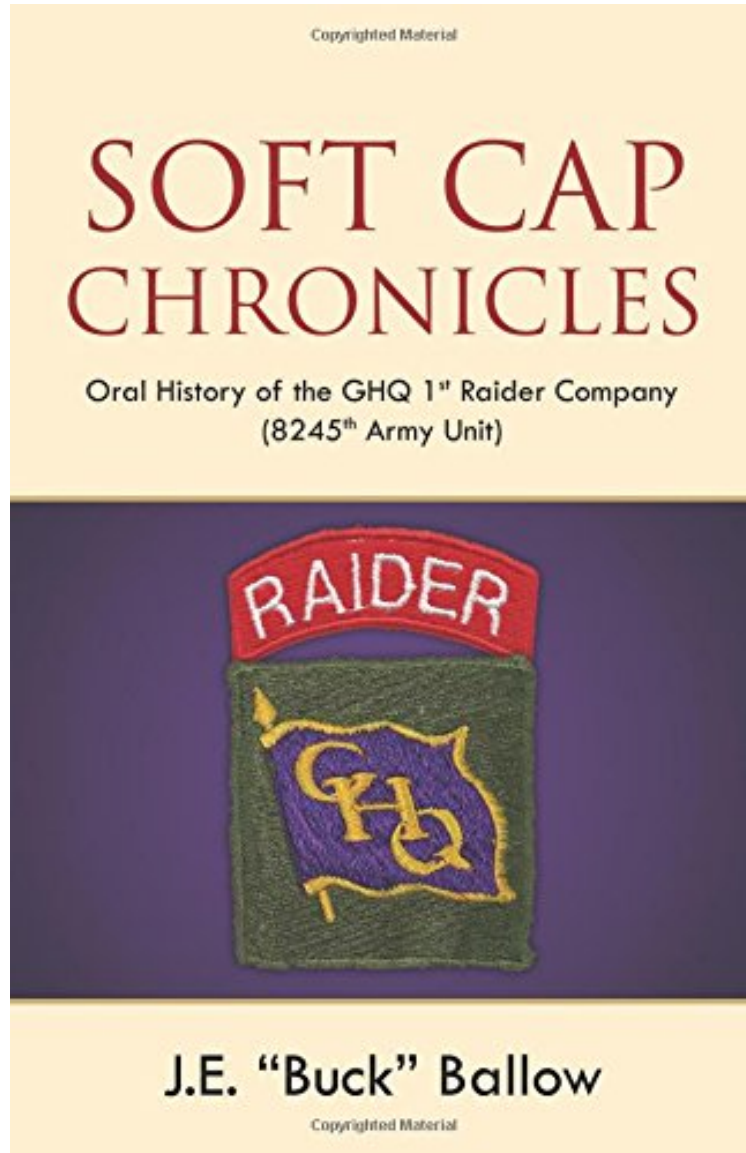


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Soft Cap Chronicles

J E Ballow

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J E Ballow : Soft Cap Chronicles before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Soft Cap Chronicles:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Tribute to a Forgotten War Raider company By Lee Boyland, award winning author. J. E. Ballow, a seventeen year old enlisted man, arrived in Yokohama, Japan in March 1950 and was assigned to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur's headquarters, GHQ, in Tokyo. Five years had passed since Japan surrendered, and the Army that had crushed Japan had become a peace time spit and polish, eight to five

garrison Army. Life was good for American military personnel in Japan, but all that changed when North Korea invaded South Korea on Sunday morning, 25 June 1950. Ballow, now eighteen and an assistant company clerk/assistant duty NCO, assigned to Company B, Staff Battalion heard the news on his radio. The now soft and under equipped U.S. military had another war to fight--a different kind of war in a cold and hostile land. Someone on MacArthur's staff decided a Raider unit was needed and the call for volunteers went out. Only the best of the best need apply. Training completed, the unit was activated on 5 September 1950, served in many locations in North and South Korea, fought many battles and was disbanded on 1 April 1951. Until reading this book, I never knew the Army had a Raider Company in the Korean Conflict. A forgotten unit of brave men who were not recognized for many years. Men who today would be SEALs, Deltas, Special Forces, and Rangers. Ballow and a few of his friends became the Raiders fan club and they followed the unit's progress until it was recalled and disbanded. Ballow continued his fascination with the Raider Company throughout his career, searching archives and compiling everything he could find about the unit. He finally established contact with the survivors and attended a unit reunion in Colorado Springs, Colorado. No date was provided for the reunion. Combining his research and interviews with the survivors, the author documented the daring deeds of the GHQ 1st Raider Company, officially the Raider Company 8245th Army unit. The chronicle is a mixture of interviews and background data from the author's research. This well written book will appeal to men and women who participated in the Korean Conflict, and scholars and historians. It provides a real world picture of the brutal war as seen through the eyes of the men behind enemy lines and on the front line of the conflict. Some of the observations are piercing, others reveal mistakes made by commanders and newly arrived and overly aggressive soldiers and Marines who learned to respect the enemy the hard way. I enjoyed the "Rice Shock" stories. I had never heard about North Koreans and Chinese disguising themselves as rice shocks. Then there is the human element--the orphan boy kept by the unit until it was disbanded. Basically, the book is a recording of a group of men reliving their experiences sixty plus years later, beginning with the formation of the company and its training at Camp McGill. The unit was led by officers and NCOs with WWII experience and comprised eighteen to mid-twenties men of great spirit and courage. The men relive their experiences, each adding to what had been said, allowing the story to wander from one event to another. Often the same event is remembered by a different man who was in a different place. Stories about "requisitioning" abandoned and unattended jeeps and trucks, and "midnight requisitioning" of other supplies brought back memories of a Spec 6 and an E8 that was in my EOD unit. They could "acquire" anything. The only technical mistake I noted was very minor. C4 explosive was not available. Most likely they used C2 or C3. The Soft Cap Chronicles is filled with extraordinary stories of bravery, hardship, dedication to mission, and screw-ups. Inspiring stories about a company that, because it bounced from one command to another, was not recorded in history and was forgotten. A few references to it occur in Marine records. The effectiveness of the Raider Company is best summed up by a captured North Korean private, "We did not mind fighting the US soldier that wore leather boots and smooth helmets (Army). They were predictable and started fighting in the morning and always stopped at dark; and only fought in one direction. We did not like to fight the soldiers in the cloth-covered helmets (Marines). They never stopped fighting; it was twenty-four hours a day with them. But, the most dreaded were the soldiers that wore the soft caps (Raiders). They were unpredictable; we never knew what direction they would come from; the time of day, or what part of the country they would be in." The Army finally rediscovered the unit and honored it with a paving stone in the memorial plaza of the Special Warfare Operations Command, Ft. Bragg, NC on 14 July 2010. I commend the author for his diligence, persistence, and for the hard work that went into preparing this outstanding chronicle. Lee Boyland, Military Writers Society of America reviewer

The oral history of a unique unit in the Korean War, where they were known by many names but the enemy simply referred to them as the dreaded Soft Caps.

About the Author The author is a highly experienced criminal investigator and intelligence officer well versed in the history and customs of Korea and Japan from formal education and personal experience. He spent eleven of his fifteen years as a Special Agent of the U.S. Army's Criminal Investigation Command (CID) in Korea and Okinawa. After retirement from the Army, he spent an additional eighteen years as a civilian supervisor in the Intelligence Bureau of the Illinois State Police.