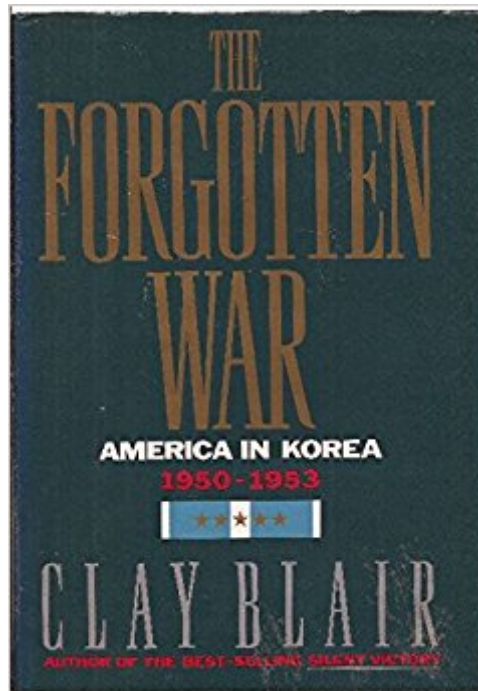




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# The Forgotten War: America In Korea, 1950-1953



## Synopsis

Heralded as an imposing and important work when first published in 1987, this history of the Korean War offers a complete and detailed portrayal of the conflict. Clay Blair, a highly respected military writer, is credited with taking a close and blistering look at high-level defense policy and ground-level leadership of the U.S. Army. He supports his analysis with official records and interviews with participants as well as his own deep knowledge of Washington personalities and politics. Blair's book captures the intensity of the conflict through the eyes of senior officers, explaining defeats and victories from the perspective of the U.S. battalion, regiment, and division commanders responsible for the progress of the war. As a collective portrait of the American officer corps at war, the book is uniquely valuable. Highly critical of Gen. Douglas MacArthur's leadership during the period, Blair also takes President Truman to task for his misjudgments and occasionally faults the conduct of corps and division commanders while offering unstinting praise for Gen. Matthew Ridgway's turn around of a demoralized field army. This day-by-day, unit-by-unit account of what went on provides details unmatched in other books on the subject. 1152 pages. 128 photos. 12 line drawings. Paperback. 6 x 9 inches. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Blair takes a close and blistering look at high-level defense policy and ground-level leadership of the U.S. Army in Korea from the opening of the war in 1950 through the first year the "pendulum period" before the final battle lines were drawn then summarizes the subsequent "talking war" period, which lasted for two years. That first year, the author amply demonstrates, was a ghastly ordeal for the

Army, partly because of President Truman's untimely strip-down of the armed forces, and partly because of incompetent leadership in the field. No historian has been more critical of General Douglas MacArthur's leadership during this period than Blair is in these pages. He also faults corps and division commanders, especially General Edward Almond of X Corps. On the other hand, his admiration is unstinting for General Matthew Ridgway, who took over a demoralized field army and quickly turned it into a fighting force. Military buffs should not overlook this one. Blair collaborated with Omar Bradley on *A General's Life*. Photos. Military Book Club main selection; Literary Guild alternate. Copyright 1988 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"Deserves an important place in the historiography of the Korean War." -- *New Republic*"Military buffs should not overlook this one." -- *Publishers Weekly*"We are in debt to Clay Blair for this book." -- *New York Times Book Review* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I recently finished reading *The Forgotten War: America in Korea, 1950-1953*, by Clay Blair's massive history of the Korean War. I purchased this 1,200-page tome not long after I finished David Halberstam's *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War*. Written by journalist, historian, and novelist Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War* was first published in 1987. To this day, it is widely regarded as probably the best overall history of the Korean War. I share that view. *The Forgotten War* is a comprehensive and a highly detailed account of the Korean War from the American perspective. Clay Blair examines nearly every aspect of the war "political, economic, cultural, and military. He traces the war from its roots in the late 1940s through the cease-fire that was negotiated in 1953. Blair is unsparing in his criticism of nearly every major figure involved in the war. They include President Harry S Truman (whose obsession with slashing military budgets led to a state of disastrous unpreparedness), to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur (whose massive egotism led him to be completely out of touch with the situation on the ground in Korea), to the field commanders (many of whom displayed a singular lack of leadership on the battlefield). Blair's judgments on what happened and why are clearly and convincingly argued. I really enjoy Clay Blair's writing style. *The Forgotten War* moves along at a brisk pace. Blair used a "top-down" approach to his work, which means he told his story from the perspective of the political leaders and senior commanders who fought the war. Very rarely does Blair mention junior officers or enlisted soldiers and Marines in his narrative. The advantage of this approach is that Blair covered a lot of different battles, although in less detail; the disadvantage is that readers don't get to know or

appreciate what the soldiers experienced as they were confronted with hordes of enemy soldiers. Blair writes with concise, impactful sentences and paragraphs that keep the story moving forward. Even sections dealing with the strictly political aspects of the war “especially the book’s first two chapters” held my interest. Of course, once I got into the sections dealing with the fighting, I found myself so fascinated that I now find it difficult to put the book down. My only gripe about “The Forgotten War” is that it’s not available in an ebook version. I purchased a hardcover edition of this massive 1,200-page doorstop. It large, thick and heavy. I, for one, would certainly benefit from being able to read a Kindle version of “The Forgotten War.” Despite this minor complaint, “The Forgotten War: America in Korea, 1950-1953” remains a brilliant work of scholarship and superb, fast-paced writing. It ranks among the very best war books I’ve ever read. Most highly recommended.

A roller coaster of an effort. Blair’s detailed retelling of battalion level combat in the first year+ of the conflict is exhaustive and provides the reader with quite a good understanding of the ebb and flow of action. This is not narrative history and the guys holding the guns make few appearances other than some of the Medal of Honor recipients. Blair’s intent rather is to portray the command level decisions which helped define the nature of the conflict. In this he is only moderately successful at best. He clearly has a low opinion of many of the high-level players including Truman, Walker, and MacArthur. He also faults a great deal of the mid-level Army leadership, especially in the earlier parts of the conflict. Whilst many of those he criticizes do fail to hold up to close examination, there exists a certain air of shrillness to Blair’s critiques that strongly suggests he has an axe to grind and is guilty of a rather skewed perspective. He also frequently lets Almond off the hook for his egregious failures as a person and a commander which is rather strange given Blair’s willingness to skewer others. I will say that to his credit Blair’s attitude seems to come from a sincere desire to protect the folks who had to pay the price for others poor decisions so it is not simply criticism for its own sake. I also have some issues with the maps as there are not enough of them and the ones provided frequently do not display the same depth of detail as his narrative. The book is huge, why not enhance it with another 10 or 12 pages of meaningful cartography? Overall this is a book you should read if you desire to develop a deep understanding of the Korean conflict but it should not be taken as a definitive account and should by no means be the only book you read. Pick up Halberstam and Millet to see some other perspectives as well.

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