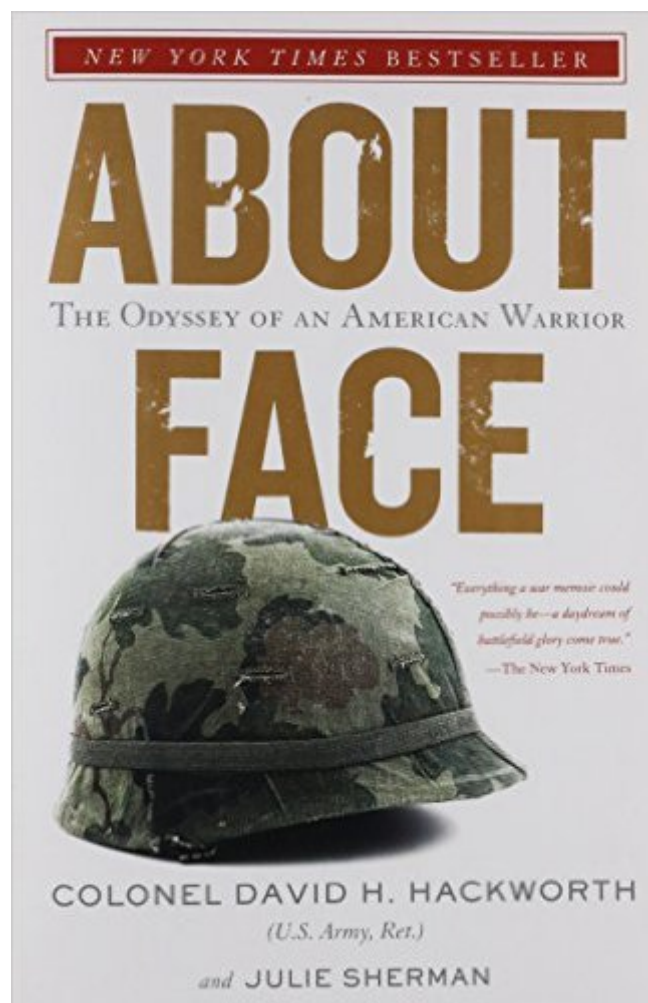


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About Face: The Odyssey Of An American Warrior



Synopsis

Called "everything a twentieth century war memoir could possibly be" by this national bestseller by Colonel David H. Hackworth presents a vivid and powerful portrait of a life of patriotism. From age fifteen to forty David Hackworth devoted himself to the US Army and fast became a living legend. In 1971, however, he appeared on television to decry the doomed war effort in Vietnam. With *About Face*, he has written what many Vietnam veterans have called the most important book of their generation. From Korea to Berlin, from the Cuban missile crisis to Vietnam, Hackworth's story is that of an exemplary patriot, played out against the backdrop of the changing fortunes of America and the American military. It is also a stunning indictment of the Pentagon's fundamental misunderstanding of the Vietnam conflict and of the bureaucracy of self-interest that fueled the war.

Book Information

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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. At the least - Hackworth made me stop and think along the way. My latter years in uniform were constant battles against mind numbing stupidity and for care and protection of our countries' most valuable assets - the men and women who served under my leadership. I have learned much from this soldier. Buy and read the book. You will come away a changed person.

A juvenile delinquent, Hackworth, flees from his confinement and joins the Merchant Marine. Later, he pays off a wino to sign a fraudulent affidavit, as Hackworth's "father" (he was an orphan), that allows him to enter the Army at the age of fifteen. This is the beginning of this book, which ends with this man, now a Colonel, venting condemnation of America's tactics in Vietnam in the press, and his subsequent persecution by Army investigators, in a harrowing, white-knuckle ending. A man is lucky to find his calling, and Hackworth was born to be a warrior. In a way, this book is an inspiration. It makes one want to be as good in one's profession as Hackworth was in his. And no matter what one's occupation is, one can identify with Hackworth's frustration with and anger at the "perfumed princes" who rose to the top in the Army he knew, and whos' equivalents exist in every field of endeavor. Don't you know people who don't give a grape-skin about the higher goals of their profession, and who live only to feed their ambition? Reading this book is like sitting down and listening to somebody who knows the score.

Two main themes came out of "About Face" for me. The first is that it is an excellent "how-to" manual on practical leadership in the military. All of the lessons pounded into me as an Officer Cadet are shown here. Know your soldiers, care for them, lead by example, don't get them to do what you wouldn't..., the list goes on. In my opinion, this book, or at least large parts of it, should be required reading in every Officer training establishment that seeks to produce real commanders. As

I read it, lights came on in my head as I began to understand some of the points I had missed in my training as a cadet. I believe it has been of some benefit to my performance as an Army Officer. For any cadets or junior officers out there, read this book. The second theme is the way in which he describes an Army sinking into the morass so common of militaries in peacetime. The most worrying thing for me was the parallels I could see happening in my own Army. An easing of standards in recruitment and basic training, decisions being made based on politics and finance, rather than on realities, increasing bureaucratisation and micromanagement, etc, etc, etc. Things seem to be the same all over. Unfortunately, neither Col Hackworth nor I can give any easy answers. Overall, an excellent book, that should provoke a few thoughts.

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