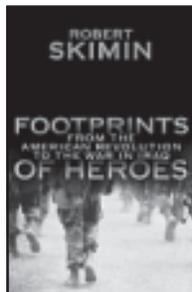


Book Reviews

By Mrs. Susan Groth



Footprints of Heroes: From the American Revolution to the War in Iraq, Robert Skimin, Prometheus Books, Amherst, New York, 2005.

“The word hero became practically a dirty word during and after the Vietnam conflict. The same was true for patriotism. Together the words were castigated and nearly removed from popular lexicon. Athletes and rock stars were presented as heroes, even if the most heroic act they ever performed was staying out of jail, maligning the true meaning of the word for our young.”¹

We live in a society that is inundated by the media and popular culture and—as a result— influences our personal, political, religious, and ethical beliefs. As Robert Skimin asserts in the above quote from his book, *Footprints of Heroes: From the American Revolution to the War in Iraq*, the media has also influenced society’s image of the hero. Too often, the word *hero* conjurs an image of cultural idols. For many of our youth, heroes are measured by the number of albums sold or the number of sports records broken, not by the true measures of heroism—courage, honor, pride, responsibility, and most importantly, self-sacrifice. It took an infamous act—11 September 2001—to remind America that freedom is a gift that must be earned and appreciated, and with this reminder, the true image of the hero resurged. We were reminded that those who sacrifice themselves for our freedom every day, and who too often are forgotten or taken for granted, are the true heroes of our society—our firefighters, our policemen and, of course, our military heroes.

In his book, Skimin takes a unique look at military heroes throughout history, many of whom are unknown to most people. Through anecdotes and vignettes, Skimin tells the stories of the heroic acts of these military men and women. Skimin revisits the lives of our well-known heroes, such as George Washington, Ulysses S. Grant, Theodore Roosevelt, George S. Patton, Douglas MacArthur, Audie Murphy, and John McCain, just to name a few. And while it is important to know and be reminded of their accomplishments, the stories that stand out and overpower this book are the stories of the men and women whose names are not remembered or recognized for their heroic acts, such as the average Soldiers of the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, the farmers who put aside their responsibilities at home to take up arms for freedom, the drummer boys who beat cadence and orders in the Union Army, and the nurses who worked on the battlefields. Even Bob Hope, who brought laughter to American troops through every conflict from World War II to Desert Storm, is paid tribute in this book. Throughout military history, there have been thousands of unknown heroes who have put aside their personal needs in order to provide us with the freedom that we enjoy today—people without whom our well-known heroes and leaders would not be known. In the words of General Norman Schwarzkopf, “It doesn’t take a hero to order men into battle. It takes a hero to be one of those men who goes into battle.”²

If there ever was any question as to what defines a hero, *Footprints of Heroes* answers that question. Skimin—a former paratrooper, Army aviator, and artillery officer—presents American military history through the lives of its heroes. Although his story does not overlook the famous, it is mostly about the ambiguous, unknown fighting men and women of yesterday and today. It is a tribute to those who sacrificed for us, and it serves as a source of inspiration for us and for future generations of heroes.

Endnotes

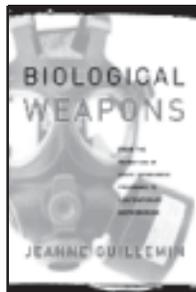
¹Robert Skimin. *Footprints of Heroes: From the American Revolution to the War in Iraq*. Prometheus Books, 2005.

²H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Peter Petre, editor. *It Doesn’t Take a Hero: The Autobiography of General H. Norman Schwarzkopf*. Bantam, 1993.

Mrs. Groth is an instructional design specialist Department of the Army intern, working with the Directorate of Common Leader Training, US Army Maneuver Support Center, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. A former contributing editor for *Engineer*, she holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees in English from Cameron University and is currently working on a master’s degree in learning systems design and development from the University of Missouri-Columbia.



By Mr. Reid Kirby



Biological Weapons: From the Invention of State-Sponsored Programs to Contemporary Bioterrorism, Dr. Jeanne Guillemin, Columbia University Press, 2005.

Dr. Jeanne Guillemin (author of *Anthrax*, the 1999 book that dealt with the 1979 Sverdlovsk biological accident) wrote this book for those interested in the modern history of biological warfare. She found that many people, including military professionals, were unaware of the development of biological weapons in different countries, so she compiled the history, development, and proliferation of bioterrorism in Great Britain, the United States, Japan, and the Soviet Union.

Having been a scholar of biological warfare history for more than fifteen years, I was pleased by the sources of information Dr. Guillemin used in creating *Biological Weapons*. You can spend years reading volumes of thirty- and fifty-year-old technical documents, histories, and monographs; or you can read *Biological Weapons*. Dr. Guillemin deduces the history of biological warfare programs to an initial offensive phase, a second treaty phase, and a final defensive phase.

Another aspect that makes *Biological Weapons* worth reading is the influence that the science-for-peace movement had on the Nixon Administration's decision to end the US biological weapons program. The author puts these decisions into historical context, identifies trends within nations that lead to the rise and fall of biological weapons programs, and raises the concern of a possible return to an offensive program.

Because of the nearly complete historical review that *Biological Weapons* provides, it is a highly recommended book.



Dew of Death: The Story of Lewisite, America's World War I Weapon of Mass Destruction, Joel Vilensky, Indiana University Press, 2005.

Some historians believe that the Manhattan Project during World War II was without precedent. During World War I, the Chemical Warfare Service (CWS) undertook a secret weapons project to produce the arsenical blister agent, lewisite. The parallels between the two projects are not coincidental. The *Dew of Death* describes how prominent figures involved with the Manhattan Project were also chemical Soldiers engaged in the Lewisite Project during World War I.

Mr. Vilensky presents a comprehensive and complete history on a chemical agent that was a celebrated contribution to chemical warfare through World War II. *Dew of Death* is a story of dichotomies—an agent that failed to live up to military expectations but prompted the development of a significant therapeutic medicine, the achievements and conflicts between the two scientists that discovered the agent, and the irrational fear of casualty potential versus the known environmental dangers.

While most historic accounts of the CWS are focused on administrative functions, Mr. Vilensky does an excellent job of bringing World War I experiences to life. Using personal accounts, biographies, and local historical information, he pieces together a story that focuses on the depth and clarity of what it was like to be a part of the Nation's chemical warfare effort during World War I.

I highly recommended *Dew of Death* because it presents a realistic portrayal of the formative years of the CWS and a clear presentation of the rumors and mystery surrounding lewisite. Today, lewisite continues to be an environmental problem in many places (especially in the former Soviet Union) and remains a viable chemical warfare agent. During World War II, lewisite as a weapon proved to be unsatisfactory. By the late 1950s, the chemical proved of little use to the Chemical Corps. But the use of lewisite did stimulate enough interest that British antilewisite (BAL)—an agent widely used today in medicine to treat metal poisonings and neurological conditions—was discovered.

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