

The competition here is much sharper. That *The Tonkin Gulf Yacht Club* and *Going Downtown* manage to stand out among this crowd is a token of their quality.

The Tonkin Gulf Yacht Club: Naval Aviation in the Vietnam War, by Thomas McKelvey Cleaver. Oxford and New York: Osprey / Bloomsbury, 2021. Pp. 400+. Illus., maps, gloss., biblio., index. \$30.00, ISBN 978-1-4728-4595-5; audio and e-editions.

Going Downtown: The U.S. Air Force Over Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, 1961-75, by Thomas McKeley Cleaver. Oxford and New York: Osprey / Bloomsbury, 2022. Pp. 352+. Illus., maps, gloss., biblio., index. \$30.00, ISBN 978-1-4728-4876-5; e-editions. -- John Prados

Bitter Peleliu:

The Forgotten Struggle on the Pacific War's Worst Battlefield,
by Joseph Wheelan.

There is a mass of literature at present adopting the 'face of battle' perspective, and such works, generally books rather than articles, dominate attention. That is understandable, while much of the literature is not only vivid but also instructive in what it tells us about the nature of combat. Yet this literature can also be limited, notably both repetitive in its content and 'lessons' and also apt to downplay questions of strategic and operational significance, and to simplify explanations of success. In addition, accessibility, archives, and language issues, ensure that history of this type is often deals with the same battles and the same, or similar, primary accounts. Thus, we have more for the Pacific War of 1941-5 than the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45.

This history by repetition means that only a few of such books are worthy of attention. Among British writers, I find Saul David and James Holland worth reading, but Anthony Beevor and Max Hastings overrated. Among American works I have recently been impressed by Joseph Wheelan's *Bitter Peleliu*. Wheelan, to a degree, is reprising his 2020 Okinawa study, while what he says about Peleliu will not surprise experts. The idea that the struggle has been underrated is not credible. But Wheelan is good on the nature of the combat, the experiences of the combatants, the intractability of the task and American intelligence failures. These were not only a matter of the situation prior to the landing but also during the initial fighting, notably repeated attacks on the ridges. Serious command faults are discerned, notably on the part of General William Rupertus. The lessons had to be relearned on Iwo Jima. Admiral Halsey argued that he was correct to have feared another Tarawa. *Bitter Peleliu* is a

worthwhile book made more attractive by not being over-long.

Bitter Peleliu: The Forgotten Struggle on the Pacific War's Worst Battlefield, by Joseph Wheelan. Oxford and New York: Osprey Bloomsbury, 2022. Pp. 336. Illus., maps, notes, biblio., index. \$30.00, ISBN 978-1-4728-4950-2; e-editions. --Jeremy Black

Animal Histories of the Civil War Era,
edited by Earl J. Hess

While historians have often written about the role of animals in society and warfare, in this excellent new work Prof. Hess (Lincoln Memorial), has collected thirteen essays by eleven historians on the importance of animals in America in the era of the Civil War.

The purpose of the book is to raise the consciousness of scholars to the many ways in which animals – horses, cattle, mules, sheep, dogs, hogs, and others – were involved in the war and how the war affected them, giving us a look at their role in the massing, movement, and sustainment of the armies, while throwing light on the ways in which animals affected and were affected by the troops and civilians all across the nation, north and south. In the process, we see how both animals and humans were put under extreme duress during the fighting. It is thus a ground breaking first work to examine this interrelationship, and Prof. Hess and the authors look to see more such inter-disciplinary study in the future.

Naturally many animals served as food for both hungry soldiers and civilians. But animals also pulled artillery pieces and supply wagons, they allowed troops to serve as cavalry, carried officers, and often served as pets for the fighting men, and mascots for their regiments. And they often became casualties of war, as seen in photographs of the dead on battlefields, with men and horses often intermingled. This carnage cruelty, and that often inflicted on animals, from the beating of mules pulling wagons to the brutality of dog fighting, helped spark increased awareness among the population of the need for more humane treatment of animals.

Individual essays vary in their theme. Michael Woods opens with a look at the use of camels in the *ante bellum* Southwest, in part inspired by a desire to extending servitude to the region. Several papers deal with wartime mobilization of horses for military service. David Goleman discusses the military system for recruiting, training, and using horses and mules. Hess points out specific physical traits that were important in "recruiting" animals for the particular tasks they were to perform. Abraham Gibson delves into how the agriculture history and environment of the Confederacy affected the