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attacked from their flank or rear if the 29th Brigade had been permitted to withdraw. Many of the survivors of the onslaught in the 29th felt that Brigadier Brodie and his American superior failed to communicate as effectively as men from the same nation and cultural background might have done. Brodie apparently told his American commander that things were “a bit sticky.” This classic bit of understatement by a British officer was not “fully appreciated” by the American commander, and so, resources were not committed “...in proportion to the threat” that the British forces faced. This is a significant lesson to be remembered in today’s multinational coalitions.

It is these scatterings of personalities and anecdotes that come out of the general overviews and chronology that give this book its appeal and character. Overall, I believe the authors achieved their goal of extending the reach of the BBC television program on 20th Century conflict to the general reader. It provides a very readable introduction across the broad panorama of a very violent century of warfare.

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HOME OF THE BRAVE: HONORING THE UNsung HEROES IN THE WAR ON TERROR

by Caspar W. Weinberger and Wynton C. Hall

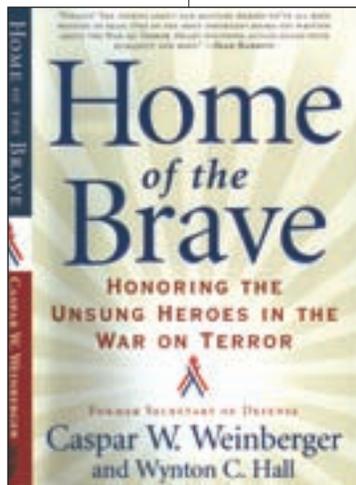
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Review by Craig Leslie Mantle

Finding a true hero or role model in this age of corrupt executives, criminal athletes, and decadent celebrities is a daunting task – although, thankfully, not an impossible task. Those who give tirelessly of themselves without expectation of reward can be found, if one looks hard enough, from small communities through to the international plane, and the ranks of the military are certainly no exception. In *Home of the Brave: Honoring the Unsung Heroes in the War on Terror*, Caspar Weinberger, a former Secretary of Defense in the Reagan Administration, and Wynton Hall, an award-winning presidential scholar and speechwriter, highlight the compelling stories of 19 very ordinary Americans, who, owing to their very extraordinary conduct in the face of the enemy, have earned some of their nation’s highest military honours – the Silver Star, Navy Cross, the Distinguished Service Cross, and Congressional Medal of Honor. With a fluid and captivating style that makes turning the page all too easy, and by never

shying away from graphic depictions of combat’s gruesome reality, the authors vividly describe how this select group of individuals mustered the courage to confront and overcome situations that weighed heavily, sometimes hopelessly, against them. In essence, they have put another human face to the War on Terror, and they suggest that the current generation is truly the equal of all others that came before it in terms of pure military prowess. Their book is as much a call to remember the sacrifices of many as it is a means to recognize the valour of a decorated few.

The stories related within offer an intimate picture of the dynamics of the modern-day battlefield and the mind of the modern-day warrior. Because the authors have, for the most part, relied upon interviews with the recipients themselves, the incidents about which they write offer a useful, first-hand commentary on such weighty matters as fear, cohesion, fatalism, stress, and leadership. Numerous quotations from those who actually were there add much to an already interesting narrative, and they become a useful resource for those studying these and allied issues. More to the point, however, each vignette provides a positive example of some of the many qualities – such as courage, loyalty, and commitment – and the military expects its members to possess, and to demonstrate daily.



This book is comprehensive in both scope and content. Included are personnel from the four branches of the military – army, marines, navy, and

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air force – although, owing to the land-centric nature of the fighting in both Iraq and Afghanistan, the emphasis naturally rests upon the first two services. When individuals from the remaining services are mentioned, it is for their actions while serving with ground forces, whether conventional or otherwise. The occupations of the main protagonists are equally as diverse: infantry and armour have pride of place, and yet special forces and military police, along with corpsmen and combat controllers, are well represented. Accounts of heroic actions span the sexes as well, as the authors have incorporated stories of individual heroism involving both men *and* women, including one that details the awarding of the first Silver Star to a female for her actions in combat. The commissioned and the non-commissioned, indeed, the entire rank spectrum, are all present, with the emphasis falling nicely upon the latter. Not every story has a happy ending either: some individuals received posthumous recognition, while others survived their harrowing ordeals. Rather than being narrow in focus, the authors have attempted to capture much of the American effort writ large, and to be as all-encompassing as possible. By including only 19 sketches, it is impossible to cover every act that received high and formal recognition, and yet, their selection of representative examples seems appropriate.

This book is descriptive, motivating, and inspirational, providing a personal perspective on an otherwise ugly and difficult conflict. And yet it is also very political, with its biases being exceedingly clear. Weinberger and Hall argue from the outset that the American media has failed, through its own conscious admission, to report the “good news” of the global War on Terror, including, importantly, stories of combat valour. They explain: “These weren’t the kinds of stories the mainstream media and critics of the War on Terror liked to publicize.” Preferring instead to focus upon those US personnel who have been victimized by the war, such as the dead and the wounded, or those who have victimized others, such as the now-infamous Lynndie England of Abu Ghraib Prison fame, the media, so they contend, has been anything but balanced in its coverage. To make their point, the authors devote an entire chapter to the lack of support and objectivity shown by the media, even going so far as to offer a catalogue of sorts, a litany of “audacious quotes” that lists, in their mind, the most offensive and objectionable statements uttered by such household names as Ted Turner, Andy Rooney, and Dan Rather about the men and women of the US military. Major news outlets, such as the *New York Times*, CNN, and Rutgers receive a sound verbal lashing from the authors as well. Nearly every vignette offers at its conclusion a brief, matter-of-fact,

and almost backhanded political statement about how the liberal media and liberal colleges have failed in their support of the military, an approach that quickly becomes tiresome and detracts from the impact of an otherwise gripping narrative account. The authors are certainly not content to simply relate these stories of bravery without adding a politicized commentary, and one wonders if indeed this is the right forum for such discussions. In their words, Weinberger’s and Hall’s book, therefore, is partly offered as a corrective to “...what appears to be the determination of some media to ignore the stories of heroism and hope coming out of Afghanistan and Iraq.” In spite of their criticisms, the authors are quick to defend the essential role played by the media in a free democracy, and to recognize that a handful of journalists have published on the good work being done overseas. Although certainly not an academic treatment of the subject, this book would serve as a useful, if light, departure point for debates concerning the “proper” role of the media during wartime.

Given their respective backgrounds, the authors come to the subject with a profound understanding of the military and its organization. Abbreviations and “military-speak” are thankfully kept to a bare minimum, yet Weinberger and Hall assume that their audience is intimately familiar with the decorations about which they write. Those in the military are certainly in a better position than the general public to appreciate the history, importance, and precedence of each award, yet discussions of the same are not offered until the middle of the book, or, in some cases, not until the end. An earlier review of these honours would certainly have added much, setting the appropriate context before delving into individual acts of bravery. Knowing for what these medals are actually awarded, and their relative rarity, would have undoubtedly made the significance of each story all the more compelling, and left the general reader with an even greater impression of the magnitude of each act. Nevertheless, it is hard not to be inspired.

Overall, *Home of the Brave* is a captivating book, offering intimate accounts of bravery and sacrifice for the modern day. The fluidity of the prose, the emotions and humility that shine through, and the military values that are constantly revealed all combine to make for a highly interesting and inspirational read. Looking past the rhetoric and patriotic flourishes that from time to time arise, one comes face to face with the sheer horror of the asymmetric battlefield, and the professionalism of the men and women who navigate that environment.

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