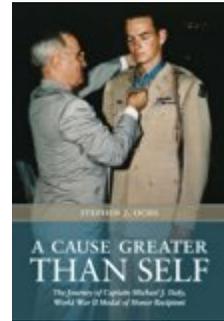


Stephen J. Ochs. *A Cause Greater Than Self: The Journey of Captain Michael J. Daly, World War II Medal of Honor Recipient*. Williams Ford Texas A&M University Military History Series. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2012. Illustrations, maps, charts. xix + 271 pp. \$42.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-60344-783-6.

Reviewed by Gene Mueller

Published on H-War (June, 2013)

Commissioned by Margaret Sankey



A Young Man's Heroism in France and Germany, 1944-45

General Brent Snowcroft wrote of Michael J. Daly: "So long as we can call on and count on such people, the Republic will be safe" (p. 200). Stephen J. Ochs has penned a very interesting, well-documented account of Daly, clearly explaining how and why he earned such praise.

Following a detailed description in the prologue about Daly receiving the Medal of Honor from President Harry Truman on August 23, 1945, the author devotes the first three chapters to Daly's youth. Son of decorated war hero Paul Daly (Distinguished Cross in WWI), Michael learned to respect his father and learn from him the characteristics of military leadership. At the center of the advice from Paul Daly to his son was the example of the medieval epic *The Song of Roland*, in which Roland exemplifies courage and fierceness, while Oliver is much wiser. Michael would, in time, demonstrate the characteristics of both. Paul continued his military career during WWII, serving under General Alexander Patch and rising to the rank of colonel. He received a shrapnel wound in the fall of 1944, damaging his sciatic nerve in his thigh and had to be sent home. Michael visited his father before he was transferred home, and his father proudly pinned 2nd lieutenant bars on his son's uniform. He also gave his son his Colt 45.

Also, in the first three chapters, Ochs describes in detail conversations between father and son regarding

leadership and honor. These discussions, combined with Michael's school days at Georgetown Prep School in Maryland, molded his character. Indeed, the author claims that Daly's days at Georgetown Prep gave him characteristics that "enabled him to play a heroic role on the battlefield" (p. 18).

Chapters 4 through 11 chronicle Daly's actions on the battlefields of France, Belgium, and Germany. Daly landed at Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944, as a rifleman in the Third Battalion, Company I, Eighteenth Infantry Regiment, of the First Division. His actions as an infantryman included rifleman, BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle) man, and scout. His courage and daring became evident from the beginning, as he helped lead his men inland from the beachhead. Ochs's accounts of Daly's combat role are excellent. This is the "heart" of the book, and it is well researched, detailed, and accessible. The reader is engaged in learning about the personal story of a brave, self-confident man embroiled in the horrors of combat. His rapid promotion from private to 2nd lieutenant, then to 1st lieutenant, and then to captain clearly demonstrates how his commanders viewed his combat abilities.

General Patch offered Daly the position of aide, which Daly refused. He wanted to remain in combat on the frontline and he served well. Amid the hedgerows in Normandy, farm country in central France, German

villages, and Nuremberg, there are many exciting and engrossing stories of Daly in combat, at the company and battalion levels. Aiding the reader in understanding the events, the author provides maps, organizational charts, and photographs. However, while Ochs artfully describes the campaign, additional maps showing the movements of the Third Battalion would have given the reader a better understanding of the actions that Daly encountered.

While Ochs certainly details Daly's performance in combat, he also provides a general picture of the combat that the First Division and Patch's Seventh Army experienced, thus clearly showing how the Allied forces moved the Germans eastward. For example, Ochs graphically explains the fighting in and around the Colmar Pocket, with references to the weather, German strategy of retreating and then attacking, and Daly's ability to attack with his platoon and knowing when to momentarily pull back. The engrossing narrative details the combat and

explains the firepower exercised by both the Allies and the Germans.

The final chapter and epilogue focus on Daly's life following WWII. He returned home to a hero's welcome, and like many other returning soldiers, had some trouble adjusting to civilian life. However, he firmly believed in the justice of the cause for which he fought. Daly succeeded in business (after some setbacks) and devoted many years of service to St. Vincent's Hospital in Bridgeport, Connecticut, serving on its governance board from 1973 to 1993. Ochs's work complements other accounts of individual heroism, such as *Citizen Soldiers: The U.S. Army from the Normandy Beaches to the Bulge to the Surrender of Germany* by Stephen Ambrose (1998), and biographies of other Medal of Honor recipients, including Don Graham's 1990 *No Name on the Bullet: A Biography of Audie Murphy*. This book is highly recommended. The reader, as this reviewer did, will undoubtedly feel a connection to and admiration for Daly, a real hero.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-war>

Citation: Gene Mueller. Review of Ochs, Stephen J., *A Cause Greater Than Self: The Journey of Captain Michael J. Daly, World War II Medal of Honor Recipient*. H-War, H-Net Reviews. June, 2013.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=38094>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.