

and the tactics developed to display material about such events to the public respectfully.

Sarah Dziedzic

Columbia Center for Oral History Research

doi:10.1093/ohr/ohu043

*Passing the Test: Combat in Korea, April–June 1951*. Edited by William T. Bowers and John T. Greenwood. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011. 488 pp. Hardbound, \$40.00.

The unforgiving reality of war looms large in this edited collection of postcombat interviews that US Army historians conducted in the wake of the People's Republic of China's 1951 spring offensive in the Korean War. *Passing the Test* is the third volume in a trilogy focusing on the firsthand experiences of United Nations soldiers in the aftermath of that war; the work is a collaborative effort of the members of the US Army Center of Military History. The sole editor of the first volume, Col. William T. Bowers, US Army (retired), passed away as his book—*The Line: Combat in Korea, January–February 1951* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008)—went to press. Thereafter, John T. Greenwood of the Center of Military History, with the help of Roger Cirillo (Lt. Col., U.S. Army, retired), utilized Col. Bowers's extensive research and completed the two subsequent volumes, *Striking Back: Combat in Korea, March–April 1951* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010) and *Passing the Test*.

Organized into thirteen microcosmic chapters, the final volume consists of edited testimonies about frontline battalions, platoons, and squads from the perspective of individual soldiers recorded immediately after battle. The first seven chapters focus on the beginning of the Chinese-led spring offensive, often termed the Fifth Phase Offensive, from April 19<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>, and the preparations of United Nations forces to blunt movement across a forty-mile front. The next four chapters examine stories from units in the US 8<sup>th</sup> Army's IX Corps, whose sector of defense absorbed the brunt of the enemy attack in central Korea over the duration of May 1951. The last two chapters detail the resolute efforts of the US 8<sup>th</sup> Army, led on the ground by General James Van Fleet, to counterattack at the end of May and drive Chinese and North Korean forces back across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.

Educational institutions in the US Armed Forces will find *Passing the Test* immensely valuable as a resource for preparing service members for the diverse circumstances they may encounter in combat. The informative testimonies of hardened soldiers contain countless tactical lessons, including the best way to defend an artillery unit in a perimeter defense against an infantry assault

(Chapter 5); logistical challenges to launching a counteroffensive in hilly terrain with poor roads (Chapter 11); and the effectiveness of tank warfare against enemy bazooka teams in open terrain (Chapter 4). In this regard, the book is also an excellent reference for enthusiasts of military history who want to know more about the play-by-play experiences of seasoned units like the famed, and ill fated, Gloucestershire Regiment (Chapter 7).

For the general reader, however, the benefit of this book has little to do with its often dry tactical teachings. Amid endless acronyms and ubiquitous military jargon—which the editors do quite well at translating for lay readers—the volume’s most important contribution to the field of oral history emerges as the editors reveal the humanity of all of the war’s combatants. While the interviews are, unfortunately, only with United Nations servicemen, their stories encourage the reader to appreciate the courage and carnage—and occasionally the comicality—of war experienced by all soldiers. For example, if you are not necessarily interested in the best way to launch a coordinated tank and infantry assault, you will surely find yourself engrossed in the story of an artilleryman who went to use the bathroom in the morning—without a weapon—and found himself surrounded by Chinese soldiers; he escaped after throwing toilet paper and running like hell.

There are also accounts of unflinching bravery that captivate the reader. Take, for instance, the story of an Army lieutenant who “nonchalantly” tosses a live grenade off his back, like “a horse flicking off a fly,” as a fellow soldier described it, and shoots his attacker with a pistol while the exploding grenade sends shrapnel into his back and helmet (203). At the same time, this book is, at its core, an oral history of a war that was often extraordinarily merciless and deeply disturbing. If an account of executing a wounded prisoner does not make you shudder—“Ruggerio saw that Lieutenant Kenney was going to shoot the soldier and called over the radio, ‘Don’t shoot the b—, I want a prisoner.’ Just then Kenney killed the enemy soldier . . .”—testimonies of bodies “flying through the air” certainly will (257, 270). There is, however, a certain opacity to the editing of the transcripts. For example, in the quote from Ruggerio above, it is not clear whether the book’s editors, the interviewer, the interviewee, or someone else excised the profanity, but clearly, someone felt it necessary to protect readers contemplating the horror of war from verbal obscenity. In the main, however, the editors leave the interview transcripts largely unedited. The straightforward structure of the text strengthens this third volume in the series by enabling the reader to imagine each interviewee giving his postcombat report in the flesh. While each chapter includes short commentaries in italics by the editors, providing informative context on engagements, the editors largely let the interviews speak for themselves.

From an oral history perspective, *Passing the Test* is at its finest when it enables the reader, if only for a brief moment, to envision the terrifying reality of

combat through the eyes of young men who lived it and to come away with a heightened sobriety about the meaning of war and a greater admiration for what David Halberstam once described as “the nobility of ordinary people” (David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War* [New York: Hyperion, 2007], 660).

Brandon K. Gauthier  
Fordham University

doi:10.1093/ohr/ohu058

*Hog's Exit: Jerry Daniels, the Hmong, and the CIA.* By Gayle L. Morrison. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2013. 552 pp. Hardbound, \$68.00; Softbound, \$31.96.

Jerry “Hog” Daniels is a fascinating subject for an oral history research project because of his larger-than-life personality and the historical and cultural sweep of his experiences. Born in 1941, Daniels became a Montana smokejumper at the age of seventeen; by 1970, he was the CIA Chief of Operations/Advisor for Hmong guerilla leader General Vang Pao in Long Cheng, Laos; by 1979, he was a disillusioned State Department immigration caseworker for Hmong refugees; and, finally, in 1982, his life was cut short by a mysterious death in Thailand. After his death, he was honored with a three-day traditional Hmong funeral, unprecedented for a non-Hmong, in his hometown of Missoula, Montana. In her book, *Hog's Exit*, Gayle Morrison uses a unique, creative analytical model that weaves Daniels's complex story together using extensive oral histories augmented by maps, international news articles, State Department documents, and personal letters that help the reader get a better sense of Daniels. Take, for example, one of Daniels's letters from 1975, which serves as a window into his character and viewpoints, as well as the dire Hmong refugee situation: “Larry, needless to fucking say, I have been left here [in Thailand] holding the proverbial bag. Everyone along the line, regardless of which government I deal with or Volags or UN, etc., all now say, Hmong, Who? I will never forgive the cocksucking religious organizations as they have not (nor ever did) a fucking thing when the going got rough. . . . As you can most likely assume, from above, I have lost faith in most of mankind” (128).

Morrison, as an independent researcher, interviewed almost one hundred people for *Hog's Exit*. In 1984, she began with Hmong refugees living in the US whom the CIA had recruited in Laos during the Vietnam War, refugees traumatized by their war experiences and who had serious trust issues with Americans. Morrison gained the refugees' confidence in multiple ways: first, through her service to them as a social worker; second, by studying Hmong culture and