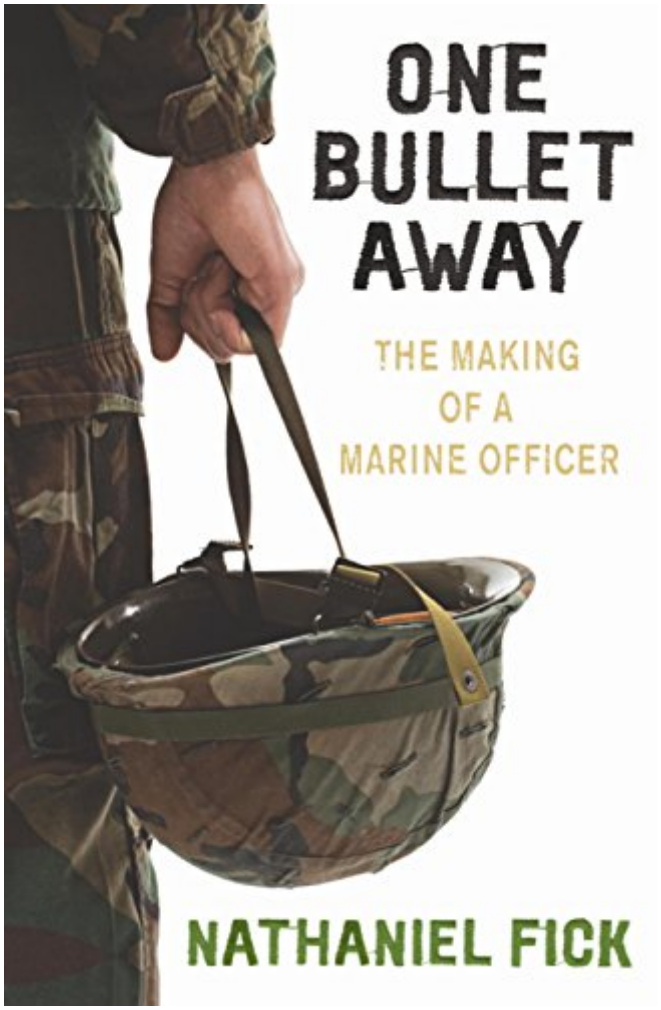
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One Bullet Away: The Making Of A US Marine Officer



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Synopsis

The most eloquent and personal story of a young man at war since Geoffrey Wellum’s FIRST LIGHTUntil a winter evening in 1998 Nathaniel was just another history student on a comfortable career trajectory of high school to college to white collar job. Then he went to a lecture by a Wall Street Journal reporter who had just published a book on the US Marines. It brought forth a latent desire to break free of the ’seat belt and safety goggle, safety-first’ culture: to be a warrior. He passed the gruelling selection course and joined the Marine Corps on graduation. Posted to a Marine Regiment in the wake of 9/11, he took part in the invasion of Afghanistan, then led a platoon of their elite Recon Battalion during the invasion of Iraq.This is not a book about the Iraq invasion as such: it is an articulate and deeply thoughtful young man’s account of what it means to fight in the frontline, to risk not just death or injury, but psychological harm. He reveals some of the awful dilemmas war can bring, horrible problems to which there is no ’right’ answer, but a decision had to be made quickly -- by him alone. In combat you are just one bullet away from death -- or promotion. But this doesn’t focus the mind: it makes it freeze up -- unless your training is so thorough that you overcome exhaustion and terror. ’Nate’ took 65 men to war and came home with all 65. He proved himself an excellent officer and won promotion, but resigned in 2003 to write this book and attend Harvard Business School.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I listened to the 16.5 hour long unabridged edition of this book narrated by Andy Paris. The last paragraph of this review focuses on that production specifically.4 stars: A straight-forward account of Marine combat in Afghanistan and Iraq from the POV of a Jr Officer.Nate Fick was a main character portrayed in HBOÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s 2008 miniseries GENERATION KILL (based on Evan WrightÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s 2004 memoir of the same name). This memoir was written before the miniseries but after Wright's account, in 2005. It covers his introduction into the Marine Corps, deployment to Afghanistan, subsequent training as a Recon Marine and then his role as an Lt in the 2003 invasion of Iraq.Fick is a capable writer and his story doesnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t simply cover the same ground covered in GK. You learn that he scored expert on the rifle range, was a weapons platoon commander, underwent varying rigorous courses of special forces-esque training and you also get a lot more information on lesser known members of the Recon Platoon he leads into Iraq. For example, Gunny Wynn is a much more significant character in the last half of FickÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s account due to his role in the unit organization.Fick is able to portray the demand and stress associated with small unit leadership and his boot camp and advanced training segments are more interesting than other accounts IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ve read, but this account is a more straight-forward, almost sterile one. It isnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t devoid of opinions or personal reflection, but thatÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s not the focus of his account. This is not necessarily a drawback, but it makes for a less riveting combat account when Fick finds himself in the thick of the fighting.Instead of a blow-by-blow combat account, weÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢re given one about leading competent men into modern warfare which, despite the subpar decision making skills of some of his superiors, sees him and his men through two different stints in combat without any KIAs.However this does make the book less compelling ultimately, and I also felt that his training portion of the memoir, though better than others was still a bit bloated and could have been a bit shorter.But these cons are drastically outweighed by the pros of FickÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s account, making it stand on itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s own as a story of the Wars on Terror, apart from WrightÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s and later the miniseries. I also feel it is one of the best officer accounts published about this conflict, hence my scoring it 4/5 stars.In terms of recommendations I'd say check out

WrightÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s book, though it is from the perspective of an embedded journalist. Also check out the miniseries because it is brilliantly made, acted and produced by the people behind THE WIRE, too.Concerning modern combat memoir recommendations: the best one so far is still HOUSE TO HOUSE by David Bellavia and the best officer account is LIONS OF KANDAHAR. There are many accounts out there and I have a listmania ranking them if youÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢re interested.As for the audiobook: I got a copy of the unabridged audiobook on tape read by Andy Paris. Paris reads the book well, if a bit dry but he changes up his voice acting for different characters though he sticks to the same tempo throughout all the different settings. The abridged version is read by Fick himself but I havenÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t listened to it and read somewhere that Fick himself wasnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t happy with how the abridged book was edited.

An excellent book. From the standpoint of an ordinary officer on Platoon level leading his unit in combat, and what they experienced - from beginning to end. Includes the variety of experience and attitudes they encountered with Iraqi civilians, many of who had been none too thrilled with Saddam and the Baathists who ruled Iraq.For all the 'major media' portrayals and critiques of the situation, our policies that got us there, etc., this is a side of the story 'on the ground', by the guys we (or Bush ...take your pick) sent to fight the war that SHOULD BE known and understood. His unit was better prepared, so suffered fewer casualties, than many others in Iraq - but you can still come close to understanding the price that was paid (or prices).What a shame that our bumbling leadership DIDN'T EVEN BEGIN to adequately plan for 'what to do' for stabilizing and restoring a capable government in Iraq after we had 'won the war' ...that's my thought, not necessarily his. We did that in Europe and Japan after World War II (not easy in any event) ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ but really fell flat this time around.

This is an amazing book highlighting the difficult road of going from ordinary college graduate to the super ordinary life of a marine officer, and then to war. This book was suggested to me by my son who has completed college, Officer Candidate School, The Basic School and is currently in MOS tank school for United States Marines. His statement to me was "this is remarkably accurate ". I found the book interesting, scary, and enhancing my already high regard for the marines and especially those that choose to lead as officers. This book also serves to help us focus on a difficult part of our country history, specifically Iraq and Afghanistan invasions. And the reintroduction of our soldiers into society. I recommend this book and say to captain Fick, Semper Fidelis.

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