

Washington Post Dec. 8, 1991

ON BEING WOUNDED

By Edward W. Wood, Jr.

Fulcrum Publishing. 188 pp.

On Sept. 7, 1944, his first day of combat, 19 year-old Eddie Wood was proud to be liberating France. Before the day ended, however, shrapnel sheared his skull, most of a buttock was blown away, and he began a healing that would require four decades. His wound became "the explosion of my personal universe."

On Being Wounded is Wood's agonized lament at trying to rebuild his life over the ruins of his childhood values.

His Mississippi father, a WWI pilot and tenth-generation soldier, taught him that a man in the 1930s Deep South was a beer-gulping Lothario who can push a woman onto her back and prove in under 60 seconds how much man he is. And men loved weapons. "Our home was always full of guns," Wood recalls. Life was defined by enemies, the "them" who determine what "us" must mean.

Shipped home from battle, Wood saw that the war had made his father rich. America seemed polluted with gluttony, and Wood wondered, "For this I almost died?" He studied at M.I.T. and found academia equally perverse, all brain and no heart, where people would gladly destroy each other for tenure. He became a city planning consultant in Washington and noted in his journal, "There is no place for truth in Washington but only the vicious struggle to maintain and expand one's place in the pecking order."

Only his journal-keeping, children and love for nature, he claims, kept him from self-destruction (which he attempted) long enough to discover what life is really about.

Wood's impassioned prose ranges from poetic to bombastic to maudlin. He grows repetitious and even whiny. His doleful polemics voice charges which the last four decades have rendered clichéd but also have failed to relieve.