

(Download pdf) COMBAT OFFICER: A Memoir of War in the South Pacific

## COMBAT OFFICER: A Memoir of War in the South Pacific

*Charles H. Walker*

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**Charles H. Walker : COMBAT OFFICER: A Memoir of War in the South Pacific** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised COMBAT OFFICER: A Memoir of War in the South Pacific:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Open and extensive - A great US Army account from the PTO and one of the best officer accounts of the war. By Joe Creason 4.25 stars: Walker provides an extensive and intriguing account of his part in the fighting on some of the Pacific's most brutal battles of WW2. Walker started off as a junior officer in the 164th Americal Regiment and ended the war as a major. He saw action on Guadalcanal, Bougainville and Leyte - fighting in the first American offensive action of 1942 all the way to one of the last in 1945. After his stint overseas, Walker would receive several promotions and combat medals for valor (IIRC, at least one Silver Star and Bronze Star each) and run the gauntlet of WW2 experiences. After spending ~4 years in combat, Walker would eventually come home to a three year old daughter as a complete stranger. I usually prefer enlisted men/NCO memoirs to officer memoirs because the latter seem to be less involved in personal combat or focus more on a leadership role/the red tape that is the US Army officer corps. Though I enjoy those accounts too, Walker's account has a good mix of both subjects that make this one of the better officer memoirs I have read. Despite spending most of the book as a company commander, Walker is often in the thick of fighting and is open and frank about his own personal combat deeds. Open and frankness are a major positive aspect of this account, too. A lot of topics are discussed, from office politics between officers, incompetence and bad calls from leadership to more nuanced topics like American citizenship, working with guerrilla fighters and civilian mistreatment (and good treatment as well) and lots of

interesting anecdotes. Walker's account is certainly one of the best officer memoirs I have read and is the best non-USMC account of the PTO I've read so far but it isn't written in a very compelling manner. Topics that I would have liked to have learned more about were brought up abruptly and then quickly mentioned and never mentioned again. The structure of the account didn't seem to flow well either, with some of the topics being brought up seeming out of place - I purchased the Kindle version of the book almost a year ago and have read bits and pieces of it since because of this writing style. Despite these drawbacks, this is still one of the best and though Walker isn't as well-versed as other memoirists of WW2, he is one of the best out of the officers. So the book gets 4.25 stars in my opinion based on everything I've mentioned so far. If you want to read other good officer books then I highly recommend CRACK AND THUMP by Charles Scheffel which seems the perfect analog to Walker's account because it is an extensive and open/candid account over a long period and from an officer only it covers the ETO starting in North Africa. I have a bunch of listmanias that rate WW2 memoirs that would also be up your alley if you're interested. 20 of 20 people found the following review helpful. An army officer's combat filled war

By John E. Larsen Walker was an officer with 164th Infantry Rgt of the Americal Division. He fought on Guadalcanal, Bougainville and Leyte. Initially with the heavy weapons Co, he is promoted and most of his combat is as commander of E Co. As such he is in the line quite a bit and given the nature of the jungle war he encounters Japanese soldiers on a frequent basis and to put it bluntly, personally accounts for many of them. A lot of this is with grenades and his rifle but also, in a first for me in my memoir reading, his combat knife! So there is combat in spades. The 164th, a National Guard unit, is the first to assist the 1st Marine Division on Guadalcanal. Walker's role is positioning machine guns and seeing that they stay in action. His unit is hit hard in the attacks of late October and he encounters quite a few Japanese infiltrators. His thoughts on operating with the Marines are interesting (and I smiled to read about being on the receiving end of Marine 'scrounging'). In the offensive phase he is frequently on patrols and involved in assaults. After rest in Fiji he spends a year on Bougainville and there are a lot of patrols, ambushes and company level actions. There is a lot of insight here into the role of a company level officer. The most notable campaign to me though was the fight for Leyte. Again Walker commands E Co but the intensity of the fighting is much greater. Walker's units (and Walker himself) account for large numbers of Japanese. The extent of these actions was news to me! Walker also deals with much else. He discusses the particular challenges of the tropics (including large poisonous centipedes!), disease and in particular weaponry. One of the more surprising aspects was issues with the officer Corps. Quite a number of the original National Guard officers were cowards, incompetents or arrogant fools. West Point trained officers were unfairly favoured and there were ridiculous jealousies and petulance and soldiers died as a result of these tensions. Walker has his share of run-ins but his priority is turning his company into a well trained and deadly force. It is interesting to read how he learned from his mistakes and also how he frequently out thought the enemy. He is also lucky. There were a number of occasions where he was nearly killed. The writing style is more straightforward and less intense than those of the top writers on my list. There is quite a bit of detail but at times I felt more could have been said. Walker is never boastful and probably quite properly, doesn't elaborate too much on killing. This said, he is keen to record the numbers of casualties his company inflicts. It was a very bitter war after all. This is a good memoir. It gives an army perspective on battles where the Marines received most of the coverage. It also reminds the reader that the wholly army campaigns were of a significant nature. So while I think it could all have been revealed in a more compelling manner, in terms of direct combat this is very impressive memoir. Highly Recommended. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A different perspective makes this a worthy WWII memoir...

By Brian Hawkinson Having read a lot on World War II recently I've found myself gravitating to the memoirs. Combat Officer seemed to fit the bill because it is a memoir by an army officer in the Pacific and, more importantly, it adds a different perspective to the Pacific War than I have yet to read. My qualms with this memoir were numerous in the beginning. It seemed as though Walker were just listing stuff off, random events and conversations, without really connecting them to the overall narrative of his time in the Pacific. This type of narrative left you with a dry taste, one that is hard to breathe any life in to. I was disappointed, but pushed on. The further I read, the more I began to appreciate his style of writing because I was getting a more round and complete picture. I was able to envision how life was as not only an officer but also a soldier in the army. What sets this memoir apart, though, is that it lends a perspective that isn't readily available in many of the other memoirs. Walker's regiment is always brought in as the supporting regiment, or the regiment that is brought in after the invasion. They either hold a position, or mop up after other Marine or Army divisions that took part in the invasion. This doesn't in any way diminish the danger that Walker and his regiment were in, for they were still on islands with a lot of Japanese bent on killing every American they could. It adds another layer to the conflict in the Pacific. While other great memoirs, such as those written by Sledge and Leckie, show the devastating conflict that takes place during the frontline invasion, Walker's memoir shows the cleanup after the invading division has left. Interesting and a definite

recommend for any interested in the Pacific War.4 stars.