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G.I. Jive

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right, despite the protests of local leaders. And the problem of what did take place between Dewey and Aguinaldo is actually a question of fact, to be answered largely by careful analysis of circumstantial evidence: was any agreement made? In what terms? This is not evident in the book being reviewed.

Biographical writing is a rather neglected art in the Philippines. It is hard, and demands self-discipline. As the psychologists warn us, it is difficult enough to understand a person who is still alive; how much more if the subject is dead. The least one can do is to marshal the facts and try to truthfully describe what the man did. It will never do to categorize him *a priori* and then try to fit the facts to support that description.

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G.I. JIVE. AN ARMY BANDSMAN IN WORLD WAR II. By Frank F. Mathias. Lexington, Kentucky: The University of Kentucky Press, 1982. xii, 227 pages, illustrations.

War is always an unacceptable political solution, unimaginable in its reality, and unforgettable for the survivors (p. 204).

I practiced swings of my knife in the dim starlight, as if a Jap were there. 'This is silly,' I muttered, and with that admission my brain began accepting its first insight into my true position. The whole world looked silly . . . I hated no Jap; I had never seen one until I went to Ford Ord. We were utterly trapped, with everything to live for and no place left to live it. Cannon fodder. Adolescent theories . . . gave way to reality as I questioned the war and myself (p. 79).

These two passages and others similar to them redeem these memoirs from the common self-serving this kind of literature is notorious for. Written in the first person, *G.I. Jive* is not a mine for "facts" for a history of the second world war. It is rather the story of a private in the U.S. Infantry who experienced the war and its terrors mostly on a bandstand playing the saxophone (hence its title, the name of a popular song). During the campaign, he wrote letters home which his mother kept. Now a professor of history, Frank F. Mathias dug them up and skillfully integrated them into this narrative.

What can this soldier, promoted to a sergeant's rank just before the war ended, tell us about that war? A few things. Guadalcanal, he argues, was a much publicized episode; but another, more costly battle which counted 594 more casualties was just as important, namely, the Papuan campaign

which ended on 9 February 1943. U.S. and Australian victory kept the Japanese from advancing to Australia.

A Filipino reader will not miss the implications of the American desire for a "speedy capture of Manila [which] would best ensure the survival of American prisoners interned there" (p. 128). What if there were no American prisoners?

It is safe to say that no historian will break his neck to read this book, but he will not regret reading—and enjoying it. Movie scriptwriters, are you interested?

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