

"The Korean War": A Unit Diary

Author Bud Hannings Tells History Day by Day

By R. R. Keene

There are people who do great things for this country and no one is ever the wiser.

For the most part they serve well, if unspectacularly. But every once in a while an everyday guy goes out of his way and does something profound for the citizens and country in which he lives.

In the case of Bud Hannings, he's done it a couple of times. His latest is a 1,088-page, three-volume history of "The Korean War." It is labeled "An Exhaustive Chronology," which no one will argue.

For historians and veterans of the Korean War, Hannings' work easily can become a cornerstone reference about one of the most difficult and misunderstood wars in recent history.

He believes history is best told by laying out events so that the readers can judge for themselves the "hows" and "whys" that led to the war's outcome.

He has helped the reader by sorting through volumes of research and painstakingly choosing, editing and rewriting. Hannings found, as writer Barbara Tuchman states: "Research is endlessly seductive; writing is hard work." This is evident by the unit diary-like entries of events, major

and minor, with order of battle, listing of nations and details of the war at sea, in the air and on land. Not to be ignored are 16 appendices that provide significant statistics and supplemental information, including Medal of Honor winners, commanders of each American military branch, casualty figures and air aces.

It is an impressive work by a man who could have harnessed his energy and drive to focus on materialistic goals that would ensure his success in business and investments.

Who is Bud Hannings, you ask?

Private First Class Bud Hannings of the motor pool enlisted in 1960. Enlistment in the Marine Corps was, in his case, predicated on a radio contest in Philadelphia, no doubt thought up by typically creative leatherneck recruiters.

The contest rules: If you passed the test, you could be one of five selected to enlist in the Corps and go to Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego in sunny California, vice the low-country marsh known as Parris Island, S.C.

Besides, Hannings said, "I was taught by Franciscan nuns, if you were anything,

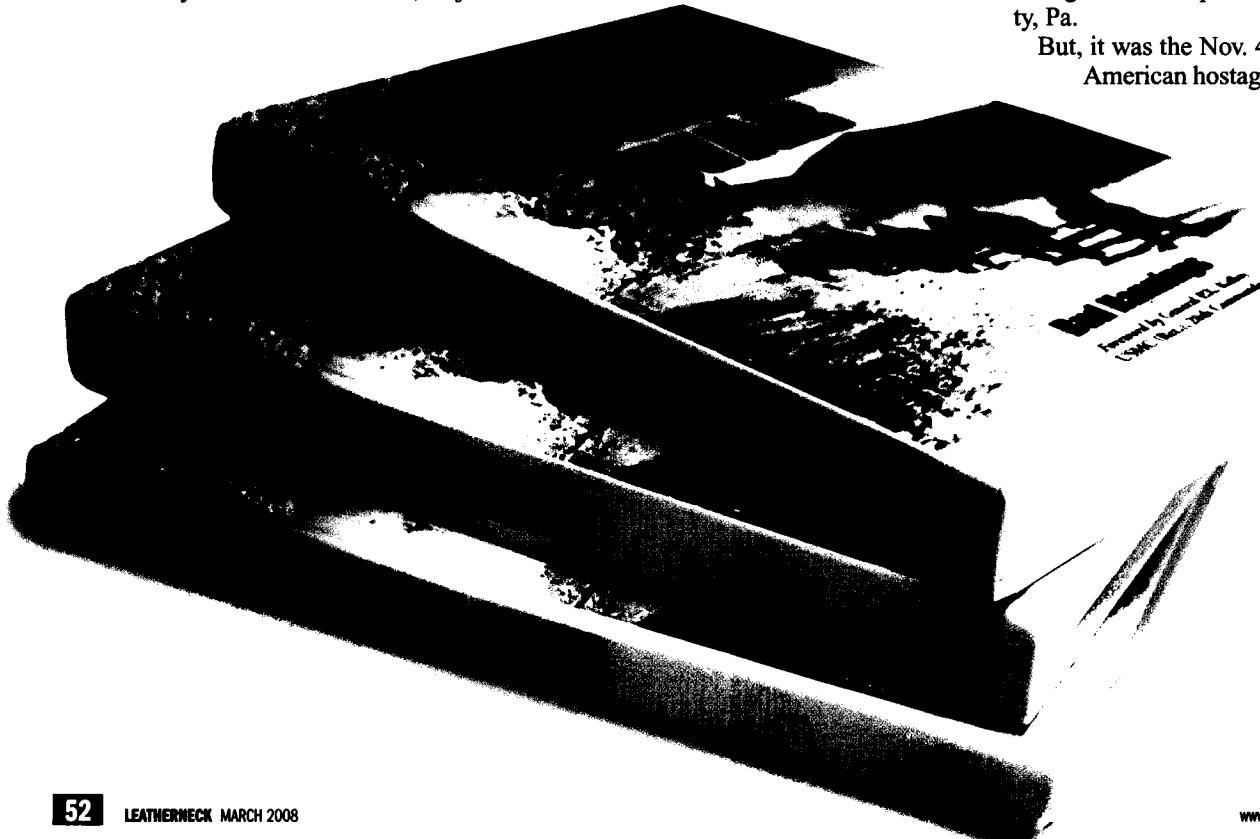
you were patriotic." Consequently, Hannings considered himself a winner. He and four others ended up in Quonset huts housing Platoon 202 (next door to noisy Lindbergh Field), snapped in with the M1 rifles and pulled butts at Camp Matthews. It was, however, as promised, sunny in California. And, his drill instructors gave him the following nuggets of truth and wisdom: "Nothing is insurmountable for a Marine, and Marines never quit."

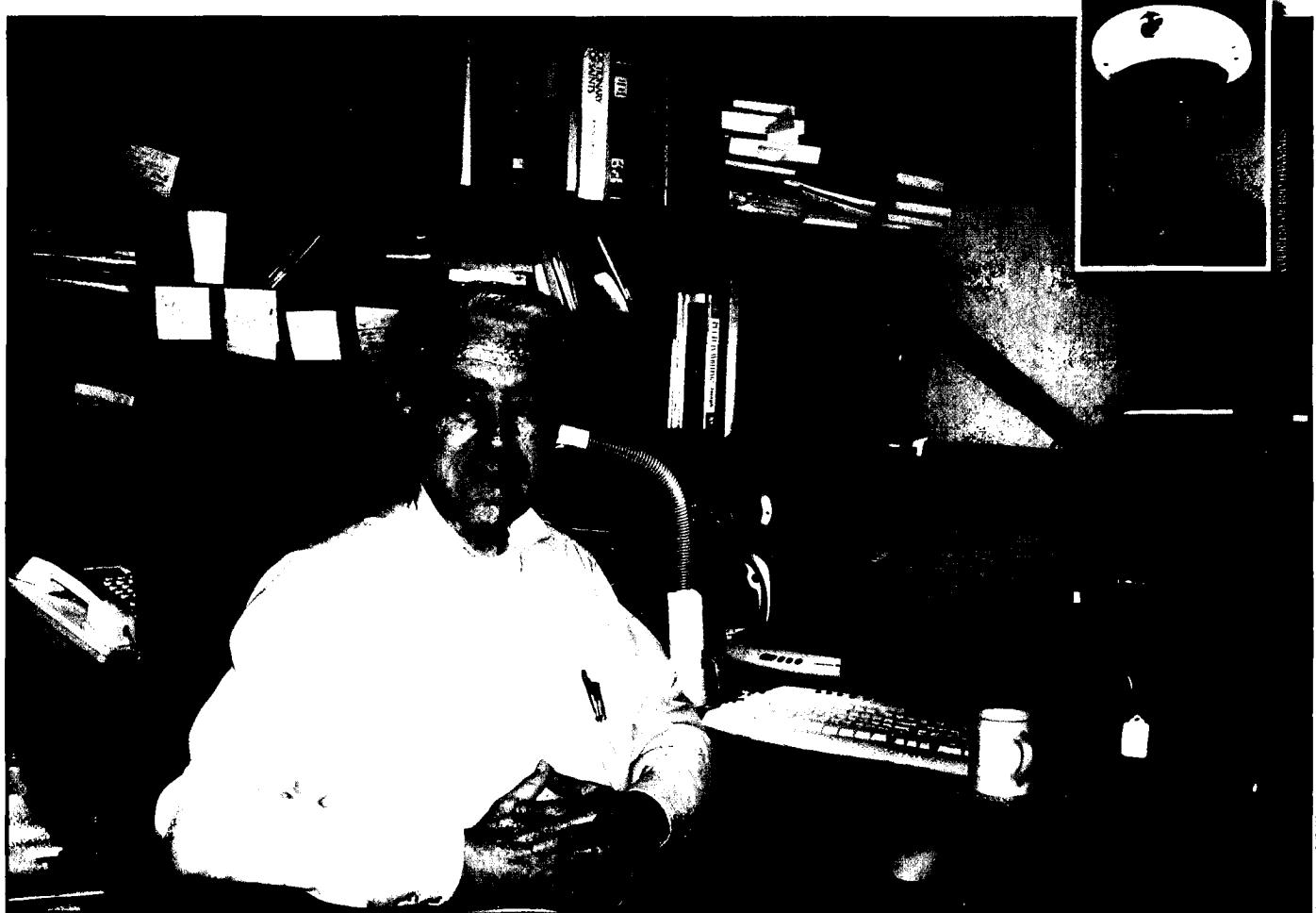
"And I believed them," he added.

Hannings didn't mind being a PFC because "nobody seems to bother them." He left his salty single chevron status as a Marine reservist at the gate of the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard and went back to civilian life in 1965. His drill instructors' words stayed with him (even when he opened an ice cream store that went out of business in three years because he gave away ice cream to all the little kids).

Fortunately, he didn't give away his motor pool experience. He worked in the trucking industry and later established an independent agency handling cross-country shipments. He was civic-minded, and in 1983, he was elected commissioner of Abington Township in Montgomery County, Pa.

But, it was the Nov. 4, 1979, taking of American hostages in Tehran, Iran,





COURTESY OF BUD HANNINGS

Author of patriotic and religious books, Marine veteran PFC Bud Hannings (above and inset) was brought up to believe that "if you were anything, you were patriotic" and that "nothing is insurmountable for a Marine." From his Glenside, Pa., home, Hannings has written extensive histories about this nation and its Corps of Marines.

that brought his patriotic fervor to the surface in the form of an editorial essay similar to Canadian writer Gordon Sinclair's 1973 essay "The Americans."

After that, history and writing became a passion. He decided to do a small book about the history of the American flag. "God never blessed me with brevity," he says. It is an understatement.

Through his research he discovered obscure vignettes and heroes of American history. It took 11 years, but he wrote a 900,000-word manuscript: "A Portrait of the Stars and Stripes." It was a two-volume comprehensive history of the United States from the Revolution through World War II, with emphasis on those who fought our nation's wars. It also contained chapters on the proper care of Old Glory and was fortified with useful and difficult-to-find reference materials. He knew his work was well written. Everybody agreed with him except the publishers.

The rejections were all similar to the one that said, "bad idea trying to promote history while promoting patriotism and historical sites at the same time."

Hannings not only didn't agree with the logic of such a rejection, he refused to let

it deter him. "I am convinced that the endless line of military achievements and the innumerable amount of American heroes were being lost to obscurity. At the same time, I've observed the flag being dishonored and the armed forces receiving either bad press or no press." His instincts told him that it was important for American heroes to be remembered, and he continued his work, against the publishing odds.

Rather than collect more rejection slips, Hannings started his own publishing company: Seniram ("Marines" spelled backwards) Publishing Incorporated. His book went to press in 1988 and has found its way into countless reference libraries. The two volumes quickly became "the books for people who get tears in their eyes when the flag goes by."

Hannings has made his peace with at least one publisher: McFarland and Company, noted for publishing scholarly works, who not only is printing the three-volume set, "The Korean War," but also "Forts of the United States," written by Hannings in 2006 and selected by the National Archives as a reference source. Other books to be released in 2008 and later are "Chronology of the American Revolution" and

"Lives of the Military and Political Leaders of the American Revolution."

Writing has become such a force in his life that Hannings left the trucking industry. He takes his vacation from the tedious business of researching by writing children's books, obtaining his ideas from his grandchildren in order to tell the stories of a saint through the eyes of a child.

Like most Americans, Bud Hannings, without fanfare, does things for his country. And every once in a while this former Marine PFC comes up with something profound and patriotic because other Americans such as Franciscan nuns and Marine drill instructors were believers in this nation and its people.

Editor's note: Bud Hannings' three volumes on the history of the Korean War are tremendous repositories of the facts about the war. Units, places, dates, times, results and impact on the war effort are standard fare. It took him nearly eight years to put this together, and all the volumes are available for purchase from Marine Corps Association stores or online at www.mca-marines.org.