Clarion Review

Biography

The Life of Stuart O. Van Slyke: Memories of a Forgotten Age May 1916 - May 1946
Stuart O. Van Slyke
978-1-4259-7369-8
Three Stars (out of Five)

"I want to make it very clear. I want action and I want it right now." That's how Stuart O. Van Slyke was introduced to his new assignment as mess officer. He was to build a mess hall for 400 men to be operational twenty four hours a day on the sixth floor of an already occupied building and have it done in two weeks three weeks at the most. "I had no blueprints no plans of any kid and no specifications. What did I know about 'Army Mess Halls' or how they should be built or equipped? I was completely bewildered. It was a bad dream. Things like this only happen in far-fetched movies."

The Life of Stuart O. Van Slyke is one of four volumes and the first to be published. Van Slyke is now 90 years old and is still working on Volume Four. With the help of his mother's diaries and letters sent home from Algeria Corsica Italy Japan and Korea Van Slyke relates his life experiences from birth to his discharge from the Army Air Corps after W.W.II. After ROTC he entered the Army as a Lieutenant and by the time of his discharge he had earned the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Through Van Slyke's eyes we can see what it was like to grow up in a time of simplicity that may never come again when friendships and relationships flourished. "Hardly an evening would go by without some of our friends calling on us or our calling on them." "In those days people did not lock their doors. Why should they when no one would bother your house."

Van Slyke goes on to tell of his experiences in the Army with "Latrine-a-Grams" (rumors) setting up radar systems building a plumbing system with hot water showers in Algeria and much more. He learned the radar so well he was able to improve on the Army's training methods. He had "the idea that to train a man to do something he must actually do it" and devised a way to set up in a small area a radar system that simulated the skills of running a large system covering hundreds of miles. With his willingness to think outside the box his gift for building relationships and his dedication to duty and hard work he continued to move from one

successful assignment to another gaining a variety of experience learning to command and winning promotions.

There are no heroics here but good insight into reality. We are not merely informed we get to know the man. At times the details seem too much. It might be made more interesting by a good editing job but *The Life of Stuart O. Van Slyke* is a wonderful window into the past that is generally worthwhile. It will bring back memories to those who lived it and will show the young what it was to live through the war.