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Dirt Behind Our Ears, by PFC. Arthur N. Wilkins

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theatre.

Top level conferences among the Allied powers set the stage for the military planners. These included: EUREKA (held between 28 November and 1 December 1943 between Britain, the U.S. and U.S.S.R.); OCTAGON (Anglo-American conference, 13-16 September 1943); QUADRANT (Anglo-American conference in Quebec, 14-24 August 1943); SEXTANT (Anglo-American Chinese conference in Cairo, 22-25 November and 4-6 December 1943); and TRIDENT (Anglo-American conference in Washington, 12-25 May 1943).

Against this background, the military staff planners of both the U.S. and U.K. churned through a variety of options: ANAKIM (the reconquest of Burma by an overland offensive); BUCCANER (the reconquest of the Andaman Islands); BULLFROG (reconquest of Akyab Island); CAPITAL (an offensive into Upper Burma); CUDGEL (an overland in the Arakan); CULVERIN (plan for successive landings in Northern Sumatra and Malaya); DRAKE (U.S. plan to bomb the Japanese home islands and areas on the mainland under Japanese control with B-29s operating from bases in southwest China and B-24 Liberators from northeast India); OCTOPUS (plan for landings in the area of the Sunda Strait); SCEPTRE (landings in the Kra Isthmus); and VANGUARD (later renamed DRACULA, envisioned an assault landing at Rangoon). The text takes the reader through the myriad details of acceptance, rejection, modification and combination of these offensive options by the planning staffs under a mounting time pressure that Japan was to be defeated by October 1945.

More by necessity than desire, the British Chiefs of Staff and military planners hammered out a strategic plan for U.K. participation in the closing months of the Japanese war. The expansion of the British campaigns in the Far East took the form of separate naval and amphibious operations in different oceans, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific. A modified ANAKIN (an overland offensive from northeast India to reconquer Burma) and DRACULA (to recapture Rangoon) were taken in hand. The Royal Navy nominated a fleet of "significant" size (including 4 battleships, 6 fleet carriers, 4 light carriers with cruiser and destroyer escorts supported by a fleet train) to operate against Luzon, Formosa and the Japanese home islands as determined by the speed of the American advance across the western Pacific. Willmott concludes that while the British Pacific Fleet's contribution to the Allied victory was minimal compared to U.S. forces, it had an important psychological effect in facilitating the reacquisition of the Imperial colonies and assuring the solidarity of the American alliance in the post-war world.

Willmott's volume is in the tradition of Sean Maloney's SECURING COMMAND OF THE SEA: NATO NAVAL PLANNING 1948-1954 and Louise Richardson's WHEN ALLIES DIFFER in that it also portray's the interplay of civilian and military politics on the size and disposition of armed forces. However, it is not a tome to be lightly perused. The arguments among British staff planners and with their political masters on the pros and cons of the available military options are presented with details which the reader must bear in mind to comprehend the trend of debate. Fortunately, the book incorporates numerous exhibits and appendices to assist the reader. These include: British Defense Planning Organization; Explanatory Notes; The Eastern and East India Fleets; Operational Chronologies; Orders of Battle; and Operation Zipper and the British Pacific Fleet. Also the military options are supported by appropriate area maps. For readers with a professional interest in the topic, Willmott offers a mine of information.

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Dirt Behind Our Ears. PFC. Arthur N. Wilkins. New York: Vantage Press, 1995. Appendix, Bibliography and Notes. xii plus 210 pages. $17.95.

This book is subtitled "An Infantryman's Life in World War II As Related in Letters He Wrote Home," and is the kind of book military historians eagerly await and quickly devour for their insight's into the daily life of the common soldier. In this case, keep waiting and don't bother devouring, there are no insights herein. Wilkins stint in the United States wartime army may have been interesting, even exciting, but the letters he writes home to his family, and chooses to publish herein are dull, repetitious and uninformative. Furthermore, Wilkins adds little in the way of commentary along the way and tells us little of his life before or afterward. The result is that the reader cares little about the letter writer and soon cares little about what happens next in Wilkins life in the infantry.

When Wilkins turned eighteen he registered and was accepted into the draft. He was shipped to Camp Fannin, near Tyler, Texas as part of the replacement pool. From there he was assigned to the Army

Specialized Training Center at Fort Benning, Georgia, and then to Camp Livingston with the 343rd Infantry Regiment, 86th Division, where he participated in various training exercises in western Louisiana. From Louisiana he was shipped to California (various camps). Eventually Wilkins gets to the European Theater. The 86th sees forty-two days of combat there, how much Wilkins saw is unclear, unless his statement that he was "on line" less than a week is it. Anyway he does not write about even those few days. He is soon assigned to be a translator at Headquarters. After Europe he is shipped to the Philippines where he spends the next seven months, until April of 1946. Once in the Philippines he basically awaits his turn to be sent home. While there he relates such interesting experiences as the time when the MP's stopped his jeep on the way to the beach for not having a divisional sticker. It would be unfair to bring this up without letting the reader know how he got out of this tight spot--his captain rescued him and they all went to the beach together.

O.K., perhaps the book is not that dull. Wilkins does provide some descriptions of post-war Germany, and Luzon. Also, it gets to be fun counting the number of times the word "therefore" appears in the text. But the writing is flat and stilted; with one short declarative sentence following another in endless repetition. It is in fact, just what one might expect of someone who taught college writing, which was what he did, he says, "for an age."

Take that universally embarrassing experience all veterans have faced; the army's physical examination. Anyone who has experienced this traditional introduction to the military--standing in an endless line of skinny, pale-skinned, naked young men, and being prodded in places you had not known existed--can not help remember it as humiliating at the time, but humorous in retrospect. Here is how Wilkins relates his encounter:

> At the reception center, we stood naked for what seems like hours for a thorough physical examination. A medic asked for a urine specimen. Doctors examined our eyes, ears, and our throat. They thumped our chests and listened to our hearts. Then an army psychiatrist interviewed us.
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> Finally, when we were permitted to dress, we were lined up, asked to raise our right hands, and required to take the oath to defend the Constitution. Therefore, we were sworn into the army one day before the twenty-fifth anniversary of the armistice which concluded "the war to end all wars." Once that ceremony was over, ...
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> On December 1, therefore, I again boarded the bus for Leavenworth and reported for active duty.

Riveting, ain't it. This from a man who, according to the dust-jacket, has published four books of verse! Don't misunderstand, I firmly believe that we owe Arthur N. Wilkins the same deep respect that we owe all vets. That he was lucky enough to escape the horrors of war, if not the boredom, should not detract from our gratitude for his service. But this book is poorly conceived. Wilkins should have used his letters as a springboard for a more personal narrative. In this format he could have expended some of that creative energy he reserves for his books of verse. I'm sure that Wilkins saw, touched, smelled, and lived much more than these letters portray. Further, I am sure that as he read and edited these letters for publication, he remembered more than he gives us here. It is our misfortune that he did not expose his feelings in this book as surely he must in his poetry. Unfortunately he did not, and "Dirt Behind Our Ears" becomes little more than a series of rather bland letters that adds little to what we already know about the G.I.'s life during World War II. Therefore, skip this book of war-time letters and await the next.

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Shadow of Suribachi: Raising the Flags on Iwo Jima. Parker Bishop Albee, Jr. and Keller Cushing Freeman. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995. Index, Maps, Photographs and Selected Bibliography. ix plus 178 pages. $27.95.

How does history come to be represented in a single photograph? How does this representation serve to visualize cultural values? What of the un-pictured "reality" obscured by a celebrated image? With this volume, historians Parker Bishop Albee Jr. and Keller Cushing Freeman provide an exploration into these questions as they expose the reality, myth, and ramifications of just such a single image: Joe Rosenthal's Pulitzer prize-winning photograph, "Flag Raising on Mount Suribachi." (1945)

The long-standing debate over this national photographic icon arose almost immediately after the image was plastered across the country---reproduced in