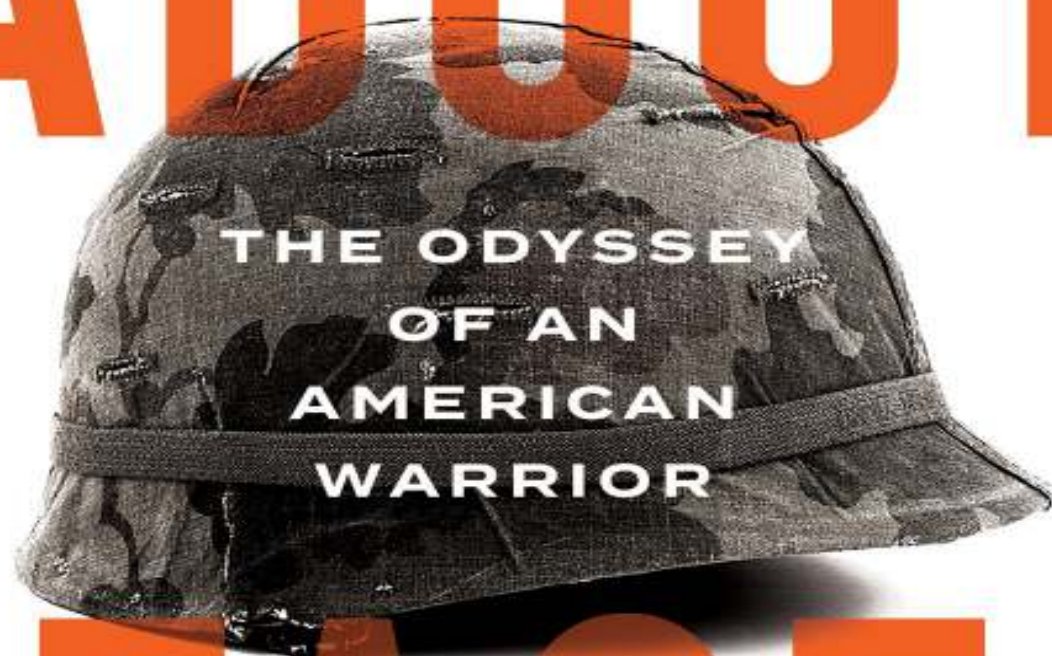


NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

FOREWORD BY **JOCKO WILLINK** (NAVY SEAL, RET.)

ABOUT



**THE ODYSSEY
OF AN
AMERICAN
WARRIOR**

FACE

COLONEL DAVID H. HACKWORTH

(U.S. ARMY, RET.)

AND **JULIE SHERMAN**

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ABOUT FACE

COLONEL DAVID

[U.S. ARMY, Ret.]

H. HACKWORTH

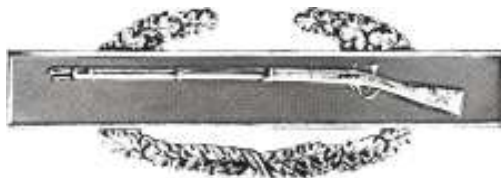
and **JULIE SHERMAN**

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MAPS OF KOREA AND VIETNAM

Dedication

To Steve Prazenka, who showed us how to soldier;
To Henry Deboer, who showed us how to die;
To Glover Johns, who showed us how to lead;
And to all the doughboys, the groundpounders, the grunts—the American
infantrymen
—past, present, and, especially, future,
to them this book is dedicated.



AUTHORS' NOTE

WAR stories present two problems to authors striving for The Truth. First of all, if you live long enough to tell them, and have enough of an audience to practice telling them *to* through the years, war stories become just that—stories. Just as time distances the storyteller from the events themselves, so do the repeated tellings. Gradually the stories are embellished in places, honed down in others until they are perfect tales, even if they bear little resemblance to what actually happened. Yet the storyteller is completely unaware of how far he may have strayed from the facts. Those countless tellings have made the stories The Truth.

The second problem with war stories is they have their genesis in the fog of war. In battle, your perception is often only as wide as your battle sights. Five participants in the same action, fighting side by side, will often tell entirely different stories of what happened, even within hours of the fight. The story each man tells might be virtually unrecognizable to the others. But that does not make it any less true.

A substantial part of the four years we worked on *About Face* was spent solving the problems that war stories create. In the earliest stage that meant, by day, regaling an audience of one with well-worn tales of youthful escapades on the battlefield, and by night beginning to dream the true and often horrible details of those “glory days,” details that had been cheerfully overlooked in that day’s narrative, or that perhaps had theretofore been locked away behind steel doors deep in the mind.

The next stage was finding other participants in the same events, the whereabouts of almost all of whom were unknown, usually with no clues save the single detail of a guy’s hometown. (It is a curious trait in soldiers: twenty, thirty, even forty years down the track, they may not remember their buddies’ first

names, but they always seem to remember where they came from.) We *needed* these guys, to bring skewed-by-the-telling war stories back into focus and to fill in the blanks, to give us the view through *their* battle sights and to allow us to peer through the fog of war.

As a couple of determined civilians in the Department of the Army (DA) took up our cause and began to attach names (which we provided, many of them with fractured, phonetic spellings), ranks, and assignments long past with addresses here and now, through other DA channels and the Freedom of Information Act we began to collect after-action reports, unit journals, and thousands of pages of miscellaneous reference materials that gave us the official views of what had previously been seen only through one man's eyes (at least as far as we could prove). These documents, particularly those pertaining to the Korean War, helped enormously to round out an accurate picture of the time, and what a relief it was when the official word, abbreviated and "sanitized" as it might have been, jibed perfectly with a vague but no less strong personal recollection.

Soon, with the help of DA, lots of old friends began to check into the net. Many of them knew where other old comrades were (who in turn just happened to know how to find others still), and before long our list of contributors numbered some three hundred, covering four decades and running the gamut from four-star generals to buck privates, Regular Army men to one-hitch citizen soldiers. Through scores of interviews and thousands of pages of letters exchanged across the oceans, these men corroborated (our primary goal) and added color to the stories as we knew them. When they shared their disparate versions of "what really happened" in a battle or an event that occurred from two to four decades ago, we looked for the common thread among them (taking into account that these guys, too, had memories of varying degrees of reliability), and then, as appropriate, wove a composite picture that dovetailed with the remembered experience of Soldier David Hackworth. In this way, we hoped to give our audience a sense of the "bigger picture" that individually none of these men could have had.

Our object was honesty and accuracy; to the best of our ability and knowledge, in *About Face* we achieved both, and we apologize for any inadvertent errors or omissions on our part. To the many fine and brave soldiers who aren't mentioned