

1989

Hey Mac, Where Ya Been?: Living Memories Of The U.S. Marines In The Korean War

Brance Parker
U.S. Navy

Henry Berry

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Parker, Brance and Berry, Henry (1989) "Hey Mac, Where Ya Been?: Living Memories Of The U.S. Marines In The Korean War," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 42 : No. 4 , Article 21.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol42/iss4/21>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

136 **Naval War College Review**

caught up in these momentous events. Both books provide unique and exciting views of these operations. Particularly moving is an incident after the capture of Sicily: The prudent mariner in LTJG Stafford declined a convenient berth in a nest alongside a quay wall in Palermo for a more dispersed position in an offshore anchorage; an air raid that night sunk the two SCs that remained in the nest. Throughout this phase, the pace of both books is fast and action filled. Then, remarkably, the two authors are relieved within 6 days of each other in October 1943 and head back to North America for some well deserved leave and reassignment to duty in larger ships (destroyers and destroyer escorts).

Both books are personal memoirs as well as accounts of the authors' ships and crews. The writing is free-flowing and technically correct, making them enjoyable reading for civilian and naval personnel alike. I commend them highly to those with an interest in going to sea in small ships, those looking for a new perspective on naval operations in the Med during World War II and to those just looking for some exciting reading.

J.S. HURLBURT
 Captain, U.S. Navy (Ret)
 Newport, R.I.

Berry, Henry. *Hey Mac, Where Ya Been?: Living Memories Of The U.S. Marines In The Korean War*. New

York: St. Martin's Press, 1988.
 323pp. \$22.95

This is the third book written by Mr. Berry dealing with the experiences of the American combat soldier during this century's major wars. Having previously dealt with the marines fighting in the Pacific during the Second World War, Berry now turns his attention to Korea. As in his previous work, the story is told in the words of the marines who fought in Korea. The viewpoints presented and the memories recalled do not deal with the art of high strategy and policy. There is little here to explain why the war was fought as it was. Those looking for such insights are probably better off seeking answers in other recent efforts. For those interested in understanding the war from the viewpoint of the average marine, this work presents a different insight into the nature of the land war.

It's all too easy with the passage of time to forget the human aspects of fighting in Korea in the summer and winter of 1950. The lack of readiness to fight again so soon after the trauma of World War II and the massive demobilization that followed tends to be forgotten today in the flush of the Reagan defense buildup. But the reminiscence of many marines vividly brings home the experience of moving rapidly from a carefree peacetime existence to the early confusion of landing in Korea. The widespread feeling that the North Koreans could be easily handled was rapidly dispelled as the South Korean and U.N. forces were

forced back into the Pusan perimeter. The story of the acclimation of the average marine as he came face to face with the twin enemies of weather and the North Korean and Chinese human-wave attacks is the glue that holds this book together.

Berry's work traces the marine involvement from MacArthur's decision to provide a marine brigade to help shore up Walker's shaky Pusan perimeter, through the landings at Inchon, the push to Seoul, the retreat from the Chosin Reservoir, and the final hard-fought engagements during the armistice talks. Recollections of the retreat from the Chosin, in particular, help to explain how the marines held together in the face of the almost constant human-wave attacks of Chinese Communist troops. Considering the less favorable aspects of the retreat on the opposite side of the peninsula, the marines have every right to be proud of this part of their history. The frustration of the period of armistice negotiations takes on new meaning when seen from the perspective of marines suffering daily casualties during a period when peace was presumed to be close at hand. Memories of the lukewarm reception that greeted all too many marines on returning from Korea would be echoed a generation later.

This book is eminently readable and very useful for an understanding of what combat in our first major undeclared war was really like. Marines, in particular, will appreciate that special bond that held their brothers-in-arms together during

the retreat from the Chosin Reservoir and continues in the Corps today.

BRANCE PARKER
 Captain, U.S. Navy
 Naval War College

Spurr, Russell. *Enter The Dragon: China's Undeclared War Against the U.S. in Korea 1950-51*. New York: Newmarket Press, 1989. 335 pp. \$22.95

Korea, the "incomprehensible crusade," the forgotten war now enjoying a long overdue renaissance, has been portrayed more comprehensively but never better than in Russell Spurr's *Enter The Dragon*. Spurr, an "old China hand" and *London Daily Express* correspondent in Korea in 1952-53, not only culled the archives, but took full advantage of door openings following Mao Tze Tung's death in 1976 to interview many Chinese participants, from private to army commander. His stunning, dramatic book is thus largely told from the Chinese point of view. And a captivating story it is.

When mainland China—under-rated, scorned, butt of countless jokes—suddenly, unexpectedly exploded into the Korean War in late 1950, she set into motion the longest, most disgraceful retreat in American military history. *Enter The Dragon* bars no holds and willingly lauds and excoriates friend and foe alike. Though it covers barely the first year of the Korean War, ending