



# The Embarrassing Australian: The Story of an Aboriginal Warrior

*Harry Gordon*

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Reg Saunders is an Australian Aboriginal - a member of a primitive, vastly under-privileged race. He became the only member of that race ever to be commissioned as an officer in the armed forces, and in Korea he commanded 200 white troops. Men who served under him there used to call him "the best officer in the world". Now Harry Gordon, who was a war correspondent in Korea with Saunders, has traced his story. He spent months on patient, careful research, interviewing members of Saunders' family, his wartime comrades and his workmates, and studying Australian Army records. The result is a remarkable, very human piece of contemporary history which discusses Saunders' experiences before and after the war, as well as in the Middle East, Greece, Crete, New Guinea and Korea. Gordon writes: "surely that's democracy at its finest, you can argue, when 200 white men take orders graciously and willingly from a black representative of a Stone Age race. Surely that shows, as effectively as any example could, that the average Australian doesn't give a damn about the pigmentation of a man's skin... In fact, though, Reg Saunders is a most embarrassing Australian. He did what he did in the army because he is an exceptional Aboriginal... one in 80,000. He was accepted unreservedly by the men who served with him because false values do not flourish among front-line soldiers. Society has not accepted him quite so readily in peace-time". This is an honest, hard-hitting, sometimes disturbing book.

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