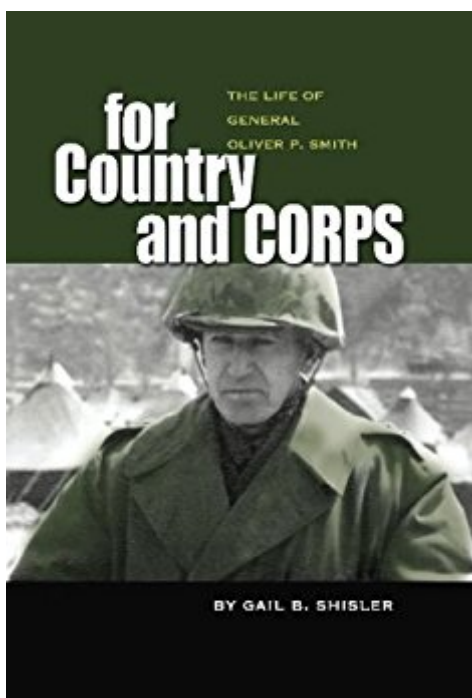


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For Country And Corps: The Life Of General Oliver P. Smith



Synopsis

Oliver P. Smith fought at Peleliu and Okinawa and then commanded the 1st Marine Division in Korea during the assault at Inchon, the recapture of Seoul, and the breakout from the Chosin Reservoir. Called one of the twentieth century's great Marine leaders, Smith was known as an outstanding combat commander and a man of great intellect and moral courage. This biography, written by the granddaughter he helped raise, illuminates the general's remarkable life. It draws on interviews, oral histories and a thorough examination of letters held by the family and not previously available to researchers. Gail Shisler's investigation of Smith's relationship with his Army superiors in Korea and with his Marine Corps peers and superiors takes exception to previously published descriptions and adds new insights into the Corps' postwar battle for survival.

Book Information

File Size: 3118 KB

Print Length: 362 pages

Publisher: Naval Institute Press (October 11, 2012)

Publication Date: October 11, 2012

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B009WW4WD8

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #297,233 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #47

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Military > Korean War #84 in Kindle Store > Kindle

eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Military & Wars > Branches > Marines #144

in Books > History > Military > Korean War

Customer Reviews

General Smith, as written about in this wonderful book by his grand daughter, was truly one of the Corps' greats. Insightful in its look at the man, his family and early life (which is not at all well known, including the horrible circumstances behind the death of his sister). A man of quiet distinction who

was present or in command at many of the Marine's tough battles. Because of the new sources utilized for reference in this book (the author had access to a lot of the General's personal papers), it's interesting reading how he viewed his relations with his seniors and others he served with, including the difficulty to work with General Rupertus, his 'boss' during the horrific battle for Pelelieu. General Vandegrift's apparent misjudgement of Rupertus' character and ability before and after this bloody battle is alluded to. Others such as MacArthur, Almond, and Puller are looked at as well. In these glimpses, the author puts a very human face on these Generals who made history. One other battle was the post war armed forces unification fight. General Smith was, though not directly involved (perhaps by design because some of the characters and junior ranking members involved) fully aware of what was secretly known as the Chowder Society, and provided at least material support of the efforts to fight the joint chiefs of staff, even if he didn't agree with their tactics and methods of acquiring inside information. As a retired Marine of 24 years, I can say it is unfortunate that the importance of General Smith's historical role and imprint have diminished over the years. Case in point, little is ever heard of his leadership of the First Marine Division out of the Chinese trap at Chosin, a feat of arms singular in comparison in the annals of modern military history (especially when his division is compared to other units that disintegrated or fled in similar circumstances). Because of the politics in the general selection process at the time, I would agree with the author that he was sidelined to make way for others who gained prominence because of their influence. As a result a lot of other non bombastic intellectual greats were eventually eased out of the Corps (Twining and of course Smith, both men with fine combat and staff records), whereas Krulak (also a great staff officer who was very much 'connected') rose to higher ranks. This is not to disparage the record of Krulak or any other highly decorated legends of the Corps. This is and always will be, to some extent, the politics involved in attaining higher rank, and this book explains this to the layman in some detail. Overall a good view of a man who exemplified the admirable qualities of a quiet professional warrior.

This biography is nothing less than thrilling. We get inside looks at the post WWII attempts to reduce the Marine Corps by the rival services. We get a look at the brilliant landing at Inchon and we get a taste of the arrogance by the Supreme Commander that reversed Inchon's gains. And, of course, we get a look at the fabulous "Frozen Chosin" redeployment and how it was so stunningly pulled off. It's hard to argue with such a book (cleanly and boldly written) or the man who stands as its subject: General O.P. Smith the man who led the Inchon landings and the man who masterminded The Chosin movement. Like many an unsung general who is nothing short of fabulous but still related to

bins of historical dust (Scipio, A.J. Smith, George Thomas, for example) Smith was a man who didn't go in for self promotion. So while lesser talents found the heights men like Smith were left for scholars and buffs to admire. Thanks to this book Smith can now take his place in the sun. I hope it is widely read.

Considerable new insight to the character of General O.P. Smith. Typical family take on a relative. Author could have really unloaded on Krulak but pulled her punches. Cates may not have paid much attention to the administrative side of command but he sure had the right take on his immediate subordinates and contemporaries. Shepard was a fine warrior but easily manipulated by kiss up sycophants. Weak commandant. Still a good document about the sorry saga of Marine Corps general officers internal politics and personality conflicts that detract from the luster of the Corps and the legacy of some of her illustrious warriors. Unfortunately Semper Fidelis does not apply to general officer infighting and self serving interests. The tolerance for Almond by the Army general officers is easily understandable knowing the character of Army officer mentality.

I had read and studied General Smith's role in Korea before which is the stuff of legend. What stands out even more in this book is the make up of the man. A serious student and teacher in his profession. A man of understated nature yet able to stand solidly for things he believed in. A man of flexible thought and action. A man who cared deeply about his men and their welfare doing his duty to the best of his ability.

For Country and Corps was a fine book about a fine soldier and revealed a lot about not only General Oliver P. Smith himself, but also about many other officers he served with or under. Reading this book also teaches us that politicking inside the military can be as fierce and nasty as in civilian life, even though General Smith was too much of a honest man to lower himself to that kind of powerplay. I just wish that O.P. Smith would have been less of a gentleman sometimes, so that he would return in kind the treatment he got from some less than honorable fellow generals.

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