

Paul Douglas, of the Cobb-Douglas Production/Utility Function

The Cobb-Douglas production function was developed in the 1920s by Charles Cobb (a mathematician at Amherst College) and Paul Douglas (an economics professor at the University of Chicago). Douglas led an interesting life: an economics professor, then a war hero in World War II (enlisting as a private at the age of 50!), then 18 years as a US Senator from Illinois. You can read about him at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Douglas

Note especially the section on military service.

The book "With the Old Breed," written by WW II enlisted man E.B. Sledge, has been called "one of the most important accounts of war that I have ever read" by one historian, and "one of the finest memoirs to emerge from any war" by another. The book is about the horrific, bloody battles for the Pacific islands of Peleliu and Okinawa. Substantial parts of Ken Burns's series *The War* were based on Sledge's book.

Here's an excerpt about Paul Douglas from Sledge's book:

We hadn't noticed him before he spoke. He wore green dungarees, leggings, and a cloth-covered helmet like ourselves and carried a .45 caliber automatic pistol like any mortar gunner, machine gunner, or one of our officers. Of course, he wore no rank insignia, being in combat. What astonished us was that he looked to be more than fifty years old and wore glasses -- a rarity (for example, only two men in Company K wore them). When he took off his helmet to mop his brow, we saw his gray hair. (Most men forward of division and regimental CPs were in their late teens or early twenties. Many officers were in their mid-twenties.)

I heard a buddy ask, "What's that crazy old gray-haired guy doing up here if he could be back at regiment?"

Our NCO growled, "Shut up! Knock it off, you eightball! He's trying to help knuckleheads like you, and he's a damned good man."

Paul Douglas became a legend in the 1st Marine Division. This remarkable man was fifty-three years old, had been an economics professor at the University of Chicago, and had enlisted in the Marine Corps as a private. In the Peleliu battle he was slightly wounded carrying flamethrower ammunition up to the lines. At Okinawa he was wounded seriously by a bullet in the arm while carrying wounded [marines]. Even after months of therapy, he didn't regain complete use of the limb.

Note by MW: Paul Douglas earned a Bronze Star and two Purple Hearts (the military decoration established by George Washington for anyone who "has given of his blood in the defense of his homeland"). After the war, he was elected a U.S. Senator from Illinois, and served for 18 years (three six-year terms).