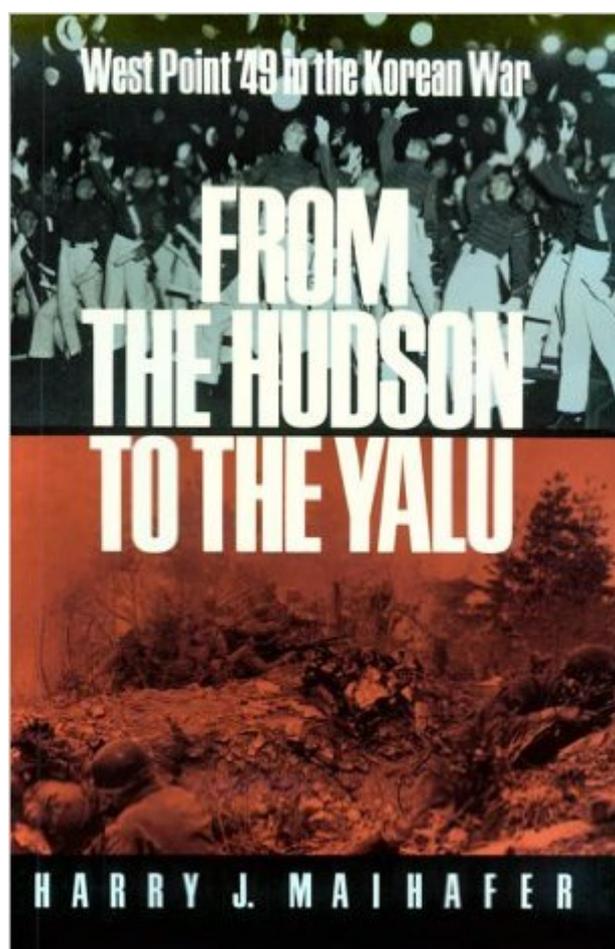


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From The Hudson To The Yalu: West Point '49 In The Korean War (Williams-Ford Texas A&M University Military History Series)



Synopsis

They entered West Point shortly before the end of World War II. Four years later the class of USMA ‘49 graduated amid peacetime military cutbacks and national complacency. A year later these young officers were plunged into a cruel and unexpected war and were forced to compensate, by valor and leadership, for the nationâ€™s unpreparedness. Some called it a U.N. Police Action, but to the 2nd lieutenants fighting as platoon leaders, forward observers, and jet pilots, it was war to the fullest. Men of ‘49 served along the Naktong Perimeter, landed at Inchon, flew combat missions against Chinese MiGâ€™s, and fought the war of maneuver, and of stalemate, from Pusan to the Yalu. They fought well—some to their death. These are their individual stories, based on the ‘49ersâ€™ own firsthand accounts, of what it was like to enter combat, as one said “green as grass,â€• and suddenly face life-and-death responsibility for American troops entrusted to their care. It is the story of men such as Sam Coursen, awarded the Medal of Honor for rescuing a wounded comrade at the cost of his own life; of Ranger hero Ralph Puckett, fighting off the initial Chinese onslaught; of D. D. Overton, becoming an ace as he scores his fifth aerial victory; or of Herb Marshburn, dying heroically as he leads men trying to escape a Chinese trap. The author, who went to Korea as an armored officer but wound up leading an infantry platoon, uses his own story as a narrative framework for this chronicle of the Korean War years. He brings the big picture to life by means of vivid stories of that “forgotten war,â€• told by men who knew it face-to-face at the junior officer level.

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Customer Reviews

This book is about the experiences in the Korean War of members of the West Point class of 1949. Just one year after graduation these young officers found themselves in the middle of fierce fighting in rugged Korean terrain. The onset of winter and the entry of the Chinese into the war soon added two new parameters of hazard and difficulty. The author was himself an infantry officer during the fighting and has fashioned the book from his own experiences and those of his classmates. This is how it was. The earlier review by the cyclist has a number of shortcomings. I will address three of the most notable. The quotations below are from that review. "... it behooves them ["a West Pointer/Officer type"] to remain a certain distance from the reality of War." If the reviewer actually read the book, he must realize that the heroes of the book are West Pointers who maintained a zero distance from "the reality of War": they engaged the enemy directly, face to face, in some cases with only bare bayonets when ammunition ran low. "... makes it sound like Korea was some sort of post graduation ritual." Indeed, it was exactly that, the kind of ritual for which West Point prepares its graduates: service to the nation, unto death if necessary. In the Korean War, 30 West Pointers from the class of 1949 gave their lives, and many more were wounded: a grim ritual indeed. "I am tempted to ask if Mr. Maihafer was in the same Korean War I have read about elsewhere." There we have it: the reviewer has read about the Korean War, whereas Col. Maihafer saw it up close, close enough to earn a Silver Star (for valor), a Bronze Star Medal for Valor, and a Purple Heart, which the reviewer's reading may have informed him means that Col.

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