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Ernie's War: The Best of Ernie Pyle's World War II Dispatches

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though they were, they were veritable "Giants" in action.

DALE L. WARD
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Nichols, David, ed. *Ernie's War: The Best of Ernie Pyle's World War II Dispatches*. New York: Random House, 1986. 432pp. \$19.95

If anyone told the story of the American soldier in the front lines, it was Ernie Pyle. Born in Indiana, he attended the journalism school at Indiana University and eventually settled in New Mexico. Pyle, like millions of other Americans, went off to war in 1941, but unlike most Americans, he had a choice of where he wanted to go, and he chose the center of action, wherever that might be. First it was the blitz in London and later up front where "The danger comes in spurts. The discomfort is perpetual. You're always cold and almost always dirty. Outside of food and cigarettes you have absolutely none of the little things that made life normal back home. You don't have chairs, lights, floors or tables. You don't have any place to set anything, or any store to buy things from. There are no newspapers, milk, beds, sheets, radiators, beer, ice cream, or hot water. You just sort of exist, either standing up working or lying down asleep. There is no pleasant in-between. The velvet is all gone from living."

As David Nichols shows us, Pyle would write about his days in the

U.S.S. *Cabot* when that carrier and others struck the heartland of Japan, and about the XXth Air Force with its B-29s making the long haul from Saipan to Japan, and about the support troops so necessary for the rapid, mechanized warfare in the West. But, his heart was with the man on the ground at the front.

Nichols shows Pyle to be both fascinated by war and repelled by it. But there is nothing new or unusual about that. Often he wrote of wanting to get away from the front, the hardship of it, and the death that continually stalked those whose lot it was to be there. He worried about his marriage that had gone bad and needed his attention. Pyle appeared not to know just what to do about any of his dilemmas. Problems unsolved, he died on Le Shima while reporting on the 77th Infantry Division. His former wife would later commit suicide.

The editor has included some of Pyle's best known works. His articles supporting combat pay, later called the Pyle Act, are there. So is "The Death of Captain Waskow." This piece also was a part of *Here is Your War: The Story of G. I. Joe* and was the poignant ending to the movie, *The Story of G. I. Joe*. Ernie had written it while in Algiers. The Battle of San Pietro would be immortalized by that piece.

Pyle's writings today are as interesting and "lively," as they must have been during the war. There is that human touch and you quickly begin to know the men he writes about. (There also were

women serving near the front and Pyle wrote of them too!) His subjects come to life with their stories and hopes of the future. Where are you today Percy Gill, Gordon Uttech and Alvin Tolliver? Did your dreams come true? So alive and vital did Pyle make the people who fought World War II that you cannot help but wonder where these people are and what they are doing now.

For those who read Ernie Pyle and those who have never had the opportunity, it's here now. *Ernie's War* is a chance to gain or renew that opportunity. David Nichols has done us all a favor.

PETER C. UNSINGER
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Travers, Tim. *The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare 1900-1918*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1987. 309pp.

Tim Travers, professor of history at the University of Calgary, has reassessed British grand strategy not merely at the tactical or the political level, but rather along the entire spectrum by working his way up from tactics and operations to strategy. Specifically, he has evaluated the British performance at the Somme in 1916 and at Passchendaele in 1917 from the ground up, and has offered comments upon the reliability of the British *Official History* of the Great War.

Travers' thesis is that Douglas Haig and the Edwardian army really

fought two wars in France. The external, or what Liddell Hart termed the "real war," is well-known. The second, or "hidden internal war," constitutes Travers' unique contribution. He shows that men such as Haig fought a "war" that pitted prewar ideas (cult of the offensive, the psychological battlefield) and prewar army structure against the demands of modern technological warfare. Rather than echoing the sterile conundrums as to whether Haig was brilliant (John Terraine) or plain stupid (David Lloyd George), Travers suggests instead that Haig was too rooted in prewar Staff College training, in Edwardian upper and middle-class moral certainties and social structure to be able to adapt to the leveling nature of modern warfare. Attitudes that were rooted primarily in the British social system (especially the personalized system of protector and protégé) tended to prevail over the "remorseless evolution" of modern, mass, industrial warfare. To be sure, the result was a certain paradox: while British army officers were perfectly willing and able to accept the new weapons of war such as the tank, they proved strangely unable to understand the tactical and command changes necessitated by the new technological warfare. Their view of warfare, like British society in general, remained strangely ordered, centralized, and rigid.

Travers' second major contribution is toward our understanding of the writing of the *Official History*, especially by General Sir James