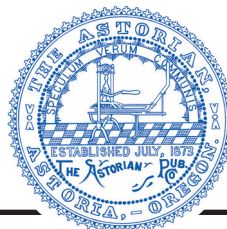


OPINION

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BOOK REVIEW

Closing the circle

Don Malarkey, who grew up in Astoria, found forgiveness late in life, then a measure of peace.

Better still, he gave the same to Fritz Engelbert, a former German soldier who fought American troops in the vicinity of Malarkey's Easy Company during the Battle of the Bulge.

That's the encouraging message that emerges from "Saving My Enemy: How Two WWII Soldiers Fought Against Each Other and Later Forged a Friendship That Saved Their Lives," a new book by former Register-Guard columnist Bob Welch, published by Regnery History. Welch was the co-author of Malarkey's autobiography, "Easy Company Soldier."

By now, the story of Easy Company is well known to many. Historian Stephen Ambrose chose to focus on the remarkable exploits of the company of Airborne soldiers for his book "Band of Brothers." Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg collaborated to produce the story for an HBO movie in a series that was celebrated for its realism and compassion.

Had it not been for the work of Ambrose and Hanks, few would have known the name of Don Malarkey. He was a noncommissioned officer in a company of soldiers that parachuted into France and eventually fought its way into Germany, suffering extreme hardship and heavy casualties along the way. He represented thousands of Americans — and British, and Australians, and Canadians and Soviets — who fought more than 75 years ago to roll back the advances by German forces under Adolf Hitler.

Malarkey was a regular Astoria guy in the 1930s and 1940s. He helped battle the Tillamook Burn, worked as a seiner on the Columbia and generally lived the lively life of a young man in the middle of the last century. "Saving My Enemy" mentions an episode from his youth that Astorians can picture with a squint: A group of three boys, releasing a tire at the intersection of 14th Street and Jerome and watching it crash through downtown, bounce high off a railroad tie and splash

satisfyingly into an empty slip.

What innocence existed in those days vanished after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the advance of Hitler's forces through Europe. Like hundreds of thousands of young people, Malarkey rushed to enlist, which is how he ended up in the 101st Airborne Division.

On the other side of the world, Fritz Engelbert heard and heeded the stirring call of a charismatic chancellor who promised Germans their nation's glory would be restored after the humiliations of World War I. Engelbert was an enthusiastic member of the Hitler Youth, whose members were drafted into the front lines by Nazi military leaders. Engelbert never questioned the choices; if anything, he was eager to join the fight.

Welch tells the story in interweaving chapters, tracking Malarkey and Engelbert as they experience the war, and then returning home when the fighting ends. They had some things in common: Both were disappointed by their fathers; each was a patriot responding to what they saw as higher callings. One came home to a brash and victorious America; the other to a deeply damaged country that was awakening to the madness that had swept them in.

If "Saving My Enemy" stopped there, it would add little to the store of knowledge surrounding World War II. The stories of Malarkey and Engelbert are absorbing, but familiar. Like many young men in many countries, they went to war, fighting their own internal battles as they engaged in a greater, historic fight. They came home with no serious physical injuries, but were deeply affected, emotionally and morally. Malarkey's own family found him difficult to live with, especially as he medicated himself with alcohol.

This painful reckoning is the legacy of battle, as poets and writers have recognized since Homer wrote the "Iliad," tracing Odysseus's 10-year journey home after the Trojan War. Postwar

trauma and moral injury is a profoundly human response to horror. In "Slaughterhouse-Five," Kurt Vonnegut Jr. described it as "becoming unstuck in time," when the survivor suddenly finds himself back on the battlefield, in a prison camp or a military hospital.

Many societies sought to address this by reintegrating their returning warriors with ceremonies and rituals. As David Morris describes in his superb "The Evil Hours: A Biography of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder," medieval cultures often prescribed ceremonies of penance that were meant to cleanse and purify people who had been required to kill others. For example, after the Battle of Hastings, a ruling council instructed "Anyone who knows that he killed a man in the Great Battle must do penance for one year for each man that he killed." Other societies, from the Maasai Tribe in Africa to the Polynesian culture of New Zealand, have ceremonies to welcome warriors, drawing a line between the war and the peace.

The United States and Germany had no such program after World War II, sending soldiers unceremoniously home to pick up the threads of their lives — threads that were often frayed or broken by the shattering experiences of battle. It's not surprising that men like Engelbert and Malarkey retreated into bitterness, anger or self-medication after they returned home.

It's a blessing that the stories of Malarkey and Engelbert took an encouraging turn six decades after the fighting ended, at an Easy Company reunion. Thanks to the "Band of Brothers" book and movie, the Americans were heroes, larger than life, even among other veterans.

In 2004, someone had the idea of inviting German veterans to attend a reunion. Not every Easy Company veteran was enthusiastic about the idea, but ultimately they agreed to allow their former enemies to join them at the inn in Hammersbach, a town near Frankfurt.



Frank Prevel/AP Photo

Don Malarkey was a World War II paratrooper who was awarded the Bronze Star after parachuting behind enemy lines at Normandy to destroy German artillery on D-Day.

Into this uncertain welcome walked a reluctant Engelbert, persuaded by his own sons to attend in hopes the experience would dispel "the dark clouds" that shadowed him since Germany's defeat.

Without spilling the details, the story emerges of an unlikely friendship between the old Oregon veteran and his German counterpart. It was a friendship that thrived despite the language barrier, their advanced ages and the great distance that separated them. They didn't have much time to develop their bond, but they did as well as they could have, and each found a kind of redemption they didn't expect.

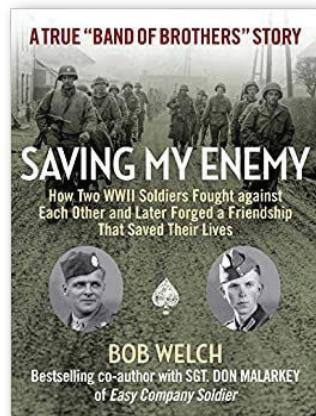
Welch tells this story at a necessary distance. Though he knew Malarkey well after co-writing his autobiography, he didn't learn much of his connection to Engelbert until after Malarkey had died. And by the time he wrote "Saving My Enemy," Engelbert had died, too.

But the families and friends of both men helped fill in the gaps, which allows "Saving My Enemy" to join the thin ranks of books about closing the circle in the lives of people who fought. It's a story that brings a note of grace to perhaps the greatest tragedy of the 20th century.

Mike Francis is a longtime Oregon journalist who has extensively covered military and veterans issues. He resides on Astoria's South Slope.



MIKE FRANCIS



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dismayed

Anyone who has driven into Portland recently must be dismayed by the proliferation of homeless encampments. Eventually, Portland and Multnomah County will have to deal with this situation.

Recently, the city and county of Los Angeles were ordered by a federal judge to find shelter within 180 days for all the homeless people who are currently occupying dangerous locations near bridges and highways.

Were Portland to come under a similar judicial order, it is very likely that some fraction of the homeless in Portland would migrate to Astoria or other locations in Clatsop County. If that were to happen, we would not be able to handle the consequences.

Over the past several years, the mayor of Astoria's homelessness solutions task force has not proposed anything actionable to the City Council. The Clatsop County commission has not prioritized action on this issue until fiscal 2022.

Meanwhile, local law enforcement, our two hospital emergency departments and Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare represent the principal resources in our communities available to deal with a multifaceted problem that has not been successfully addressed by far wealthier cities and counties.

Additional resources are provided by Clatsop Community Action, Helping Hands, Feeding Empty Bellies and the Astoria Warming Center. But none of these groups is adequately staffed or funded.

Our local shortage of affordable housing makes recruiting professionals almost impossible. If, like Los Angeles, we were given 180 days to come up with viable solutions, a crisis would ensue, as we are not prepared.

BARRY PLOTKIN
Astoria

Defend

Did you know that there are two ways of adding amendments to our U.S. Constitution under Article V?

One: Three-fourths of the state legislatures, and two-thirds of both houses of Congress, agree to it. This is the only way used in the past.

Two: Three-fourths of the state legislatures call for an Article V constitutional convention. Some state legislatures have called for an Article V Constitutional Convention as far back as the 1700s and 1800s. Oregon is one of these states. These resolutions are still on the books.

The danger of an Article V convention is that there are no regulations as to how delegates are to be chosen. There are no limits to the power of an Article V convention to add amendments, or even to rewrite the Constitution.

In recent years, a group of the super-wealthy have been working behind the scenes to get more and more state legislatures to call for an Article V constitutional convention. They only need six more states. They hope to rewrite the Constitution in their favor.

Common Cause is the only bipartisan grassroots citizens

lobby that is working to prevent this, by warning state legislatures of the dangers.

Common Cause is also working to get Oregon, Washington state, Illinois and New York to rescind their outdated resolutions.

To find out more about this, and what you can do to help, visit defendourconstitution.org

CAROLYN GEIGER
Warrenton

Proud

Through the isolation and hardship associated with the global pandemic, the importance of our connection to others — personally and professionally — has come into sharp focus. While Hampton Lumber remained operational this past year, we are very aware this would not have been possible without dozens of local businesses.

In Northwest Oregon, we contract with 48 family-owned businesses to help us grow, harvest and move wood from the forest to the sawmill. Reforestation crews, loggers, road builders, surveyors, wildlife biologists, truckers and engineers are the backbone of the local forest sector.

The businesses we contract with, and their nearly 800 employees, are critical to local wood manufacturing. On behalf of all Hampton Lumber employees, I want to thank our contractors for their hard work and professionalism this year.

The work has never been easy even in "normal" times. Long days, challenging terrain, isolated locations and unpredictable, and sometimes severe, weather. They work through it all, and keep our mills and the communities in which we operate vibrant and sustainable.

In the midst of a global pandemic, our industry and communities also grappled with one of the most destructive wildfire events in recent memory. Foresters and loggers worked alongside state forestry and emergency managers to help protect their communities.

Now that recovery is underway, many are hard at work with salvage logging and reforestation efforts to help restore forestland and keep people safe.

To all our contractors out there, we are proud to call you our friends and partners.

STEVE ZIKA
Portland

Disappointed

I am disappointed that the Clatsop County commissioners have asked the governor to lift COVID-19 restrictions.

They say it's unfair to impose greater restrictions on restaurants and bars than on other businesses. It's not unfair, because restaurants and bars have a higher risk of COVID-19 transmission than other businesses. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention still says indoor



KUPER

"I'm just glad things are getting back to normal."

THE ASTORIAN'S CHOICES FOR TUESDAY'S ELECTIONS

Clatsop Community College Board of Education

- **Zone 2, Position 2** (four-year term): Sara Meyer*
- **Zone 2, Position 3** (four-year term): Robert Duhmig*
- **Zone 3, Position 6** (two-year term): Suzanne Iverson

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board of Directors

- **Position 1** (four-year term): Su Coddington*
- **Position 2** (four-year term): Celeste Bodner*
- **Position 3** (four-year term): Patrick Duhachek
- **Position 4** (two-year term): Erika Marshall Hamer*
- **Position 5** (two-year term): Katharine Parker*

*Denotes incumbent

dining with people outside your household, without masks or social distancing and inadequate ventilation, is "highest risk" for transmission.

They say state restrictions are unnecessary because there hasn't been a workplace superspreader event in the hospitality industry here. But cases have risen sharply since restrictions were eased.

The commissioners imply that Oregon Health Authority is incompetent, and want to "do our own thing." But what happens in Clatsop County doesn't stay in Clatsop County. The hospitality industry pulls people here from all over. People can bring COVID-19 here, and they can take it wherever they go.

Initial problems coordinating between the county and the state were understandable, given the novelty, scale and complexity of the problem. We need OHA's perspective and support. We need the county and state to work together.

Because our economy is so dependent on tourism, COVID-19 restrictions are especially hard on restaurants and bars. But the governor and OHA are not "arbitrarily" picking on them. There are solid reasons to continue restrictions until most of the population is vaccinated. This is where we should be putting our energy.

MARGARET MURDOCK
Gearhart