

Book reviews

Roll me over, an infantryman's World War II, by Raymond Gantter, Ballantine Books, New York, 1997, 397 pp; \$5.99, ISBN 0-8041-1605-9.

Roll Me Over, An Infantryman's World War II by Raymond Gantter is a "tribute to all former infantrymen, a personal narrative for Gantter's family, and a rough notebook of sorts for the young men who will be the foot soldiers of the next war". This book was written from letters Gantter wrote to his wife as well as scrap notes he wrote through his journey as an infantryman from Normandy to Czechoslovakia. It describes in great detail the day-to-day encounters of a foot soldier deployed for war.

The author describes his emotions while waiting for each assignment that could potentially, and will undoubtedly, change the rest of his life. He faces the unknown forefront of war and contemplates the rumors that trickle down from the men that were there before him. This book actively peaks the interest of the reader with an actual uncensored re-creation of this man's experiences during war.

It is difficult to compare this book to others like it because it is the first book I have read reflecting personal memories of a soldier in war. I found it to be quite interesting and have become interested in reading more books like it. Gantter expressed his thoughts, feelings and actions regarding the war and the people he encountered in it in a factual and candid manner. The book was written in a logical manner and followed each sequence of events chronologically. Footnotes were included when appropriate to make certain the reader was aware of "the rest of the story" for any situation that was not resolved until later.

From the point of view of an occupational therapist, I keyed in on the impact each major role change had on the author. He described his difficulties at the beginning of his journey as he adjusted to the distance and undetermined time away from his wife and two children. At the same time he was dealing with his new roles and responsibilities that he did not want or choose, as a foot soldier. He described the resentment, anger, hopelessness and helplessness he felt with these new

roles. He questioned his abilities to be a good soldier and carry out the expectations the Army had put upon him. He felt he was leaving his family behind without the comfort of knowing he would return.

Though many of Gantter's grievances were unchanged regardless of the stage of war or geographical location, he managed to describe each so the reader could visualize his life and feel his discomfort. He wrote about the many meals he was served while living in the field. They were cold by the time he got to eat them, and there was not enough food to fill him. He described how he had to eat tactically, so he would not be seen by the enemy while his defense was down. Eating was to sustain life, not one of life's pleasure as before.

Another daily complaint was how cold he felt. He was cold all the time. He was not allowed to modify his uniform with a scarf, so he waited cold and hungry for the next command. When he saw a couple of officers go by him snuggled in warm scarves, he felt a great deal of resentment and this resentment stayed with him. The event and the emotions continued to be on his mind even after he was commissioned in the field as an officer.

Gantter described the sleeping conditions he endured during the different troop movements. Many times he would sleep in a cold, wet foxhole that he and his battle partner would dig. He described them as uncomfortable, small and many times incomplete due to bad weather, lack of time and poor digging equipment. He would have many sleepless nights due to these conditions. He described his adaptation so hearing artillery and other sounds of war throughout the nights actually became a comfort, rather than a threat. If you could hear it in the distance, you knew what and where it was. Silence meant the situation was unknown, which was certainly more frightening.

As time passed, Gantter adjusted to his new roles as a soldier and to his temporary distance from the prior roles he enjoyed as a teacher, husband and father. His adjustment occurred without his active realization of his own ability to cope with such change. It was not until he arrived back home that he recognized how

much he had made his wartime environment part of his culture, belief and language. Others had surrounded him for so long with similar feelings, thoughts and experiences that he had lost touch with his previous interests, relationships, and emotions.

This book is an excellent source of knowledge for any healthcare provider in the armed services. It provides a strong understanding of the day-to-day physical and mental stresses and expectations demanded of a soldier in war, as well as during training. I recommend this book to any service member dealing with the well being of soldiers, as it will help them understand the demands of their fellow soldiers and potential patients.

As an occupational therapist I recommend this book to provide a comprehensive understanding of a soldier's life dynamics. It described aspects of all domains of concern in occupational therapy including ADL, rest, leisure and work. It explores the emotions and conflicts that arise when facing role changes, even when the changes are positive, such as returning home. This life-sharing can only enhance therapists' understanding of others and will certainly lead them to wonder how they would respond under similar circumstances.

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Black Hawk Down (First ed.), by Mark Bowden, Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, 1999, 386 pp, \$24.00, ISBN 0-87113-738-0.

Black Hawk Down provides a realistic account about the war in Mogadishu, Somalia on October 3, 1993. This victorious, yet tragic, situation primarily involved the special force's group Delta Force (also known as D-boys or Operators), the Task Force Rangers, and the population of Mogadishu, Somalia.

Mark Bowden takes the reader into the realities of war. Not just war, but the actual terror and exhilaration of urban infantry combat fighting. Classifying this book as nonfiction is difficult. Bowden composes the individual accounts and dialogues together in a proficient and commanding manner. He builds up the suspense so that it reads like a best seller authored by John Grisham. His intent: "... To capture in words the ex-

perience of combat through the eyes and emotions of the soldiers involved, blending their urgent, human perspective with military and political overviews of their predicament." (Bowden, p. 331).

Black Hawk Down is not a book required or recommended for every occupational therapy practitioner (therapist, assistant, or student) to have as a reference or a guide. It is not a book of insight, theories, or treatment techniques concerning the field of occupational therapy. However, it is relevant for occupational therapists in both military and civilian environments, for reasons I'll explain below.

At some point in the career of many occupational therapy health care providers (therapist, assistant, or student), it is likely they will be involved in the treatment of a client (civilian or military) who has injuries related to a combat situation, either mental or physical. Reading Black Hawk Down will provide the caregiver some knowledge of the realities that the client has experienced. This opens avenues for two-way communication and possibly guidance toward treatment techniques.

An additional item of interest for health care providers is the type of injuries that occur during training and combat. Many soldiers' injuries (such as shoulder or elbow injuries) occur as a result of physical fitness training, sports, or horseplay during down times between missions. At the other extreme, a soldier may have severe damage to muscles, tendons, and bones caused by 5.56 m rounds, shrapnel from a grenade, enemy or civilian mobs. If a soldier has a shattered elbow, it is important to know if it occurred during a training exercise or by the complexities of combat.

This book provides insight on the realities soldiers go through during training and in actual combat. Most people are not aware of the occupational demands required in combat. As the reviewer, I found I did not understand the constant terror, exhilaration, moral/ethical dilemmas, the losses, the triumphs, the hopelessness, and the brotherhood of war.

Mark Bowden does an excellent job of reporting the events that took place in Mogadishu, Somalia. His extensive research interviews and reviews of radio transmission tapes attest to the accuracy and realism of the text.

Black Hawk Down is worth reading: For those in the field of occupational therapy and all civilian and military health care providers. It is remarkable and provokes the readers to comprehend the realities these highly trained soldiers go through during actual combat. Bowden re-created for the reader the experience

of combat through the eyes of the soldiers involved.
(Read it. You'll be glad you did.)

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