

THE LIVES OF WARS

BY LUCINDA DYER



When it comes to writing about wars, they are never over.

Unlike Gen. Douglas MacArthur's old soldiers who "never die; they just fade away," books on military history often refuse to disappear, retaining their popularity for decades or even hundreds of years. Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* hit the shelves—or more accurately the bamboo scrolls—more than 2,000 years ago and is still required reading in military academies and boardrooms around the world. And as generations of students can attest, Caesar's *Commentaries* are still very much in print. Alfred Thayer Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783* was published in 1890 and not only retains its place on bookstore shelves, but is the only book to be named a Milestone in American history by the Office of the Historian of the U.S. Department of State.

Twenty-first-century readers of military history can now choose from contemporary accounts of the French and Indian Wars, the American Revolution, or the Battle of the Bulge as well as books written just last month. Which presents a challenge for publishers: How do you keep history fresh, relevant, and exciting?

"If a book can mimic what has been so hugely successful in film documentary form—giving voice to the war's participants—then I think it appeals to today's reader," says Lyons Press editor Keith Wallman. "Letters, battlefield reports, and diaries are huge for these kinds of books." Matthew Westfall's *The Devil's Causeway: The True Story of America's First Prisoners of War in the Philippines, and the Heroic Expedition Sent to Their Rescue* (which earned a *PW* starred review) is due in September. St. Martin's Press executive editor Marc Resnick believes "it's really important to find and publish unique stories that have something special to say." *Five Lieutenants* by James Carl Nelson (Nov.) tells the story of five young Harvard men who took up the call to arms in 1917 and met differing fates on the western front in 1918.

Robert Pigeon, executive editor at Da Capo Press, sees military history with a distinct human dimension as essential to successfully publishing in this category. *Dog Company* by Patrick K. O'Donnell (Nov.) is the story of one company of World War II Rangers as they fought from the cliffs at Omaha Beach to the forests of Germany, while *Fire and Forget* (Jan.) is a collection of short stories from veterans of the wars in Iraq and

Afghanistan. And at Norton, chairman and president Drake McFeely looks for "great stories like David G. Coleman's *The Fourteenth Day: JFK and the Aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis*, *The Secret White House Tapes* (Oct.) that have either not been told before or not told in a long time, rather than targeting specific wars or periods."



WORLD WAR II

With shelves continuing to groan under the weight of titles about WWII, publishers are constantly looking for stories that can offer readers a new perspective on the now seven-decades-old conflict. Berkley Caliber senior executive editor Naralee Rosenstein sees "the emphasis shifting from 'battle' books to human stories or explorations of previously unknown or underreported aspects of the war." *The Axmann Conspiracy* by Scott Andrew Selby (Sept.) reveals the little-known conspiracy led by the head of the Hitler Youth to establish a Fourth Reich in postwar Germany. Bob Welch's *Resolve* (Nov.) tells the story of a young officer who refuses



to surrender to the Japanese at Bataan and instead becomes a guerrilla fighter, and *A Higher Call* by Adam Makos with Larry Alexander (Jan.) details the unlikely postwar friendship between a German ace and an American bomber pilot.

At Casemate, editorial director Steven Smith notes that while "World War II memoirists themselves are disappearing, the mantle is being taken up by their sons and daughters who have not only recorded their fathers' experiences but have done additional research and provided new perspectives." Father and son Neil and Stuart Nimmo's *Perilous Moon* (Oct.) offers a look at Occupied France through the eyes of a downed British bomber pilot who made his way to Paris and became immersed in its political and moral complex-

ity. Joseph Heller may have denied that his extraordinary band of characters were based on his real companions in war, but Patricia Chapman Meder, daughter of the colonel of Heller's unit, sets the record straight in *The True Story of Catch-22* and reveals the identity of everyone from Chief White Halfoat to Milo Milobinder.

"For a reader, there is no greater joy than to discover something new and fresh about a topic you love," believes Aquila Polonica president Terry Tegnazian, who sees World War II titles continuing to find an audience with readers in search of new ways into this pivotal era of history. *The Auschwitz Volunteer: Beyond Bravery* by Witold Pilecki (Apr.) details his three-year undercover mission as a prisoner in Auschwitz, and *They Returned by Night* by Jędrzej Tucholski (Jan.), describes the experiences of an elite group of Polish special forces paratroopers called Cichociemni—"the unseen and silent."

And two lesser-known WWII figures finally get their biographical due. Simon & Schuster's *A Man and His Ship: America's Greatest Naval Architect and His Quest to Build the S.S. United States* by Steven Ujifusa (July) is the story of Walter Francis Gibbs, who was responsible for nearly 70% of all naval vessels built during World War II. *Yamashita's Ghost* by Allan A. Ryan (Univ. Press of Kansas, Oct.) recounts the trial of Japanese general Tomoyuki Yamashita, who was accused of—and executed for—atrocities he neither committed nor ordered.

IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

"Overall, I think interest is shifting from a history of policy and operations to the postwar environment," says Naval Institute Press's Rick Russell, "which includes veterans' issues, strategic shifts (e.g., toward China), and broader issues related to Southwest Asia." The press addresses the challenging issues surrounding returning veterans in Nathan D. Ainspan and Walter Penk's *When the Warrior Returns: Making the Transition at Home* (Sept.), and the compelling stories of one group of young naval officers are told in *In the Shadow of Greatness: Voices of Leadership, Sacrifice, and Service from America's Longest War* by the U.S. Naval Academy's class of 2002 (Aug.), edited by Joshua Welle, John Ennis, Katherine Kranz, and Graham Plaster.



In October, Atlantic Monthly Press will publish *The Finish: The Killing of Osama Bin Laden* by Mark Bowden, author of *Black Hawk Down*. "This is the perfect match of author and subject," reports Grove Atlantic CEO Morgan Entrekin, who notes that Bowden's unprecedented access to key players takes readers inside the war room as decisions were made and onto the ground as directives were executed. Norton's *The Last Refuge: Yemen, Al-Qaeda, and America's War in Arabia* by Gregory D. Johnsen (Nov.), brings readers into al-Qaeda's training camps and safe houses as the terrorists plot poison attacks and debate how to bring down an airliner on Christmas Day.

Little, Brown editorial director Geoff Shandler calls *The Outpost: An Untold Story of American Valor* (Nov.) by ABC News

senior White House correspondent Jake Tapper "thrilling and heartbreaking because it is a very human story about brave men placed in an impossible position. In a sense, it could be any war—and in another, it could only be Afghanistan. In the end, all war stories are tragedies, even if the good guys win, and that's certainly the case with *The Outpost*."

"ANNIVERSARY" WARS

The year 2012 marks the 200th anniversary of America's Second War of Independence, the little-celebrated (and still underpublished) War of 1812. "As Rowman & Littlefield is located between Baltimore and Washington, D.C., we're surrounded by the stories of this often-neglected war," says vice-president and senior executive editor Jonathan Sisk, so it's not surprising that the publishing group would go all out to mark its bicentennial. *The U.S. Navy Pictorial History of the War of 1812* by Don Philpott (Aug.) combines a historical narrative with more than 130 illustrations. Colonel David Fitz-Enz's *Hacks, Sycophants, Adventurers, and Heroes: Madison's Commanders in the War of 1812* (Taylor, Sept.) reveals that while Madison may have been an astute politician, he was woefully lacking in the skills required of a commander-in-chief, and *1812: A Nation Emerges* by Sidney Hart and Rachael L. Penman (Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, July) accompanies the National Portrait Gallery exhibition of the same name.

While Casemate's Smith doesn't believe the Civil War sesquicentennial—celebrated last year but continuing into this year's publishing seasons—resulted in the same upsurge the topic saw after Ken Burns's documentaries, we've joined in nevertheless with a remarkable book about Jeb Stuart and his

Confederate cavalry prior to Gettysburg, Monte Akers's *Year of Glory*" (Oct.). Publisher Hugh Merrell of Merrell Publishers sees books "falling increasingly into one of two approaches: either the massive narrative that makes sense of an entire war or epoch... or the book that digs deep into a particular micro event or angle." *Battlefields of Honor: American Civil War Reenactors* (Sept.) with photographs by Mark Elson and text by Jeanine Stein digs deep to reach out to the thousands of Americans who become—if only for a weekend—battle-weary soldiers, courageous generals, dedicated nurses, or even eager newspaper reporters.

Lincoln, as always, merits yet another look. David Von Drehle's *Rise to Greatness: Abraham Lincoln and America's Most Perilous Year* (Holt, Nov.) chronicles 1862, when the American republic was, many believed, at death's door. "Lincoln was as deep and complicated as any man who ever lived," says editor-at-large John Sterling. "And if it's true that 16,000 books about Lincoln have already been published, it won't surprise me if another 16,000 are still to come." Lincoln's secretary of state is the subject of a new biography by Walter Stahr, *Seward: Lincoln's Indispensable Man* (Sept.). The book, promises Simon & Schuster editorial director Alice Mayhew, "is finally the biography Seward deserves."

WARFARE FROM THE RENAISSANCE TO PIRATE ALLEY

"At Dundurn, we're gearing up for the centenary of the beginning of WWI in 2014," reports director of sales and marketing Margaret Bryant, "but we're also interested in 'recent history' where there are still people around who have firsthand experiences to share." Roger Gunn's *Raymond Collishaw and the Black Flight* (Feb.) takes readers to WWI's western front with one of Britain's legendary aces, while Michael Petrou's *Is This Your First War? Travels Through the Post-9/11 Islamic World* (Sept.) chronicles the award-winning journalist's experiences in the hot spots of the Middle East and Central Asia, and offers a from-the-front-lines view of the sociopolitical upheavals in the Islamic world. Mark Bourrie's *Fighting Words: Canada's Best War Reporting* (Sept.) is a collection of the best war journalism created by or about Canadians at war—from the Vikings battling North American natives to Afghanistan.

Bloomsbury publisher and editorial director Peter Ginna sees a growing interest in earlier periods of history, spurred partly by the popularity of television costume dramas like *The Tudors* and believes readers "are always looking for a book that brings big

historical themes down to a personal level." Lauro Martines's *Furies: War in Europe, 1450–1700* (Jan.) takes on warfare in Renaissance Europe, and William Craig's *Yankee Come Home* (Aug.) explores why our republican ideals died in the glory of San Juan Hill and takes a fresh look at Guantánamo, the corner of Cuba we've never left. In *The Double V: How War, Protest, and Harry Truman Desegregated America's Military* by Rawn James Jr. (Jan.), the son and grandson of African-American veterans, illuminates the African-American military tradition as a metaphor for such veterans' unique and dynamic role in American history.

Osprey takes readers from the 19th century to the 20th with Terry Crowdy's *Incomparable* (Sept.), about the French 9th Light Infantry Regiment in the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, and Andrew Wiest's *The Boys of '67: Charlie Company's War in Vietnam* (Sept.), which traces the experiences of the company from training through its baptism of fire in Vietnam and eventual return to the States.

Twenty-first-century conflicts outside of Iraq and Afghanistan

are the focus of two new books. Holt/Metropolitan's *Our Harsh Logic: Israeli Soldiers' Testimonies from the Occupied Territories, 2000–2010* (Sept.) was compiled by the Breaking the Silence organization and has already been cited by the *New York Review of Books* as "one of the most important books on Israel/Palestine in this generation." Retired Rear Admiral Terry McKnight collaborates with Michael Hirsh to relate the challenges of protecting the world's sea-lanes against piracy in the Naval Institute Press's *Pirate Alley: Commanding Task Force 151 Off Somalia* (Oct.)

Master storyteller Larry McMurtry turns his considerable talents to nonfiction in *Custer* (Simon & Schuster, Nov.) and brings the "Boy General" to life in a lavishly illustrated book that delivers an honest assessment of Custer's legacy and redefines our understanding of the American West. Historian Kevin Phillips and Viking have teamed for *1775: A Good Year for Revolution* (Nov.). "Why does interest in the American Revolution persist?" asks associate publisher Wendy Wolf. "That seems almost too obvious to have to say. How can we possibly understand who we are today unless we understand how we really began as a nation?"

The first book from Master Wings Publishing, an imprint of the Pritzker Military Library, will mark the 40th anniversary of the release of American POWs held in Vietnam. One of those POWs, Maj. Gen. John Borling, USAF (ret.), composed poems in his head while being held in the infamous Hanoi Hilton and communicated them to his fellow prisoners via a tap code. They are now collected in Borling's *Taps on the Walls: Poems from the Hanoi Hilton* (Feb.).

University Press of Kansas examines conflicts in both the American South and the south of China. Samuel J. Watson's *Jackson's Sword: The Army Officer Corps on the American Frontier, 1810–1821* (Dec.) focuses on the years when Andrew Jackson led the Division of the South in a quasi war along the northern border of Florida, and *Clash of Empires in South China: The Allied Nations' Proxy War with Japan, 1935–1941* by Franco David Macri (Nov.) opens a new window on the rarely studied military operations that emerged from the Japanese invasion of southern China:

And at DK, editorial director Nancy Ellwood finds readers still have "an appetite for beautiful, well-researched history books." *Military History: The Definitive Visual Guide to the Objects of Warfare* (Sept.) is published in association with the Smithsonian Institution and offers a comprehensive look at the development of battlefield technology from Bronze Age Mesopotamia to the war on terror.

SOCIAL MEDIA

While their books may peer back in time, military history publishers are definitely forward-looking when it comes to social media. "It may seem like a new phenomenon, but the fact is, our readers have been using it for years in different forms such as online forums," says Casemate publicity director Tara Lichterman. "In this day and age, it's become important to have a Web presence, and while initially it seemed like extra work, we see now that we're hitting a market that as a military history publisher we may have never been able to attract. This season, three of our new releases, *The True Story of Catch-22*, *Perilous Moon*, and

Year of Glory, all have additional illustrations that will be exclusively available via either the author's Web site or Facebook page."

Aquila Polonica began its social media campaign in 2010 and has attracted more than 1,200 Facebook fans and 1,400 Twitter followers. "To our delight," says Tegnazian, "we've found that history buffs are extremely active online and share a global camaraderie. They provide a barometer of what this audience finds interesting." Naval Institute Press's Russell reports that a number of their authors "have aggressively used social media as a marketing tool." The Facebook page created for *SEAL of Honor* by author Gary Williams has almost 200,000 fans, and his outreach to the tight-knit community of SEALs, their families, and supporters has resulted in its becoming the publisher's top-selling e-book.

"Because military titles tend to sell well as e-books," notes Lissa Warren, Da Capo senior director of publicity, "we're extra aggressive when it comes to obtaining coverage on key Web sites like Military.com and Milblogging.com. And because members of the military and their families are usually social-media savvy, we make a point to Tweet and Facebook about our military titles and everything that's happening for them—reviews, interviews, events, etc. We're also strategic about partnering with event venues that use the Web and social media to promote their events—places like the Pritzker Military Library in Chicago and the Naval Heritage Center in D.C."

STILL-TO-BE-EXPLORED STORIES

When your category covers several thousand years, it's to be expected that some conflicts never seem to get their fair share of shelf space. Norton senior editor Steve Forman sees "potential in the Revolutionary War, which despite all of the attention given to the founders, still awaits a new grand narrative incorporating its global dimension and other elements drawing the attention of scholars," while DaCapo's Pigeon cites the underrepresentation of World War I in bookstores. "I'm hoping that the popularity of *Downton Abbey* and *War Horse* might spark American interest in that most significant war." For Casemate's Smith, "It's been a mysterious axiom that 'Korea doesn't sell.' If someone could illuminate the incredibly dramatic first year of that conflict, it might really open some eyes."

And as the War of 1812 continued through 1814, it's never too late for publishers to properly remember the conflict that gave us the "Star Spangled Banner," the dying words of Capt. James Lawrence ("Don't give up the ship"), and thanks to the quick thinking of Dolley Madison, who spirited it to safety, Gilbert Stuart's iconic painting of George Washington. ■