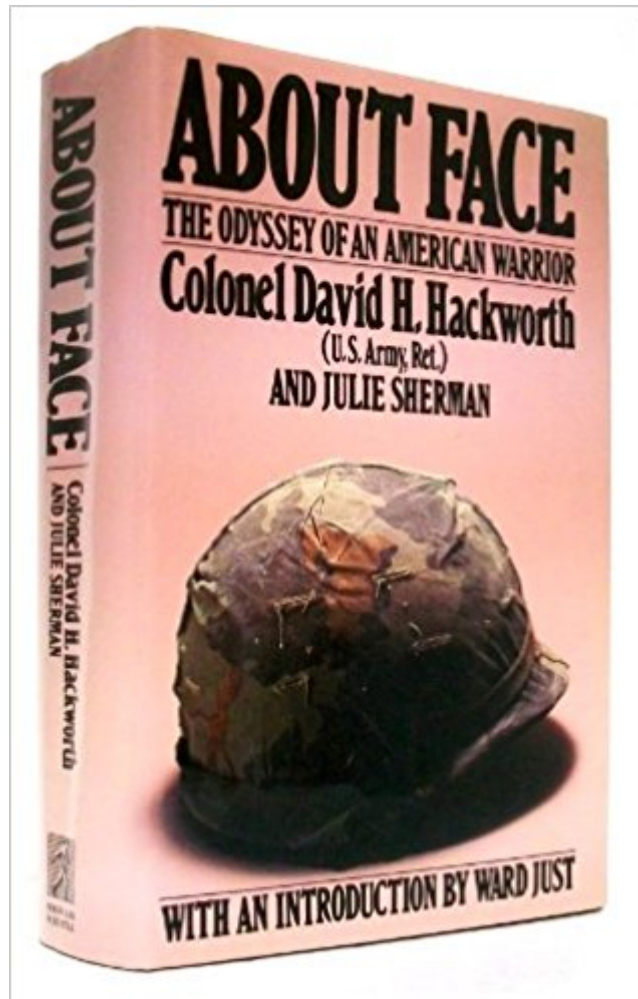


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About Face: Odyssey Of An American Warrior



Synopsis

About Face: Odyssey of an American Warrior

Book Information

Hardcover: 875 pages

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Customer Reviews

[Sadly for all of us, Col David Hackworth died shortly after I wrote this review. Nothing about him or my review of his works needs revision. Hack - we will miss you! Hack - RIP, Mike H, LTC, MI, USA 1970-1996]. Say what you want about Hackworth - you can't deny him his valor or experiences in the Army. "Hack" continues to thrive on controversy - one who is not afraid to stir the pot. This book was his first view on the public stage after his Vietnam exit from the Army. As a young officer - I first read this book in the career stage of my commission - as a Major - and came away with mixed feelings about his views and attitudes. Hackworth's Vietnam experience - like that of John Kerry's, was a defining point of his life. Both came away from that service determined to change the way government uses the military. Kerry became an anti-military cynic; Hackworth lashed out at the systems' waste and stupidity - in an attempt to make the system better. During war, Hack would be a leader one would wish to serve under. In peacetime - like so many other warriors - he'd be a disaster in the mindless training environment of a peacetime army. Like a fire extinguisher - keep under glass until an emergency demands his use. The book is deliberately written to stir controversy. This IS Hackworth and what he is all about. Step on a few important toes to save good soldiers - this IS and always was his intent. When he drifts to politics - watch out! He has no friends in either political party. If you have never served - and are thinking of signing up - maybe this will give you pause. If the world awaits you as a grand adventure - do what he did - and wear the uniform proudly

for a majority of your adult life.

About Face is an odyssey to read. Like battle itself, it is full of pages of sheer terror separated by long passages of nervous boredom as Hackworth sought to find some identity apart from battle. The Army made him a man, and as long as there were wars to fight he honored "his mother" the military with an almost unbelievable string of courageous achievements in battle. But when the time to kill was over, Hackworth lost himself, as he more or less admits. He candidly admits not only his many adultries but his fundamental inability to honor his wife and children. He admits constant theft, and tolerated any immorality that would help his unit. Through two thirds of the book you want to enlist to be a stud like Hack. In the last pages you want to slap him in the face for betraying the Army. He was a law unto himself (as the title to the penultimate chapter confesses), both as a maverick in the Pentagon or as the quasi-warlord of a fire base in Vietnam. Many, including Hack, have suggested that he was the model of Colonel Kurtz in Coppola's Apocalypse Now. Whether or not this is true, the comparison is chillingly apt, only Hackworth may be more frightening. Hackworth was genuinely patriotic, undeniably courageous and damn effective in killing Chinese in Korea and Vietcong. But this same warrior spirit refused to bow to any moral principal except his own concept of loyalty to and concern for his troops. "The horror, horror." He saw clearly that guerrilla warfare required a guerilla-style response from the Army (a lesson of continuing significance in modern political battles like Afganistan), and he clearly understood the political nature of the Vietnam War.

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