

## Suggested Readings

by

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*Editors' note. In place of the lengthy general bibliography found in earlier editions of this volume, the editors are substituting a personal essay by the Chief of Military History on the subject of reading history. Bibliographic information on the volumes mentioned in this essay, along with that for other general works recommended by the editors, is appended below.*

These remarks are addressed to this volume's principal audience—future officers of the United States Army. Taking advantage of your goodwill and general interest in a new subject, I want to suggest that developing a habit of reading military history is both useful and rewarding. Many of our great captains of war read military history in their spare time. I believe that, like them, you will discover that a familiarity with histories that carefully and clearly analyze our country's military past will provide you with a new and special perspective on your profession.

Some of the books I'm going to mention are classics and appear elsewhere in this volume's formal bibliography. Others do not, but they all rate a place on my personal suggested reading list. Not only are they among my own favorites, they also serve a major intention of the Army: to stimulate a lasting interest in military history among Army officers. As the Army's leaders have frequently put it, an understanding of military history is essential in our future military leaders.

Before I give you my personal reading list, let me urge you to take advantage of the many fine military journals available to Army officers to keep themselves abreast of the latest trends in our profession. Begin with the fine periodicals published by the various branch schools. For generations, officers have gained valuable insights from studying the pages of *Infantry*, *Armor*, *Field Artillery*, and the rest. For a broader view of military matters, I recommend that you pick up the Command and General Staff College's *Military Review*, which specializes in articles about combined arms war, and the Army War College's *Parameters*, which will provide you with a useful survey of current thinking on military strategy and theory.

My personal recommendations begin with three volumes that introduce the student to the battlefield, the epicenter of the soldier's profession. *The Face of Battle*, *Company Commander*, and *Seven Firefights in Vietnam*, all superb books, approach the battlefield from different perspectives, but each analyzes the performance of the individual soldier under fire and convincingly demonstrates

696

both the reality of fear and the overriding influence of military discipline and leadership on the outcome of battle. I promise they will linger long in your memory.

Every officer needs some notion of how the art of war has evolved throughout western history. I'd suggest that you start by sampling the work of four modern masters of our craft. Sir John Winthrop Hackett distilled a lifetime study into the brilliant chapters of his brief survey, *Profession of Arms*. Bernard Brodie is especially recommended for his examination of the philosophical dimensions of warfare in his masterful *War and Politics*. J. F. C. Fuller focuses on the evolution of military operations in his *The Decisive Battles of the Western World*; while the authors in Peter Paret's collection, *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, concentrate on the strategy of war in the West. Taken together, these insightful and beautifully written analyses create the essential context in which American military history must be placed.

Knowledge of our own military past has benefited greatly from the work of gifted historians who have specialized in interpreting the American approach to war. Four of the best in terms of originality and clarity of thought are Walter Millis, who in his *Arms and Men* describes the evolution of American military institutions in the context of the nation's social and economic forces; T. Harry Williams, who

examines the effects of military organization on strategy in his short but provocative *Americans at War: The Development of the American Military System*; Samuel P Huntington, who presents a classic interpretation of the role of the professional soldier in a free society in *The Soldier and the State*; and Russell Weigley, who demonstrates the grand sweep of America's military past in *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* and *History of the United States Army*.

Military historians have always and with good reason depended on the biographer's craft to help define the role of great commanders. Here are six of the best: Flexner's *George Washington*, Freeman's *Lee's Lieutenants*, Henderson's *Stonewall Jackson* Pogue's *George C. Marshall*, Blumenson's *The Patton Papers*, and the articles in Roger Spiller's concise and informative *Dictionary of Military Biography*. The student often finds biography a particularly human introduction to the complexities of our military past. These authors reveal in fascinating detail the personalities of these great captains, the times in which they lived, and the changing face of war.

I've discovered not only that novelists and poets can illuminate the essential truths of our profession in memorable ways, but that fictionalized accounts of warfare can often provide a unique and broad perspective on the nature of conflict. Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Forester's *The General*,

## 697

masterworks of fiction, cut through the confusion of the Great War with unequalled precision and poignancy. Shaara's *Killer Angels* puts you with great immediacy into the mind of the Civil War commander, providing thereby an impressive lesson in military leadership. *Once an Eagle*, Myrer's realistic portrait of the modern Army officer, makes the point well that his training in peacetime is the key to a soldier's success in war. Finally, let me press on you the *Book of War Poetry* compiled by the Oxford University Press. Here we see in distilled form and beautiful language the inner convictions, along with the doubts and fears, that have possessed the warrior over time.

It's a source of pride to me and, I hope, of inspiration to those of you who plan to make the study of military history a part of your Army career that some important books in our field are the work of serving Army officers. General Dave Palmer's insights into military strategy shine through his study of the Vietnam War, *Summons of the Trumpet*, and of the American Revolution, *The Way of the Fox*, while General John Galvin shares his special knowledge of modern tactics in *Air Assault: The Development of Airmobile Warfare*. Although Col. Robert Doughty's *The Seeds of Disaster: The Development of French Army Doctrine, 1919-1939*, Col. Harold Nelson's *Leon Trotsky and the Art of Insurrection*, and Lt. Col. Harold Winton's *To Change an Army* focus on other armies in other times, they address issues that have broad implications for our own Army today. Nelson has joined with the distinguished military history professor Jay Luvaas to produce several books that I am convinced will stand the test of time. The Army War College guides to the battles of Gettysburg, Antietam, and Chancellorsville are proving invaluable to those of us who, by means of staff rides, use the experience of great commanders of the past to prepare us for future tests. Finally, the novelist's skills have enabled Lt. Col. Jim McDonough in his *Platoon Leader* and Maj. H. W. Coyle in his *Team Yankee: A Novel of World War III* to add new perspectives to issues that you will be encountering as serving officers.

Let me conclude by urging you to dip into three books that newspaper critics were once prone to call "good reads": William Prescott's *The Conquest of Mexico*, Cecil Woodham-Smith's *The Reason Why: The Charge of the Light Brigade*, and Matthew Brennan's *Brennan's War*. Good reads they certainly are, but beware: they are also solid and serious examples of the historian's craft, and they just might hook you for life on reading military history.

## GENERAL WORKS

### *The Battlefield*

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## 698

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700

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## 702

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*page updated 27 April 2001*

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[Return to the Table of Contents](#)

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