \$14.35).

reviewed by Dr. Williamson Murray

While the society at large and even many within the military seem bent on pretending that the Vietnam War never occurred, the literature both in terms of fiction as well as factual studies suggests that no war since the Civil War has affected the American psyche to the same extent as our experiences in Southeast Asia. Stuart Herrington, an army intelligence officer who served 20 months in Vietnam working in Hua Nghia Province to the northwest of Saigon has provided a valuable addition to the growing list of important books on our war with ourselves, our allies, and the enemy. Col Herrington gives his readers a fascinating picture not only of his experiences in attempting to root out the Viet Cong infrastructure on the very lowest level but also real insight into why the American effort was doomed to failure, perhaps from the moment we embarked on our crusade to bring the great society to Southeast Asia.

Herrington began his tour in Vietnam in early 1971 when the writing appeared to be already on the wall. Even after six years of massive commitment to Vietnam, we unfortunately still were unable to provide many advisors to the Vietnamese who had a real grasp of the local language, the culture, and the customs of a people who were so extraordinarily different from us. Herrington was one of those officers who proved willing to approach the Vietnamese on their own terms. As a result he was able to gain the trust and understanding of not only the South Vietnamese with whom he worked but a number of captured enemy soldiers, Viet Cong cadre as well as North Vietnamese regulars. Among the latter were several fascinating individuals whom Herrington, understanding one suspects then as well as today the full

ambivalence of what he was doing, turned and successfully used to help break the enemy's infrastructure and to attack his main force units. By the end of his tour the author, who had journeyed to Vietnam as a dove, had been won over to the South Vietnamese struggle. It is an extraordinary journey.

More than simply the nature of his experiences emerges from Herrington's account. By the end of the book one has a real sense of the enemy in the villages as well as in the main force units. And Herrington makes no bones about the immense respect that he has for the tenacity and fervor (almost religious fanaticism) with which the Viet Cong cadre struggled to maintain their hold over the villages (or at least to deny any security to the governmental structure). No less extraordinary is the picture of the main force North Vietnamese soldiers who journeyed over such distances and faced such difficulties in reaching the battle areas where they would fight against an enemy with such overwhelming firepower. Herrington, quite rightly, wastes little sympathy on their leadership (praised so often by the antiwar movement in the United States) who sacrificed tens of thousands of their young men without the slightest hesitation in the most dubious military operations.

In the end Herrington had to come home. Despite his vigorous protests because he wished to see a major operation through, he learned that he had to return to the United States three months before the end of his twice-extended tour to fill a billet in the Military Intelligence Officers' Advanced Course. Calls to Washington were to no avail. He could find no one who "understood what we were facing in Hua Nghia."

Recently an army major general in writing a critical review of a book on the Vietnam War suggested that the Army left Vietnam with its head held high. I would argue that individual soldiers like Col Herrington left Vietnam with their heads held high. An organization, however, that places "courses" and career ticket punching before the mission has no right to claim that it left Vietnam with its head held high. This book will be worthwhile to anyone with an interest in the Vietnam War.

† Dr. Murray is director of the Military History and Strategic Studies Program at the Mershon Center, Ohio State University.

Marine Corps Gazette † April 1983