

## 4.0 out of 5 stars **Humanity in the Midst of Chaos**

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By [J. E. Smith](#)

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This book was a bit of a surprise. I was expecting the usual WWII shoot-em-up about yet another triumph by supermacho gyrenes. Instead it is the compelling story of Bob Sheeks, a combat interpreter who used his Japanese language training to save lives in the South Pacific.

Serving with the 2nd Marine Division, Sheeks was smack in the middle of three amphibious assaults on the islands of Saipan, Tinian and the bloody, bungled chaos that was the landing on Tarawa. There, during his baptism of fire, Sheeks received what was probably the most idiotic order ever given to any lieutenant by a commanding general (read the book to find out).

But out of the inept tangle of Tarawa, Sheeks learned useful lessons on how to draw the fanatical enemy out of their caves and bunkers. Doing so, he reduced casualties among suicidal Japanese soldiers and, more importantly, his fellow Marines. Sheeks later applied his linguistic skills to rescuing native civilians and Korean slave laborers from extinction. This is an exceptionally readable book. The author, a scientist and professional writer, takes you smoothly through his subject's life (including dates with Hollywood starlets and other interesting stuff), but he keeps the focus on this intrepid young officer as he maneuvers through a series of nightmarish battles while still trying to hold on to his humanity.