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One Square Mile of Hell: The Battle for Tarawa

Ronald R. Shaw Jr

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General Electric's Jack Welch. In 2002 he published a work on Donald Rumsfeld and his leadership style.

Krames's new book draws on a six-hour interview that took place in Drucker's home about two years before he died, as well as upon Drucker's writings. As Krames sat down for the first (and apparently only) interview, Drucker mentioned that Jack Welch had sat in that same upholstered chair twenty years earlier, just before Welch became the legendary CEO of General Electric.

The goal of Krames's book is to capture the relevance of Drucker's most important management philosophies and strategies. Reading this book, one gets the sense that the author wants to ensure that Drucker's contribution to management knowledge does not diminish with time.

His concern has merit. Drucker's career path was varied and unconventional, so he was never really viewed as a true academic, especially by other academics. Krames points out that although Drucker had a seminal influence on such leaders as Welch, Tom Peters, Jim Collins, Michael Dell, Andy Grove, and Bill Gates, Drucker is rarely referenced in management textbooks. Perhaps one reason is that Drucker was not a self-promoter. You will not find a Drucker Consulting Group, spin-off publications, or Drucker training workshops. Drucker declared, "My aim has never been academic, that is, to be recognized; it has always been to make a difference."

Like Cohen, Krames centers on leadership, strategy, and social responsibility, covering much of the same ground. However, Krames has more of a business and historical perspective than

Cohen, who writes from a military vantage point. Each book makes its own unique contribution. For instance, Krames's extensive insights into General Electric amplify the little-known influence Drucker had on the company and its iconic leaders. On the question of whether leaders are born or made, Drucker said that some leaders are naturals (like Welch) but that there are not enough of them—so leaders have to be made! That is one of the reasons why General Electric has done so well; the company has been developing leaders at its renowned Crotonville Training Center since the 1950s. Drucker was a founder of Crotonville, along with Ralph Cordiner, General Electric's CEO at the time. For readers interested in where great leaders get their ideas, the book's chapter entitled "Drucker on Welch" is quite interesting.

However, it seems presumptuous to say that after only one interview and a few letters, the author got "inside Drucker's brain." The reader is left wondering why there was no second or third interview.

HANK KNISKERN
Naval War College



Wukovits, John. *One Square Mile of Hell: The Battle for Tarawa*. New York: New American Library, 2006. 320pp. \$15

One Square Mile of Hell relates the story of the November 1943 battle for the Tarawa Atoll from the personal level of the Marines who endured this remarkably bloody fight. John Wukovits makes use of firsthand interviews with veterans of the operation, while also citing personal letters and diaries. The result

is a personal history that draws the reader into the lives of the corporsman, privates, lieutenants, and colonels who grimly made their way across the central Pacific.

As events unfold, Wukovits traces the lives of several Marines as their paths converge on Tarawa. The marriage proposals and strong family ties ominously set the stage for the tragedies that would follow, although the general historical discussion of the war leading up to Tarawa is at times made awkward by the intermixed personal story lines.

The assault on Betio, a strip of sand and coconut trees two miles long and half a mile wide, became a bloody slugfest. There was little room to hide or maneuver on the island, and the frontal assaults by the Marines produced unprecedented casualty ratios. As a battalion commander emphasized to his men, there were two choices: move forward or die. Complicating the operation was the fact that amphibious planners had utilized outdated charts and inadequate tide tables to determine water levels over the island's outer reefs, resulting in numerous groundings and unnecessary exposure to enemy fire. After three days of brutal, hand-to-hand fighting, the Marines subdued the Japanese defenders and claimed a costly victory.

A common theme of the accounts is the incredibly adverse battle conditions. The limited space and high casualties resulted in a layer of death and carnage over the entire island. The equatorial sun and legions of flies added to the misery, but it was the smell of death and decay that lingered in one's mind. "The smell was inescapable," wrote a correspondent; "it evoked instant and

nightmarish memories. . . . Betio was nothing but stink and death."

Besides being a testament to the courageous leadership and fighting spirit of the Marine Corps, the Tarawa operation raised questions in 1943 regarding the degree of force that should be employed in war. The issue has been continually debated following the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan, and it is still argued today in connection with harsh interrogation techniques used on suspected terrorists.

Time reporter Robert Sherrod, who accompanied the Marines during the Betio landing, struggled to reconcile what he saw at Tarawa with the clean, edited version of war presented to the American home front. "Americans," he wrote, "are not prepared psychologically to accept the cruel facts of war." Sherrod's observation makes *One Square Mile of Hell* poignant indeed for Americans today.

While it is noble to memorialize the courage and sacrifice of the Marines at Tarawa, it is equally important to remind ourselves that victory comes at a steep price. Sherrod regarded the carnage of Tarawa as "the most haunting memory of World War II." Indeed, the story of Tarawa should haunt all Americans.

RONALD R. SHAW, JR.
Commander, U.S. Navy
Naval War College



Fischer, David Hackett. *Champlain's Dream: The European Founding of North America*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008. 834pp. \$40

David Hackett Fischer writes of Samuel de Champlain, who founded French