



From AJR, **July/August 1992**

Foreign Correspondents' Top Ten

Book review by **John Maxwell Hamilton** **Judith Paterson**

John Maxwell Hamilton is dean of theanship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University. Judith Paterson is a professor at the University of Maryland College of Journalism.

This tormented, brooding journalist could as easily have been a poet. In 1944, while recuperating from wounds he received covering the battle of Salerno for Life magazine, Belden wrote this account of the fighting he witnessed in the Asian and European theaters. The drama comes as much from his passions as from his on-the-scene reporting of the falsehoods, chaos and bewilderment of war. The volume is virtually forgotten today — much like Belden, who drifted out of the profession in the 1950s.

Hiroshima

By John Hersey

On August 6, 1945, the first atomic bomb ever dropped on a city killed 100,000 people in Hiroshima. Among those who lived, skin fell off bones, boils erupted, sickness and fatigue lasted a lifetime. Told via the memories of six survivors, Hersey's 1946 account of the destruction lays bare the savagery of America's then-new technology. A new concluding chapter, written for the 1985 edition, adds a message of hope with stories of survival and the human capacity for regeneration.

Dispatches

By Michael Herr

This drug-infused, hip-talking "war sucks" take on Vietnam, originally written by Herr for Esquire in 1967 and 1968, made him a cult hero and gave us our image of a time and place where nobody wanted to be. "Spooky," he said, "everything up there was spooky." It took him another 10 years to turn that spookiness into a masterpiece of the new journalism, a better depiction than any of the movie screenplays that have been lifted from it.

Salvador

By Joan Didion

In the summer of 1982, this veteran literary journalist toured revolutionary El Salvador for two weeks and watched her own personal dread mirror the realities of a country being "demoralized, undone, humiliated" by fear. No need to analyze this one. Just follow the Dantesque traveler to hell and watch the bodies pile up. "Terror," as Didion writes in her 1983 account, "is the given of the place."

Crossing the Line:

A Year in the Land of Apartheid

By William Finnegan

Working his way around the world, Finnegan, a 27-year-old surfer and magazine travel writer, landed a teaching job in a high school for "coloreds" in Cape Town, South Africa. The year he spent there, 1980 to 1981, turned out to be filled with violence and student demonstrations. Through the eyes of a narrator losing his youthful illusions, Finnegan's 1986 book remains the best we have of "ordinary life" under apartheid.

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