

About Face Study Guide

About Face by David Hackworth

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Plot Summary

About Face is written by Colonel David H. Hackworth and Julie Sherman and is the story of Hackworth's year in the United States Army. Throughout his career, he had been concerned with the adequacy of the training of troops. During his Army career, he served in both Korea and Vietnam and he felt the United States never adequately adapted its training techniques to the jungles of Vietnam.

Hackworth grew up in the Santa Monica area of California. He lived in a series of foster homes before lying about his age and entering the Army at the age of fifteen. World War II had just ended and the teenage Hackworth felt that this would be a good way to meet girls. He was assigned to the Trieste area of Italy along the border with Yugoslavia.

Hackworth basically grew up in the Army. He found the family that he never had and he was conscious about the value of good training from the beginning. When the Korean conflict began, he requested and received assignment to Korea. He describes the various battles in which he fought, the mistakes he made and what he learned from those mistakes.

After Korea, Hackworth left the Army for two years. There was no place for him in the post-Korea army since he didn't have a college degree. He rejoined the Army in 1955, after two years of college. He missed the structure of the Army and the Army way of life. He was then assigned to Germany and became part of the forces that march through East Germany to Berlin during the Berlin crisis. Hackworth discusses the experience and how the American forces could have been annihilated by the Soviets at any point.

Hackworth watched as the Americans become involved in Vietnam. He considered himself a combat soldier and applied for a position as an advisor. His application was denied because he had too much experience. He was assigned to duty at the Pentagon and other places in the United States until he received a position with a combat unit in Vietnam. He discusses the different battles he was in and his life in Vietnam.

Hackworth is critical of the inadequate Army training procedures for Vietnam. The Army training procedures were geared to a ground war in Europe, not the jungle warfare of the jungles of Vietnam. He tried to do the best in training his men and all of his units became outstanding performance units.

In 1970, Hackworth participated in an Issues and Answers interview in which he stated his views about the shortcomings of the training and other issues. As a result, he submitted his resignation. The Army delayed his discharge while it investigated him. Eventually, the case was dropped and his discharge was processed. He eventually settled in Australia.



Chapters 1-3

Chapters 1-3 Summary and Analysis

The book opens on February 1, 1951 with a unit of tanks moving on a road in Korea. The unit was under heavy fire but none of the tanks was firing back; the soldiers were dazed and the sergeant had to enter a tank and began shooting. They eventually began shooting, lessening the incoming hitting the ground troops. Hackworth was with the 3rd Platoon and seven men were killed in this skirmish. After giving the company commander, Captain Michael, a situation report, Hackworth was put in charge of the unit because the lieutenant was dead.

Hackworth and the medic, Van Mieter, checked out the dike and found a lot of wounded and dazed Communist troops who surrendered. Hackworth had an empty rifle at the time but they took the Koreans prisoner.

They found more North Koreans in bunkers and then the North Koreans counterattack. Hackworth ate while the battle was raging and had to stop eating because of a sniper. He was shot trying to take out the sniper but made it back to his unit.

Chapter Two reveals that Hackworth enlisted in the Army when he was underage. It was May 20, 1946 and Hackworth was accepted and sent to Italy. He was fifteen at the time and more interested in meeting girls. His unit served as replacements for the battle troops and they shifted to a peacetime army. In Trieste, his unit patrolled the Morgan Line, since Italy was having problems with Yugoslav nations. Hackworth and his unit trained under platoon sergeant Steve Prazenka who became his mentor.

On June 25, 1950, North Korea crossed into South Korea and United States troops were on alert around the world. Hackworth requested duty in Korea and was there the following month.

In Chapter Three, the Chinese enter Korea a month after Hackworth arrived. Hackworth realized that Korea was not a training exercise when he killed a North Korean soldier. The Chinese attack began and the United States troops retreated to the south. When winter arrived, the troops suffered from the lack of food and warm clothing. Hackworth's unit was pushed back to Seoul. Seoul was taken by the North just after New Year's. Hackworth's unit reached Suwon. As they left Suwon, the unit was assigned to a night position on railroad tracks when the enemy attacked. They won the skirmish but Hackworth was upset because the tanks didn't attack. He was told that the platoon leader didn't want to give their positions away.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary and Analysis

Hackworth, called Hack, joined the 27th Infantry (Wolfhounds) Regiment and was assigned to the 3rd Platoon of Company G. At this point, Hackworth thought the war was lost. The American's seemed to be moving back and forth and gaining no ground. Their spirits were lifted when Captain Michael's Task Force successfully took Suwon.

After Hack's head injury, he was flown to Pusan and transferred to the hospital ship, USS Haven. When he began to feel better he said he wanted to return to his platoon but was sent to Osaka General Hospital in Japan for tests. He returned to his unit in mid-March. The Americans were now pushing to the North. They now had winter gear.

The unit was low on ammo in one of the battles. They needed the permission of Lieutenant Gilchrist to use a grenade. Just as they were running out, fresh supplies arrived. The Chinese stopped the attack. When it began again, Hack was the last one of his squad off the hill in the withdraw. The last one off was Lieutenant Gilchrist. The platoons reassembled at the dug-in and Hack ate and slept. The unit regrouped for the rest of Objective Logan with Hack becoming the assistant to the platoon sergeant.

The Wolfhound Regiment consisted of many replacements. Some were World War II vets bitter about being recalled to active duty. They continued to move north.

Hackworth says that the men were losing faith in MacArthur by April. The general was fired by the President and replaced by Ridgeway. The unit began the battle for Objective Jake Able, a craggy almost vertical hill. Hack couldn't sleep the night before the operation, which was unusual for him. Easy and Fox Companies bore the brunt of the operation. Other operations for other hills followed. Hackworth felt that the Chinese were becoming stronger and the Eighth Army's offensive was becoming weaker.

As they began to move into Chorwan Valley, the unit was told they were going on reserve. This gave them the chance to unwind, talk about the actions and make award recommendations. Their reserves lasted only a few hours. They were called back because of a Chinese attack.

In one encounter, Hack and his group made it to the top of a hill, found it unoccupied and relaxed. They watched what they thought was Fox Company approaching and when they were three hundreds yards away, realized that they were Chinese. The Americans were saved by artillery fire.

When tanks came to assist G Company, Hackworth found them commanded by Master Sergeant Frances, who had been his platoon sergeant in Italy. The tanks had to pull back because they could not negotiate the muddy hill. That night there was a massive Chinese attack resulting in the second largest barrage in the Korean War. Then all firing stopped and the Chinese stormed the positions running. They broke through and



continued down the road. Third Platoon was cutoff as were many others. They finally reached Fox Company. They ended up with the Rangers under Captain John Scagnelli.

Their unit, with Rangers, entered the valley the next day. The other soldiers blamed G Company for being overrun. They found that some of G Company moved out with another unit, and thought it was Hackworth who ordered them to move.



Chapters 5-6

Chapters 5-6 Summary and Analysis

After two years in the Army, Hackworth didn't want to be an officer. He just wanted to lead his platoon but he finally agreed to accept a promotion. He was upset that he was assigned to Easy Company and not sent back to George. Gilchrist was still his commanding officer.

Korean nationals were also under the command of the Eighth Army. There were problems with communications and customs.

Hackworth talks about the men in the unit and some of the experiences they had; like incidents of friendly fire and having to negotiate through United States mine fields. There were incidents that occurred with every hill they took.

At this point the second phase of the Chinese Spring Offensive was waning. The United Nations forces were turning the attack to the north. Hackworth had only been an officer for two weeks and still felt uneasy around officers. But he did go to the Fifth Air Force Officer Club in Seoul. They drank too much and were very obnoxious.

At the end of May, Easy Company was joining the United Nations in a joint operation. They were in reserve before the operation and spent the time playing poker. When the heavy artillery battle began, E Company was caught in the middle and the platoon sergeant Charlie Greer and Hack were injured. Both of them viewed the injuries as a ticket to Japan. The medics thought he had a punctured lung and sent him to Pusan, where they found no damage to his lung. He returned to Easy Company when he recovers.

The attack continued north through the Kumhwa Valley. By June, they were north of the 38th parallel. One of their objectives was Hill 1062. They found the hill to be vertical. They took the ridge and then were ordered to withdraw. Soon after this, Hackworth was offered a volunteer unit. He could pick his men and train them as he wished. He accepted the command.

In Chapter Six, the unit Hackworth formed was called the Wolfhound Raiders. More than four hundred men volunteered for the unit. Hackworth only needed forty. Crispin served as the platoon sergeant and helped Hackworth select the men. They chose forty seven men. Hackworth allowed each man to have any automatic weapon he wanted. They had a rigorous training schedule and became highly proficient.

Hackworth kept his unit separate from the others. They did all their own secondary jobs such as cooking and driving without any outsiders. They didn't have inspections from the brass as other units did. The Raiders received their orders and did it their way. They made raids, usually at night, on enemy strongholds. After their tenth raid, they went to Japan for R & R for five days.

After their R & R, the unit had to explain why they had possession of a missing jeep, which they had to return.

Chapter 7-8

Chapter 7-8 Summary and Analysis

The Raiders were asked to assault Hill 400. Hackworth accepted the assignment even though other units had failed. They scouted the hill looking for a weak point. They had perfect weather conditions for their attack. The hill was better defended than they anticipated. Hackworth was injured in the attack but refused to leave until they took a prisoner. They took the hill but suffered heavy casualties and some fatalities. Only two men escaped without injuries.

The injured were treated at a MASH hospital and then transported to Pusan. Hackworth was sent to a Swedish Hospital where he spent his twenty-first birthday with arm and chest wounds. He returned to his unit as soon as he could. He met the new men and all the men involved in the attack on Hill 400 received awards. Hackworth was hospitalized again with an arm infection. By the time he was released, the Raiders had been disbanded. He went to Japan and then the States.

In Chapter Eight, Hackworth was in officer's training. In the States, he visited friends in the Santa Monica area and visited the families of some of the Raiders. He then reported to Fort Benning. Hackworth had only spent three months out of the previous seven years in the States. The country had changed a lot in those years.

At Fort Benning, Hackworth met Steven Prazenka and they spent most of the week visiting. There were two hundred forty three students in Hackworth's class. Hackworth felt that the things taught at the school were not relevant. One afternoon, he was called to the office of General Meloy. Meloy talked to him about attending West Point and he said he would think about it. Since General Gavin, one of his heroes, was a West Point graduate, he decided to apply.

The officer training course lasted four months and Hackworth graduated.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary and Analysis

In Hackworth's second tour, he was assigned to the 40th California National Guard Division. Hackworth let it be known that he was unhappy and they told him he would have a more favorable assignment soon with a rifle company command. He was assigned to work under Colonel Yang with whom he had a series of Confrontations and lasted one month. Most of their confrontations were over Hackworth's unorthodox methods.

After a confrontation with the colonel, Hackworth was transferred. Fox Company became his new command. Colonel Locke was in charge of the Second Battalion. Hackworth was pleased with the men in his company. The company was a fighting unit without much experience, so Hackworth had to train them. He gave them the name of Fighter Company. On their first mission, one of the men, Joe Rice, who was a West Point military engineer, redesigned the bunkers to make them safer. It was November 1952, the peace talks were in progress and the heaviest fighting was taking place. F Company was in a place called the Gap. The enemy was in front of them on a hill named No Name Hill. During the day, troops from both sides stayed underground. At night, they hunted each other. The North Koreans knew the land better and this gave them an advantage.

When the battle ended, Hackworth reviewed the battle. He recorded the mistakes made and the lessons learned in a book he kept for that purpose. He made mistakes that resulted in two deaths and one man being taken prisoner.

On December 18, Hackworth found the Koreans approaching during daylight hours. He sent out a patrol and notified the backup units. When the Korean machine guns began firing, a heated battle took place. Hackworth's men were victorious. They obtained valuable information about troop movements from the prisoners they took.

Six weeks later, they were east of the Gap after being in reserve. Colonel Locke was replaced by Major Jack Hemingway who approved of Hackworth and his tactics. Hackworth was promoted to the rank of captain.

Fred Crispino of the Wolfhounds learned where Hackworth was and came to visit on the front.

Hackworth met with general Cleland who told him about the changes being made in the Army. After the peace, there would be a standing Army and the first to be let go would be officers without a college education.



Chapters 10-11

Chapters 10-11 Summary and Analysis

In San Francisco, Hackworth had to decide what to do with his life. He was processed at Fort Mason and decided to leave the Army. He missed the Army life even though he served in the Reserves. Hackworth settled in Santa Monica and attended college. He became a part-time insurance salesman. When he completed two years of college in 1955, he reapplied for active duty.

Hackworth says he returned to a different Army in December 1955. The Air Force was now a separate service and the lynch pin of the nation's defense. Hackworth was assigned to temporary duty at Fort Bliss, Texas, where he received Air Defense training. This was basically nine to five, five days a week duty. He graduated the course and was now an Antiaircraft Battery Officer. He was then assigned to Battery C of the 77th AAA in Manhattan Beach, California.

He trained his men hard but at the same time tried to do his best for them. His men began calling themselves Hackworth's Rangers. They won honors for being the best in most categories. Hackworth spent the time learning about guerilla warfare. He did not get along with his CO and was given a new assignment as a Group Logistics Officer at the 108th Arty Group near Los Angeles.

At this time, President Eisenhower's Reductions in Force (RIF) program was taking place and many military were being cut. The men who didn't leave the Army were placed in whatever jobs were available, which often meant a demotion. There was no more job security in the Army. Other changes were made in belt buckles and in requiring black shoes. They copied a lot of German designs.

In July, Hackworth became the Group HQ Battery CO. He was happy to be back in a command position. He put together his own staff and held this position until August 1957. During this time, he worked on the requirements for his college degree and married Patty Leonard. In February 1952, he was sent to training in Oklahoma and then on assignment to Germany as CO of an atomic missile unit.

In Chapter Ten, Hackworth was assigned to a position at the Visitor's Bureau at the Nurnberg Post. He and Patty became good friends with Harold Borger, who turned out to be a spy, and their daughter Laura was born in October 1959. Hackworth was assigned to the United States Army Europe Command Headquarters as an administration branch chief.

Hackworth was promoted to major in June and their headquarters moved to Heidelberg. His second daughter was born in November 1960.

When Kennedy became President in 1961, there was an increase in the defense budget. Hackworth received his long awaited appointment to an infantry unit near

Mannheim. There he served under Colonel Glover Johns and was assigned to Company D.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary and Analysis

Company D was already rated as the best company. Its NCOs have World War II and Korea experience. Most of the people shared Hackworth's views regarding training and he began a rigorous training routine with them. Hackworth taught his own training classes. The unit would go on training exercises at Baumholder every few months. During this time, Hackworth continued to work on his bachelor's degree not knowing that coming world events would prevent him from completing it in Germany. Johns told his men that they had to reinforce Berlin.

Berlin was divided among the four powers and was being supplied by air. The Russians were trying to force the West out of Berlin. East Berlin was surrounded with barbed wire and barricades to prevent people from leaving. As a result, Western troops moved up the Autobahn to reach the city, moving through Red territory. Soviet and East German troops surrounded the city. The Americans reached Berlin without incident. Vice President Johnson and other dignitaries were waiting as they marched into Berlin.

D Company was sent to Tempelhof Air Force Base right by Checkpoint Charlie. They were on five minute alert until tensions eased. They watched the Berlin Wall being built as they drove around town. At one point Hackworth wandered too close to the barricade and found an East German soldier pointing an AK 47 at him. After a week, they stood down from full alert and engaged in night training exercises while there, until Christmas.

When the promotions list came out, Hackworth's name wasn't on it, even though he received the promotion months before. Johns tried to push it through but he was designated as qualified but not selected. In January 1962, he was transferred to the battle group's Combat Support Company. This was another command position. In this position, he weeded out some incompetent officers earning him the nickname of Sackworth.

Hackworth was up for a new assignment. He decided he wants to be a trainer in Vietnam and talked Grattan and Peppers into volunteering with him. They were accepted but he was rejected for having too much combat experience. He did receive his promotion to major in July. He was assigned to the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. He returned to the States via ship.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary and Analysis

Hackworth was impressed with Fort Campbell and the 101st Airborne. Patty and the kids were visiting family in Los Angeles when the Cuban missile crisis occurred. Hackworth told her to go to a cabin in the mountains until it was over. He was attending the Infantry Career Course at Fort Benning and was on alert. At this time, Maxwell D. Taylor was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and was restructuring the Army under a program known as ROAD, which was covered in his course as well as counter insurgency. Hackworth felt there should have been greater emphasis on Indochina in the course.

Hackworth was assigned to the 101st logistics shop as a G-4 Operations Officer. This involved writing plans for the logistics of operations. He took part in the yearly training exercise called Operation SWIFT STRIKE III. He was also involved in Task Force Cassidy and the use of troops during integration in the south.

The army made arrangements for Hackworth to complete his degree at Austin Peay College which was near the base. He was in school in August 1964 when United States destroyers were attacked in the Gulf of Tonkin. Hackworth received his bachelor's degree but missed finals and graduation because he was sent to the Army's Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth.

Returning to Fort Campbell, Hackworth was assigned to the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne (1/101). The unit's continual training made them combat ready. Hackworth felt that the South Vietnamese troops were losing the battle and that United States troops would be sent to Vietnam.

Hackworth received order for Vietnam just as his son Joel was born. He would be an advisor. They bought a house outside Memphis for Patty and the kids to live in while he was away.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary and Analysis

The Screaming Eagles 1st Brigade arrives in Vietnam in July 1965. They are welcomed by General Westmoreland and Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor when they arrive at Cam Ranh Bay. Hackworth arrives earlier to prepare for the arrival of the unit. The first thing he learns is that there are no safe areas in Vietnam.

The unit left Cam Ranh Bay in August and spent the next six months traveling to the hot spots in Vietnam. The first major engagement with the enemy was Operation Gibraltar. The unit performed well but was very lucky. Six months later, when they captured a prisoner, they learned that their plans had been known in advance by the Viet Cong. Westmoreland claimed the operation was a huge success. Hackworth viewed it as a learning experience. The enemy had the area booby trapped and this resulted in many casualties.

Much of the equipment they sent is being tested on the battlefield. This resulted in all kinds of paperwork which irritated Hackworth. Some of the equipment was good and the troops were thankful for this. They also had a problem obtaining proper clothing and supplies.

The Army rotated Commanding Officers every three months. This led to a lack of continuity and prevented the COs from becoming proficient in their jobs. It also resulted in morale problems among the men.

A unit of volunteers called the Tiger Force joined the unit. They were a raider-like group that added to the reconnaissance and ambush capabilities of the unit.

Hackworth was hospitalized with gastroenteritis when the battle of Ia Drang Valley occurred. There were heavy American casualties.

At Thanksgiving, General Westmoreland visited the troops. They still didn't have the right kind of clothing and equipment. After the holidays, the troops were supposed to take and guard the Michelin rubber plantation at Ben Cat. This involved taking the Bien Hoa Airfield.

In another operation, called Operation Checkerboard, the Americans failed to find the enemy.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary and Analysis

Hackworth says that 1966 is the year that he really established himself. Captain Robert Murphy and Emerson's C Company were pinned down by the Vietnamese. Hackworth was assigned to relieve and reinforce Murphy. He brought the Tigers and B Company in on both sides of the enemy. Jim Gardiner was killed in the operation but that night they set up their perimeter around the village. They had a total of nineteen dead. The NVA left the My Canh area during the night.

Hackworth says that the NVA troops were well trained and disciplined. At My Phu, Hackworth saw an old man and had someone ask him for information. He told them about the NVA in the area and they caught the NVA by surprise, a fact confirmed by a prisoner they captured. Hackworth was called to brief Westmoreland on the battle and received his congratulations. Hackworth says the experience taught him that there is no point in taking an objective that you have no intention of holding. His unit received a citation for their good performance.

After R & R in Hong Kong, Hackworth was made CO of the 2/327. At this time it was becoming known that the NVA troops were operating out of Cambodia.

Hackworth was given command of the 1/327. They were supposed to relieve a special forces camp at Tou Murong. Hackworth suspected that they were walking into a waiting trap. He planned accordingly and avoided the trap. The unit was involved in heavy fighting at Dak To. The NVA was trying to lure the Americans into this area of Vietnam for the monsoon season. The usual plan was to attack the relief units. The American troops suffered heavy casualties from friendly fire.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary and Analysis

Hackworth's first tour of duty in Vietnam would soon end and he wanted to teach at the Infantry School at Fort Benning. Instead, he was assigned to the Pentagon Office of Personnel. He moved his family to a house at Bunker, Virginia. After two months in his Pentagon position, he accepted assignment to Vietnam as an aid to General Marshall. They were to devise plans to improve combat efficiency.

General Marshall, known as Slam, and Hackworth toured Vietnam. They established schools to teach post combat interviewing techniques in which the combat groups would discuss the battle, identify mistakes, and learn from those mistakes. After two weeks in An Khe, they went to Di An. Here they studied Operation Attleboro and uncovered all of the deficiencies in what everyone thought was a stunning operation. The troops involved were not combat ready. At Bien Hoa they noted the laxness of the troops. The Screaming Eagles were still performing well at Phn Rang to Hackworth's satisfaction. At Pleiko, they examined Operation Paul Revere IV and found little correlation between what actually happened and the official report. The last unit they visited was Delta Force, a Special Forces unit . A common problem in Vietnam was the emphasis on body count.

After their visits were completed, Slam and Hackworth returned to Saigon. They stayed at the low priced Oriental Hotel when they weren't at Westmoreland's home. Hackworth felt that the United States was losing the war and needed a new strategy. Marshall told the top brass that they were doing fine in the war.

Back in Washington, they wrote the Vietnam Primer which was based on the lessons learned in the discussion they had with the troops in Vietnam. Hackworth was vassigned to work in the Directorate of Individual Training.



Chapters 17-18

Chapters 17-18 Summary and Analysis

Hackworth says that there were great pressures to working at the Pentagon even though that was where the most career advancement was made. He was responsible for the functioning of all Army service schools in the United States. Three star generals approved the recommendation of their action officers offer the different issues went through the bureaucratic procedure. With so many people being involved, Hackworth felt the system resulted in preventing the necessary changes in training policy. In 1967, the training was still geared to the European battlefield and not to the jungles of Vietnam. Because of this, the war was going badly.

Hackworth worked on Ranger training and the result was an increase in enrollment. He thought that the Army would be quick to improve the training tactics of Army personnel. During the 1967 Tet Offensive, the Americans won the tactical victory but the Vietcong won the psychological victory.

Slam and Hackworth planned a fact finding tour of Vietnam in May 1968, but Hackworth changed his mind because he didn't want to be part of a charade. When General Zais changed his mind about a promise he made Hackworth, Hackworth filled out the paper work to quit the Army. A friend offered him a position at Fort Lewis which he accepted.

In Chapter Eighteen, Hackworth reports to Fort Lewis as a battalion commander. He was critical of both the instructors and the trainees and was vsurprised at the deficiencies he found in the system. He developed new procedures to try to remedy the deficiencies.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary and Analysis

Hackworth felt that the politicians and generals didn't know what was really going on in the war. He began to train his battalion and implemented his own rules. At first the men complained, but after one day decided that he knew what he was doing. They were in Vietnam and he was trying to do what was best for them. He gave them the name of Hardcore and Recondo.

Hackworth's men were at Dong Tam. They performed well in combat. They were in the Tet Offensive of 1969. Hackworth had problems with Brigade Commander Colonel Hunt who issued orders directly to Hackworth's men bypassing him.

Hackworth performed a dangerous and tricky extradition helping to remove some men who were trapped by the Viet Cong. They were then assigned to establish Fire Support Base Dickey in western Dinh Twong Province. Hackworth felt that no American ever fought in worse conditions than those in the Mekong Delta.

There was a great deal of emphasis on body counts. When Hunt left for Division in March 1969, the new Commander, John Hayes, was told he better achieve the same high body count that Hunt had. Hackworth formulated Night Hunter where snipers shot from helicopters. The program was very successful. During this time, one of his companies took heavy casualties in battle. Hackworth as well as many of his men ended up in the hospital. The hospital was also under heavy attack. The hospital staff decided to send Hackworth to Japan via Long Binh which would mean he would lose his Hardcore unit. He wanted to stay in Vietnam so Long Binh reverse evacuated him back to Dong Tam.

Hackworth recovered enough to use a cane and returned to Hardcore. He was allowed his choice of assignments in the theater. He accepted a position as a G-3 adviser with General Timothy. America had been involved in the Vietnam War for four years at this point.



Chapters 20-22

Chapters 20-22 Summary and Analysis

Hackworth spent a few days in Saigon before going to Pleiko. General Ewell invited Hackworth to dinner and asked him to work in his G-3 section, but Hackworth didn't want to do this. This cost him the chance to command a brigade in Vietnam. In his job with Timothy, Hackworth would work with many others in trying to turn the war over to the South Vietnamese. Most of his time was spent writing reports.

When Secretary of the Army Stanley Resor visited Vietnam, he met with Hackworth. Hackworth told Resor the United States was losing the war at a faster rate. Resor asked for his recommendations. Hackworth recommended more competent advisors.

In November 1969, Hackworth was reassigned as advisor to the Airborne Division. He returned to the United States in between assignments and decided his marriage to Patty was over. He returned to Vietnam. His job as advisor to the ARVN Airborne was one of the most coveted jobs in Vietnam. He made it known that the role of advisor was to advise and not to guarantee success. Hackworth went into Cambodia with his group.

In Chapter Twenty One, one of the men he advises is Colonel Hanh who lived in a plush villa and acted like a warlord. Hackworth knew he would have a problem with him. Hackworth refused to let him sue the Air Cav forces. Hanh started doing things the way Hackworth wanted. Hackworth also insisted on weekend operations instead of the five day a week, nine to five operations of the Vietnamese.

The Americans at the base built the building they needed. There was an Officer Club and a steam bath. It was known as the Team 50 Compound. They had concessions, shops and a theater and the proceeds from all of these revenues went to the Team 50 Compound Improvement Fund.

Hackworth expanded the training program. They developed an Ambush Academy. No matter what they did, they could not motivate the Vietnamese.

On R & R in Australia, Hackworth met an airline hostess named Jenny Bates. When he returned to Vietnam, they corresponded and saw each other monthly. Right before she visited him in Vietnam, he was promoted to full colonel. She stayed for two weeks.

Hackworth's next assignment would be for two years at NATO Headquarters in Brussels and after the My Lai incident, he served on a television interview panel. Chapter Twenty Two is a transcript of the interview in which he presented his views on the inadequacy of training and how it resulted in higher casualties. The command used the mentality from Korea and Europe which was not suitable to Vietnam. He presented the views he had been presenting throughout the Vietnam conflict.



Chapter 23 & Epilogue

Chapter 23 & Epilogue Summary and Analysis

After his taped interview, Hackworth applied for retirement. His staff felt his orders to NATO would be canceled because of the interview. He was still in Vietnam. He said goodbye to friends. In Saigon, members of the press knew about his interviews and went to talk to him. He spent his two week leave in Australia and then returned to Vietnam for out processing. While he was in Australia, he was notified that the Army was investigating his allegations.

In Saigon, he had an ABC film crew with him since he was concerned for his safety. He was interrogated by the headquarters staff for four days. He knew he had to get out of Vietnam. When he was leaving for the airport, he and John Westmoreland found the jeep booby trapped.

Jerry met him in San Francisco. The next day, he completed his sign out papers at Fort Lewis. He had two months of terminal leave. The Army was investigating him and he was concerned about a court martial. Jenny and Hackworth were staying at Tim Grattan's cabin in Seattle, until they traveled across the United States, followed by Army investigators.

In Washington DC, he retained lawyer Joseph Califano. The Army told him that his leave and retirement had been cancelled. He was ordered to report to Fort Meyer to sign in and was assigned to Fort Meade. Hackworth was assigned to Chief of Staff Circarella. The general made him feel welcome and said if they court martialed Hackworth, they'd have to court martial hundreds of others.

The investigation resulted in a letter of censure in his file and the case against him was dropped. He was discharged from the Army on September 28, 1971.

In the Epilogue, Hackworth and Jenny moved to Spain after he retired. After a year of traveling around Europe, he separated from Jenny and moved to Australia. He eventually bought property in northern New South Wales. He became the business partner of Peter Margaret Cox. They married and had a son, Ben.



Characters

David H. Hackworth

David H. Hackworth is the author of the book. He was retired from the U.S. Army when he wrote the book. He was a sergeant in Korea on February, 1951 when the book begins. Hackworth enlisted in the Army on May 20, 1946, when he was underage. He was assigned to the 752d Tank Battalion and sent to Italy. He was born in Ocean Park, California. He did his basic training at Fort Knox and attended the Leadership School near Venice, California. When the Communists entered South Korea, Hackworth requested and received duty in Korea. Hackworth came from a fighting family dating back to the early sixteen hundreds. His great uncle Roy had been in World War I. Uncle Roy and his grandmother always told him war stories. As a youngster, he was inspired by war movies. He formed the Hackworth Raider unit in Korea which was an efficient assault and raid unit. Hackworth's brother Roy was a sergeant. Raised in forest homes, Hackworth ran away and joined the merchant marines at the age of fourteen. The Army was basically the structured family that Hackworth didn't have. When he left after Korea, he missed the Army way of life even though he was a member of Reserves. He completed two years of college and in 1955, rejoined the Army and married Patty Leonard. In 1959, he was assigned to Germany. Their daughter Laura was born on October 22, 1959. Leslie Allison was born the following November in Nurnberg. His son David was born in 1965 just as he was assigned to Vietnam as an advisor. After his first tour of duty, he worked at the Pentagon. He divorced Patty in 1970. He resigned from the Army as colonel while under investigation for comments made to the press. After his discharge, he lived in Spain and then in Australia where he married Peter Margaret Cox. They had a son named Ben.

Joseph P. Cleland

Joseph P. Cleland was a general in the United States Army when Hackworth first met him in Korea. He had served in the 82d Airborne and many members of his staff were from that unit. Hackworth was assigned to one of his units and wasn't happy about it because he wanted to go back to the Wolfhounds. The General talked to him and convinced him to stay with the unit. He told Hackworth that he could do a lot for him if he stayed in his command and gave him command of a rifle company. Cleland was known as the Great White Father. He would run alongside the company during training exercises. He had a good spirit that spread to the men who served under him and motivated them. He regularly visited the men on the front. Hackworth respected Cleland and believed he was the best troop leader. Cleland was well informed and experienced. He was the first to suggest to Hackworth that he attend college, possibly West Point. Cleland told Hackworth that the post Korean War Army would be a standing army needing college educated officers and that the first ones to be let go would be the officers without college degrees. He wanted Hackworth to consider attending college, but Hackworth decided against this. Cleland established the King for a Day program to



find out what problems the fighting man experienced. The King for a Day had twenty four hours of VIP treatment away from the front. It was also a way of rewarding good performers. Cleland was named Commanding General, XVIII Airborne Corps.

Jack Michaely

Jack Michaely was in the United States Army. He served as the company commander of G Company where Hackworth served. Captain Michaely was in charge of the Task Force assigned to take Saigon. The Task Force was successful on January 16. Michaely served in World War II. He was an officer in the regiment that moved in front of Patton's army. He was twenty eight years of age at the opening of the Korean conflict. He learned in World War II to always control his emotions and to act cool in front of his men. Any show of emotions would result in fear among the men and affect their performance.

S.L.A. Marshall

S.L.A. Marshall was a brigadier General in the United States Army. Known as Slam, he was in his mid-sixties during the Vietnam War. He selected Hackworth to accompany him to Vietnam to study the combat situation. They traveled around the country talking to troops and wrote a manual called the Vietnam Primer when they returned to Washington. He served in World War I and all major campaigns since then and is the author of several books.

Colonel Glover S. Johnson

Colonel Glover S. Johnson was the battle group Commanding Officer who Hackworth serves under in Mannheim, Germany. In World War II, he served as an aide to General Patton and was part of the Normandy D-Day invasion. He authored the book *The Clay Pigeons of St. Lo*. Johnson also served in Korea as the regimental commander of the 40th Division. He was forty nine years old when he was in Mannheim and had been a commandant at Virginia Military Institute.

Steve Prazanka

Steve Prazanka was the platoon sergeant who Hackworth served under in Italy in 1946. He became Hackworth's mentor. Steve was twenty two years of age at the time. In World War II, he was the 254d Division leader and captured by the Germans during the Battle of the Bulge. In 1952, he was a second lieutenant when Hackworth saw him at Fort Benning.



Phil Gilchrist

Phil Gilchrist is a United States soldier who served in Korea with Hackworth. He was made 3d Platoon leader in early 1951 and Hackworth served under him in a variety of capacities. Gilchrist won the Distinguished Service Cross award for his role in Objective Logan. He then became the assistant Operations Officer at the tactical operations center.

Patty Leonard

Patty Leonard became Hackworth's first wife. She was a student nurse who became pregnant by Hackworth and had to drop out of training. They had two daughters, Laura and Leslie Allison and a son, Joel. They divorced in 1970.

Peter Margaret Cox

Peter Margaret Cox is an Australian restaurateur who became Hackworth's business partner and second wife. They had a son, Ben.

Tim Grattan

Tim Grattan was an NCO in Company D. He was a Distinguished Military Graduate. He was married to Darlene.



Objects/Places

Korea

Korea is an Asian country bordering Communist China.

Italy

Italy is a Southern European country where Hackworth served in 1946.

Ocean Park, California

Ocean Park, California is located near Santa Monica where Hackworth grew up.

Fort Benning

Fort Benning is an Army base located near Columbus, Georgia.

Panmunjum

Panmunjum is a city on the border between North and South Korean where the peace talks were held.

Fort Bliss

Fort Bliss is an Army base in Texas.

Nurnberg

Nurnberg is a city in the south central part of West Germany.

Vietnam

Vietnam is a country in Southeast Asia.

Arlington

Arlington is a city in Virginia that is a suburb of Washington DC and the location of the Pentagon.

New South Wales

New South Wales is in southeastern Australian. It is where Hackworth moves after retiring from the military.

Themes

Loyalty

Loyalty to country and service is the most dominant theme of the book. Hackworth wanted to be a soldier in a combat situation. He preferred combat situations to all other situations, even the good career path opportunities available in the Pentagon. When he entered the Army at the age of fifteen, World War II had just ended and Hackworth thought that it was a good way to meet girls. The structure and camaraderie of the military provided him with the family like environment that had been lacking in his life and he grew into a dedicated soldier, loyal to his country and to the Army. When he was serving in Italy and the Korean conflict began, he requested assignment to Korea. He always tried to do what was best for his troops and believed in hard training. All of his troops became star performers. Even though he studied all of the soldiering manuals, he had a natural ability for what to do in combat situations. He was very interested in the training of troops and when he served in Vietnam, he noticed that the training programs were geared for European land wars, and not the jungle environment of Vietnam. He felt that the top brass didn't know what was really happening in Vietnam when they said the war was going well. Hackworth, who risked his life under many conditions for the Army and the country, finally spoke out in a televised segment of Issues and Answers. He was critical of the Army. He was not being disloyal when he did this, even though it resulted in an investigation. He was offering constructive criticism for how to make things better.

Relationships

Relationships are another dominant theme of the book. Hackworth was not raised in a stable home environment. He did not have the family relationships that most people had. When he joined the Army at the age of fifteen, it provided him with the family structure and support that had been lacking in his life. The Army became his family and provided the structured environment in which he thrived. When he left the Army for two years after the end of the Korean conflict, he missed the structure and the lifestyle. Even though he married Patty during this time, he still missed the Army lifestyle. He always provided for Patty and their three children even though he was away most of the time. But he said right from the beginning of their marriage that Patty couldn't compete with the Army. The few times he had an assignment in the United States, he lived with Patty and the children but always found it to be an adjustment. He was always eager to get back into a combat situation. When the kids were old enough and Patty resumed her nursing career, they divorced and he was happy to be a bachelor again. The family with which he felt most comfortable was the Army because it provided the kind of environment that he needed. Hackworth's relationship with Jenny lasted for several years. She was by his side during the investigation and then spent a year with him in Europe before they split. He didn't remarry until he settled in Australia.



Honesty

Honesty is another theme of the book. Even though Hackworth would swipe what he needed like the medical corps jeep, and adhered to the false body count reporting, which he didn't like to do, he basically acted as an honest person. He said what was on his mind, which wasn't always what people wanted to hear. He did what he felt was best for his troops, even if he had to break some rules. He didn't lie to them. He was hard on them when it came to training, because he knew that good proper training could save their lives. They came to respect him for his approach. They knew that he wouldn't ask them to do what he wouldn't do or hadn't done and all of the troops he commanded were star performers in the Army. What he saw in the new recruits was a lack of proper training for combat in the jungles of Vietnam. This was what he criticized. The troops didn't have the proper training or equipment. He felt that the top brass didn't readily understand the battle conditions in Vietnam. He also found that, at the Pentagon, they were slow to make changes because of the bureaucracy. His feelings all along were that the Americans were losing the war in Vietnam even though the generals said the war was going fine. Hackworth finally presented his views in a televised segment of Issues and Answers. This brought him into conflict with the Pentagon, which delayed his discharge. He was critical of the Army because of his honesty and these were the views he had been presenting all the time.



Style

Perspective

The perspective of *About Face* is the perspective of the author, David H. Hackworth. The book is written in the first person point of view which is appropriate to the book's nature. Hackworth is telling his story about his years in the Army. He talks about the different combat situations in which he participated, how he handled them, what mistakes he made and what he learned from those mistakes. He is honest in evaluating his own actions. While most of the book is about Hackworth's own experiences, he does talk about some situations in which he was not a part, like Hamburger Hill and My Lai. Since most of the book deals with his own experience, the limitations of the first person are avoided. The author is the narrator and is present at the events. Because of this, the knowledge of the reader is not limited by the knowledge of the narrator. The author is able to adequately describe the situations and provide all of the background and detail information to the reader. This is the best approach that the author could take. He had experienced the events that he describes and is writing about the experience. The author is well qualified to write this kind of book because he had been present in Italy, Korea, Germany and Vietnam. He is well respected by others in the Army and is writing about his own experience.

Tone

The tone of the book is subjective. *About Face* is the story of Hackworth's career in the Army. He talks about his experiences and presents his views and opinions about the different issues. Hackworth presents the facts and analyzes many different situations and throughout the book, he presents his opinions. He is critical of Army policy and practices, particularly regarding training procedures. The Army, he feels, is training troops with procedures conducive for land wars in Europe and not for the environment or the situations encountered in the jungles of Vietnam. Hackworth is also critical of the required inflated body counts. The men are required to carry cards with them with the figures for battles and are supposed to count the bodies during the battles. The men also had had inferior equipment when Hackworth first had arrived there. Hackworth expresses his views about all of these issues, as well as his opinions of various people. He is honest and factual when he talks about these things and candid in admitting the mistakes he has made or the failures he has had. He tries to learn from his mistakes. The writing style of the book is conducive to the nature of the book. The book is written in a mature style with an air of honesty that the reader expects from a man of Hackworth's position. He wants the reader to know what had happened during the years he had been in the Army and he tells the reader his story in this book.

Structure

The structure of *About Face* is designed to be informational. The book is divided into two parts, one dealing with Hackworth's time in Korea and the other with the latter part of his career in Vietnam. There are twelve chapters in the first part of the book and eleven in the second. There is an Epilogue which explains what Hackworth has done since leaving the Army. There are quotes at the beginning of each chapter, usually by others, about Hackworth. There are also explanations throughout the book that clearly explain the terms or the situations being described by the author.

The Author's Note section presents his reasons for writing the book and the methods he uses to write about the different events. The Introduction is written by Ward Just who talks about Hackworth and the situation in Vietnam. There is a photo section that shows pictures of Hackworth and other people who are mentioned in the book. This allows the reader to associate a name with a face, which adds to the realism of the book.

At the end of the book, there is an Appendix that contains the Standing Orders, Rogers' Rangers. These are basically the rules under which the unit had functioned. There is a Notes section which shows Hackworth's sources. The Glossary section is comprehensive and explains many useful terms. There is also a detailed Index that makes it easy to look up information. The book is well structured to provide the maximum information in the most efficient matter.

Quotes

I was really pleased we'd nailed them; prisoners are the best source of battlefield information, and with the fight still going on full tilt around us, it'd be useful to find out what the hell was happening in the enemy camp. (Chapter 1, pgs. 27-28)

It really was a great relief, knowing I would not have to prove myself to anyone anymore - but what I didn't know at the time was that the name I made for myself on 6 February 1951, was one I'd have to live up to for the next twenty years. (Chapter 4, pg. 66)

Some discretion had to be given to the fact that he was not only volunteering his own life and safety, but the lives and safety of forty-two other soldiers in his command, but Jack's demonstrated example rubbed off on the members of his platoon - soon they all wanted to fight and be like him. It was a delightful experience having such an effective fighting 'machine.' (Chapter 5, pg. 113)

It dulled the pain but not enough; he told me to lie down in a litter so I could be evacuated. But I was not about to go anywhere. The welfare of my men was not a responsibility that could be delegated. Until everyone had been cared for, I'd stay right there. (Chapter 7, pg. 189)

To my mind, they still were. But if I had to be a rear-echelon commando, I was determined to be the best rear-echelon commando, and had studied long and hard, at night and on the job, to this end. Now, on the line, my task was first to establish interlocking bands of grazing fire across the battalion front; then to cover dead spots with indirect fire starting with D Company's mortars; and finally, to deploy the principally antitank recoilless rifles to cover tank and infantry approaches. (Chapter 9, pg. 231)

I probably missed the structured, disciplined life too - I couldn't find a purpose in the world outside the military - and the same unknown variable that had compelled me from childhood to join up now had me counting the days until my self-imposed exile was over. (Chapter 10, pg. 288)

In Couch's words: 'It was our policy to encourage excellence among the soldiers, particularly in bayonet training, unarmed combat, shooting, and total physical fitness. This is what really makes a soldier; if he masters these subjects, he'll fight.' From my experience in Korea, I could not have agreed more. (Chapter 12, pgs. 362-363)

Airborne was unique. There was the adrenaline rush of the jump itself - the butterflies in your stomach beforehand, the cold wind lashing your face as you stood in the door waiting for the green light, the merciless prop blast as you took the plunge, and then the falling, falling, confident your chute would open but never sure until (thank God) the violent jerk that told you it had. (Chapter 13, pg. 44)



I'd learned the first of many valuable lessons in the new war: there were no safe areas in Vietnam. (Chapter 14, pg. 464)

Hell, I'd been dreaming of another combat command since 1953. And then to get one as a major, and with the Tigers (whom I'd secretly considered 'my boys' since the creation of the elite force), was the greatest break I could have asked for. (Chapter 15, pg. 501)

'Sir,' I said, 'that statement is about as far from the truth about the nature of the war in Vietnam as I have ever heard!' (Chapter 16, pg. 550)

With training my longtime passion, if I had to be in the Pentagon it was probably the best job I could have had: provided that a way could be found to blast through the concrete that locked obsolete Army doctrine in place, for the first time in my career I was actually in a position to do something about it. (Chapter 17, pg. 588)

Draftees are not concerned for the reputation of their employer, the Army (in Vietnam they happily blew the whistle on everything from phony value awards to the secret bombing of Laos and Cambodia); a draftee, citizens' army, so much a part of the history of America, is an essential part of a healthy democracy, one in which everyone pays the price of admission. (Chapter 18, pg. 656)

Regarding ARVN...I am convinced that they will never make it. The individual soldier has the potential to be great. But to be great he needs leadership and that is the rub. The Vietnamese just don't produce leaders. (Chapter 20, pg. 717)

This is an unfortunate loss to the Army. Colonel Hackworth is a brilliant officer, of impressive reputation as a combat unit commander, extraordinarily innovative, and with exceptional insight in to the nature of insurgency. He is a natural leader of soldiers. He attracts outstanding people, especially those of his own 'tiger' type. (Chapter 23, pg. 717)

Topics for Discussion

Why did Hackworth join the Army in 1946? What were the circumstances of his enlistment?

Why Hackworth investigated by the Army? What are the circumstances surrounding his retirement? Why does he move to Australia?

Why does Hackworth leave the Army after the end of the Korean conflict? What does he have to do to come back?

Why does Hackworth leave the Army after the end of the Korean conflict? What does he have to do to come back?

Why wasn't Hackworth happy with civilian life? What does he think of the new Army to which he returned in December 1955?

Why was Hackworth rejected when he first applied for duty in Vietnam? Do you think the reason was a good one?

Why is Hackworth so critical of the Army's training policies? What does he think is wrong with them?

What does Hackworth talk about in the Issues and Answers interview? Why does he decide to leave the Army afterwards?