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BOOK REVIEW:

Ed Kennedy's War: V-E Day, Censorship, & the Associated Press

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Ed Kennedy, with an introduction by Tom Curley and John Maxwell Hamilton. Edited by Julia Kennedy Cochran. *Ed Kennedy's War: V-E Day, Censorship, & the Associated Press.* Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 2012, 201 pages.

Journalism and mass communication students in America today have lived continuously in a country at war—a War on Terror, a war in Afghanistan, and a war in Iraq—but most do not truly understand the cost of those struggles. Neither do their parents. Americans are not fully engaged with these wars, in part because of the absence of daily, widespread reporting about them. Many journalists have bravely reported from these war zones, but the saturation coverage of previous wars, such as Vietnam and World War II, has not been sustained, even though the casualties continue. Albeit these are very different wars, but journalists have no greater obligation than to keep a free and open society informed about the military actions of their government.

A book released this year could help journalism and mass communication educators teach their students about the journalist's role in wartime. *Ed Kennedy's War,* the memoir of a reporter who bucked the censors to write one of World War II's most controversial stories, could be incorporated into a variety of courses, ranging from broadcast journalism, war reporting, public relations, and journalism history to media law, and mass media & society.

The memoir, completed in 1950 but not published until 62 years later, chronicles Edward Kennedy's 10 years as a veteran war correspondent for The Associated Press (AP). Kennedy embodied the healthy tension between the Fourth Estate and the government at war. He bucked World War II censors to report what was arguably one of the most important stories of the war, and as a result, he lost his credentials, his job, and his reputation.

Kennedy's monumental story, which haunted the venerable AP for six decades, was the first to break the news that the war in Europe was over. Kennedy was among 17 accredited correspondents selected to cover Germany's surrender on May 7, 1945. In order to cover the historic event, correspondents were required to acquiesce to an embargo because President Harry S. Truman had agreed that the Allies would hold the story until the Russians had a similar surrender ceremony. Reporters did not like it. The Supreme Allied Commander did not like it. Both correspondents and the commander knew that announcing the end of the war would be the only way to prevent further fighting. The correspondents weighed the price of the embargo against the value of witnessing the surrender, and they opted to see the surrender for themselves.

In his memoir, Kennedy wrote that he had planned to honor the embargo, but then a German radio station reported the surrender. The AP began

asking Kennedy about the broadcast. (After the war, Kennedy confirmed that the Allied forces had authorized the German broadcast, making the embargo pointless.) After grappling with military censors, Kennedy released the story without authorization.

Among the 17 reporters, he alone did so.

His "scoop" unleashed a firestorm. Public relations officers stripped his accreditation as a war correspondent. Other reporters were enraged. The AP feigned support, but it eventually abandoned Kennedy, leaving him to fight for his reputation. And fight he did when he returned from the European theater. Kennedy believed he was vindicated when General Dwight D. Eisenhower reinstated his credentials one year after the war's end. The reinstatement meant he could cover future wars, but he never fully regained his reputation.

The AP did not know how to handle this notorious incident in its storied history. This memoir has afforded the organization and Kennedy's family the opportunity to address both issues. Upon his death in 1963, Kennedy's ex-wife, Lyn Crost Stern, gave the memoir to their daughter Julia, herself an AP journalist, suggesting that Julia publish it someday. Julia Kennedy Cochran did nothing with the manuscript for more than four decades. When she eventually sought to tell her father's story, she edited the memoir and an AP official co-authored the book's introduction. Tom Curley, AP president and CEO, and John Maxwell Hamilton, series editor of Louisiana State University's "From Our Own Correspondent" book series, wrote the introduction to the 201-page volume. Curley and Hamilton wrote that The AP "made a kneejerk response to repudiate him publicly to staunch an uproar" (p. xiii). They also applauded Kennedy's reporting, concluding, "Edward Kennedy was the embodiment of the highest aspirations of The Associated Press and American journalism" (p. xix).

This endorsement from a top AP official goes a long way toward erasing the news organization's past sins regarding Kennedy. Additionally, the introduction posits, "This book matches the best memoirs by World War II combat reporters for quality of writing and telling detail, some of it gripping" (p. xix).

Despite his claims to the contrary, Kennedy never fully restored his name during his lifetime, and the scar left on the nation's largest newsgathering organization may now begin to heal with the publication of this significant book.

Ed Kennedy's War is marvelously written and recounts an important story while providing insight into the inherent tension that exists between the government and reporters. Students should read it because it is great material. Students should read it because it is noteworthy. But most importantly, students should read it, because it will teach them what the best journalists do in the field when they face complicated ethical issues: They consider the reader, and then report the news as responsibly as circumstances permit. Edward Kennedy did just that, and it is reassuring that his news organization has had the courage to correct the record and applaud his achievement.

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