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At times, even his admirers seemed unsure of what to do with General Douglas MacArthur. Imperious, headstrong, and vain, MacArthur matched an undeniable military genius with a massive ego and a rebellious streak that often seemed to destine him for the dustbin of history. Yet despite his flaws, MacArthur is remembered as a brilliant commander whose combined-arms operation in the Pacific—the first in the history of warfare—secured America’s triumph in World War II and changed the course of history.

In *The Most Dangerous Man in America*, celebrated historian Mark Perry examines how this paradox of a man overcame personal and professional challenges to lead his countrymen in their darkest hour. As Perry shows, Franklin Roosevelt and a handful of MacArthur’s subordinates made this feat possible, taming MacArthur, making him useful, and finally making him victorious. A gripping, authoritative biography of the Pacific Theater’s most celebrated and misunderstood commander, *The Most Dangerous Man in America* reveals the secrets of Douglas MacArthur’s success—and the incredible efforts of the men who made it possible.

The Most Dangerous Man in America: The Making of Douglas MacArthur Details

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From Reader Review The Most Dangerous Man in America: The Making of Douglas MacArthur for online ebook

Gus Breymann says

This is a balanced biography of a man with great strengths, flaws and personal failings. By the end of the book, you will find evidence of all those traits in this military genius. It relies almost exclusively on the firsthand accounts of the men who knew and worked with MacArthur, as well as the multi-volume official army and army air forces histories of WWII. I recommend it highly. A hint to potential readers: read the eight-page epilogue first because it provides helpful perspective for the body of the book.

I found the following highlights:(1)the critical importance of MacArthur's strategic decision to take Rabaul in Operation Cartwheel as a key to defeating Japan; (2)MacArthur's first Southwest Pacific command victory at Milne Bay; and (3) the very careful communications between Marshall, Roosevelt, and MacArthur that had the effect of moving the war forward throughout the Pacific.

More than some other biographies, this one emphasizes the emotional attachment MacArthur had to the Philippines, going all the way back to his father's posting there. This ultimately determined that the campaign would be fought through the Philippines.

I quibble with the author over his portrayal of General Lewis Hyde Brereton. I know of no evidence that Brereton was drunk or hung over after the 27th Bombardment Group bash at the Manila Hotel in the hours before the Japanese attack on Luzon on December 8th. The author uses this to explain why General Sutherland refused to allow Brereton to speak directly to MacArthur twice after news of Pearl Harbor arrived. Furthermore, while MacArthur did want Brereton out of his command structure, Brereton proceeded to competent performance, senior commands and promotion to lieutenant general in the Mideast and Europe for the remainder of the war. He held command positions in more theaters of WWII than virtually any other general.

Having just quibbled, however, I must add that Perry makes the point that, even if Lewis Brereton had sent his FEAF planes north to bomb Formosa on December 8th, it would not have made a difference because the size of Japanese forces was far superior at the time.

A key value of this volume is that it highlights the great leadership of men in the Pacific like Kenney, Whitehead, Eichelberger, Krueger, Barbee and others who have been insufficiently regarded because they were overshadowed in the news by European generals like Eisenhower and Bradley. The 5th Air Force was known as the "Forgotten Fifth" for a reason.

An interesting sidelight to Perry's book concerns the very attractive secretaries (WAC officers)who accompanied some of MacArthur's top aides all the way to Tokyo. The author mentions Elaine Bessemer-Clarke, who was General Sutherland's mistress. MacArthur sent her packing back to Australia after Sutherland disobeyed his boss twice about discontinuing their public relationship. The author does not, however, mention General George Kenney's secretary, Beryl Speirs Stevenson, who was present in Brisbane, Port Moresby, Hollandia, Leyte and Manila. Nor does Perry mention Louise Mowat, another especially attractive young woman who was General Richard Marshall's secretary until the end of the war. Oveta Culp Hobby, director of the WAAC and WAC, fought very hard to prevent the women from being commissioned so that they could accompany their bosses into the war zone. Hobby lost.

Dave Hoff says

Reading this book so soon after *A Mantle of Command* was déjà vu all over again. The authors must have used the same sources. MacArthur as "Gen. Goober at the Battle of Anacosta" riding his horse, wearing his Sam Browne belt & cornucopia pipe, leading a Cavalry charge against Vets wanting their War Bonus. His ego was huge, he fought with Roosevelt, Marshall, the JCS and hated Admiral King. His troops hated him, his staff protected him.

Bryan says

For some reason, I've always been drawn to MacArthur (and Truman, the other player in the Greek Tragedy). I think it is because I would like to flatter myself that I share some of his strengths, such as his creative problem solving and ability to bring the best out in people, while I know I possess some of his weaknesses, such as overconfidence and unwillingness to share the limelight with others. There are probably as many books and internet pages that take a dim view of MacArthur's generalship as there are those that proclaim him a genius. This book, with a very misleading title, is firmly in the MacArthur admirers column, so I really enjoyed it.

The book covers MacArthur during the buildup and denouement of World War II. It builds a strong case that MacArthur was a very able, if not brilliant, commander during those years. He had an incredibly strong supporting cast of field commanders, including, my favorite since I'm a retired Air Force Captain, George Kenney, his Army Air Corps commander. Kenney infected MacArthur with his confidence, assuring MacArthur during his daily visits to MacArthur's headquarters that the Air Corp would come through, a performance that was so studied and measured that an aide compared it to a cat on a hot tin roof. The Air Corps did come through, brilliantly, as well as MacArthur. The book doesn't gloss over MacArthur's faults, but the overwhelming egoism that cost him his job in Korea had not manifested enough during these years to detract much from a masterful performance.

I loved this book, so ignore the title and read a good book that makes an excellent argument about a controversial subject.

Sammy Duncan says

I found this to be an extraordinary biography of Douglas MacArthur as it was told through the eyes of his relationship with FDR, who very famously stated that he would need to tame MacArthur. MacArthur was an over-sized personality in a time of over-sized personalities.

Bfisher says

Prior to reading this book, my view of Douglas MacArthur had been conditioned mainly by reading William Manchester's "American Caesar", which overall left me with a negative view of MacArthur, personally and

as a commander.

Perry's take on MacArthur, at least on his military virtues, is more favourable. His book almost exclusively deals with MacArthur as commander in the Philippines after Pearl Harbor, and as SWPOA commander to the end of WW2. The book's title is somewhat misleading in that respect, although there is an initial discussion of MacArthur's and FDR's relationship during the overlap of FDR's first term and MacArthur's term as Army Chief-of-Staff.

The book was interesting especially in its description of the relationship between MacArthur and FDR, Gen. Marshall, Admiral King, and the major American commanders in the Pacific arena. Perry had some interesting points to make in how the unending Battle of Washington (between the army and the navy) impacted the Pacific war both positively and negatively.

Larry Walsh says

As a MacArthur admirer, the book was often difficult to read. The author took a contrarian view of MacArthur, painting him as an ego-maniac, insubordinate and largely ineffective leader. I would say this book gives context to the general but is not a definitive portrait of his capabilities, accomplishments, and legacy.

Kamaziz320 says

Biographer William Manchester in his book 'American Caesar' described MacArthur as a "thundering paradox of a man". This is an apt description of a man who held the destinies of nations in his hand whenever the war tocsin sounded. In a study of modern Commanders since after the Second World War, there are but a handful of personalities that fit MacArthur's description but none of his achievements. This is not due to the lack of leadership qualities but rather the increasing public scrutiny of a Commander's behavior and the demand that the military remains subservient to civil authorities. That said, the strategic insights, the mastery of the art of war, the ability to read the 'crystal ball' clearly and the quality of Coup d'oeil, or intuition espoused by Clausewitz remains in demand till this day. History is abound with examples where failure in securing military initiatives will sound the death knell of civilian control as seen in Afghanistan and Iraq today. Would MacArthur be a successful Commander in Afghanistan or Iraq today? Let history decide but one fact remains, his martial mastery remains the key to successful and victorious command in any conflict at any period. A compelling book indeed.

Lily Li says

First class book with a third class title. This is a very neutral book about the most liked and hated general in US history. I am not a big fan of DMA but after finishing this book, I feel more positive of him. I don't believe people living 21st century have sound justification to make easy conclusions on him. I mean lots of our grandmas still dislike Truman because he relieved MacArthur. Anyway, interesting book but not easy read.

Tom says

My Dad, who served in the Army Air force in China/India during WW2, despised MacArthur. This bio takes "Dugout Doug" to his greatest triumph, accepting the Japanese surrender. It does not include his greatest mistake, taking on Harry Truman during Korea. The author alludes to MacArthur's staff's hatred of FDR & far right politics, but does not hold MacArthur responsible, why not?

The US was lucky that another WW2 general won the Republican nomination for President in 1952.

Lee says

From the title, I expected a focus on MacArthur's political ties to the Republicans or something on the opposition desire to use him as a club to attack Roosevelt's handling of the war. There was some of that, but it was not the focus of the book. MacArthur's wartime personality and actions were the real center of attention for this work.

The opening (prewar) chapters covered what I was looking for, with MacArthur and Roosevelt working around the issues of the Great Depression, the Army's budget, the New Dealers in the Cabinet, and the Congress. After that, the book turns into a more conventional MacArthur wartime biography, with some emphasis on his relationship with Roosevelt. MacArthur's postwar career, including his famous firing by Truman, is wrapped up at the very end.

It was definitely well-written and readable, although some minor technical errors in the naval and aerial sides caught my eye.

Later: The book did address that while MacArthur had very good field commanders working for him (Kenney, Kinkaid, Eichelberger, Krueger, and others), he did poorly at picking an effective staff (Willoughby, Whitney, Sutherland).

Also, he did address the Clark Field fiasco, but the author inclined to let Brereton off the hook. One error brought up was that when the fighters landed for lunch and refueling and the B17s were still on the ground, other fighter squadrons were tasked to cover the various airfields, but the one to cover Clark didn't get the word. Sutherland is mostly blamed for the inability to even launch a recon flight on the morning of Dec. 8, Brereton (hangover inferred) gets credit for asking for permission to launch recons and strikes. Brereton's later wartime career (mediocre at best) was ignored, as was his reputation as a party animal.

An interesting assessment was made for the Luzon 41-42 campaign's mobile portion-- MacArthur seemed to be perpetually behind the "battle tempo". Like many other WW1 veteran commanders, he didn't realize the speed of 1940s infantry operations, which put him in the category of many Allied commanders in their first battles, 1939-1942. Unlike many of them, he did recover-- his open-field operations on Luzon and Korea seemed to bear this out.

John Michael says

The book is an excellent read and provides some major insights to WW II in the Pacific. It also highlights the inter-service rivalry between the US Army and US Navy. It was also telling of the relationship of Franklin Roosevelt with Douglas MacArthur.

Matt Ely says

This is a low 3. It's readable, and I learned more about the overall context of MacArthur in WW2. But as soon as the first shots are fired, large stretches of the narrative have little to do with the man himself. I don't feel like I understand him or his point of view as much as I should after several hundred pages.

Much of the focus is on troop maneuvers within his command, as well as the wartime politics that sometimes affected him. But it feels like there just wasn't enough material on MacArthur, so the author had to pad things out with battle summaries. I understand that it adds context, but the author does little to show how many of these events were the result of MacArthur's influence or how those events impacted him. Of course there are exceptions, but overall it was pretty uneven.

When, in the epilogue, the author tries to summarize his subject's greatness, it feels like a point unproven. There were so many examples of his pettiness, short-sightedness, and selfishness, that calling him the war's greatest commander felt like a stretch designed to justify the book itself. I'm glad I know more, but there are probably better biographical resources out there.

Kenneth Barber says

This book details the relationship between FDR and Douglas MacArthur. The main emphasis of the book, however, is MacArthur. A summary of his family roots and the career of his father is described, as is the relationship with his mother which had a big impact on his life.

MacArthur's career first crossed paths with FDR in 1932 when he commanded the troops that expelled the Bonus Marchers out of Washington DC. FDR was running for president at the time and this incident helped his victory. After his election, FDR appointed MacArthur as Chief of Staff and kept him there despite the objections of many of his advisers. This was a case where FDR respected his abilities but also wanted to keep MacArthur under his control. FDR later appointed MacArthur as commander in Chief of the Southwest Pacific Theatre.

The relationship between the two was always outwardly cordial, but deep philosophical differences were never far below the surface. That combined with MacArthur's egotism and paranoia always added an edge to their relationship. FDR, consummate politician that he was, managed to work with MacArthur and reap the benefits of his talent while ignoring his less admirable traits. The author also rehabilitates the image of MacArthur by stressing his accomplishments in the winning of the war in the Pacific. Also emphasized are his efforts in the occupation of Japan after the war.

Bill Powers says

I came across both *The Most Dangerous Man in America* & *Supreme Commander* in the NY Times Book Review - both books are an excellent read for you history buffs out there. A well told story of a very complex man who led us to Pacific victory in World War II, rebuilt Japan and salvaged disaster in Korea. Unfortunately MacArthur is not well understood in today's America. We needed men like MacArthur in the 20th century. Unfortunately, in my opinion, these types of men no longer exist in America and when the day comes when they are needed, the call will go unheeded.

Rich McAllister says

Wanting to read a MacArthur bio, picked this one because Manchester's was checked out at the library and reviews seem to indicate this was "balanced", neither a hatchet job or a hagiography. Reading it, I'm coming to the conclusion Perry wanted to write a close to a hagiography as he could while remaining true to the sources. The book tends to wander a bit into straight WWII history, even diving off into parts of the war (Europe) that MacArthur had nothing to do with. Most disappointing to me was the decision to stop at the end of WWII, and not go into the Korean War and the confrontation with Truman. That's actually what I most wanted to read about. It seems to me that Perry couldn't figure out a way to spin that incident in a way that made MacArthur look good, so he just stopped before he had to deal with it.

On the other hand, the descriptions of the military campaigns are good; if I had wanted a history of the SW Pacific theater I'd been happy except for complaining a bit about too much focus on MacArthur.

Maybe I'll put the Manchester one on reserve....
