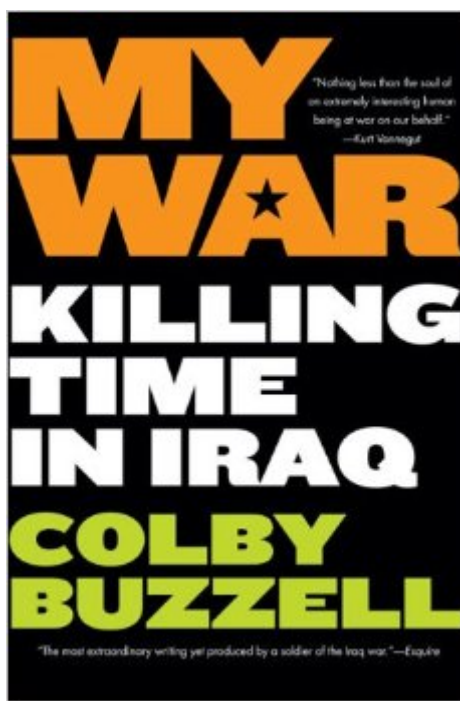


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My War: Killing Time In Iraq



Synopsis

Colby Buzzell traded a dead-end future for the army-and ended up a machine gunner in Iraq. To make sense of the bloody insanity surrounding him, he started a blog about the war and how it differed from the government's official version. As his blog's popularity grew, Buzzell became the embedded reporter the Army couldn't control-despite its often comical efforts to do so. The result is an extraordinary narrative, rich with unforgettable scenes: the Iraqi woman crying uncontrollably during a raid on her home; the soldier too afraid to fight; the troops chain-smoking in a guard tower and counting tracer rounds. Drawing comparisons to everything from Charles Bukowski to Catch-22, *My War* depicts a generation caught in a complicated and dangerous world-and marks the debut of a raw, remarkable new voice.

Book Information

Paperback: 368 pages

Publisher: Berkley; Reprint edition (September 5, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0425211363

ISBN-13: 978-0425211366

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.9 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (116 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #237,047 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #114 inÂ Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Military > Afghan & Iraq Wars > Iraq War #268 inÂ Books > History > Military > Iraq War #2485 inÂ Books > History > Military > United States

Customer Reviews

I recently read Anthony Swofford's review of *My War*, by Colby Buzzell. Swofford, a former Marine sniper and Gulf War veteran, is the author of *Jarhead*, the successful memoir of his Gulf War experience, which has recently shown up on the Hollywood big screen as a top box office seller. All in all, I think *Jarhead* was a fairly good read. Criticisms abound regarding the manner in which Swofford portrays the Marines-which for the most part seem to stem from people who cling to the sentiment and disillusion that all things military must be John Wayne like. There is though, an annoying overtone of whining in his account, and an even more annoying hint of supplication to the cultured academic elite (which seems to be his intended audience), as if with a wink and a nod he readily validates that echelon's misguided and misinformed perceptions and stereotypes of the

military, and in particular, all-male combat culture they so disdain. The most redeeming quality of his memoir, which was illuminated even better in the movie, is Swofford's honest portrayal of having never squeezed the trigger. In the first Gulf War, there was absolutely no substantial role for light infantry, let alone snipers. While Jarhead may be the defining account of a sniper's role in the Gulf War, it is not the defining account of the war-which will be better served by someone who directly participated in the armored blitzkrieg of a slaughter that it was (i.e., someone from the 1 out of every 14 Gulf War soldiers who actually did squeeze the trigger). I'm not here though to focus on Jarhead, I'll leave that to the sophomore at Brown or Amherst or Dartmouth...as a former dirt soldier of the first Gulf War, I'm here to zero in on My War.

A common fallacy prevalent in America today is that the best way to support the troops is to slap a yellow ribbon magnet on our cars and attend political fundraisers. I'm not one who subscribes to those notions. In order to best support our currently deployed troops, one has to understand what's really happening to them, and how they perceive not only the events unfolding around them but also their own actions. This is why I started reading CB's blog. I have yet to encounter another soldier who is willing, able, and/or allowed to convey those messages as vividly as CB. The blog on which this book is based has recently become the gold standard for other soldiers currently keeping milblogs. While CB's experiences are personal and consequently unique in many aspects, this book does teach the reader quite a bit about universal soldier life in Iraq today. For example, it illustrates what wearing a full kit in desert heat really feels like, soldiers' opinions of war reports in the press, the ways in which the latrine walls have become a forum for political commentary, the surprising sites found in a rare Iraqi Christian neighborhood, troops' reaction to voting and writing home regularly, which camp has a reputation for its STD rate, the gradual desensitization to mortar attacks, the important role books and music play not only during downtime but also in battle, and most importantly, what's really going through soldiers' heads. Also of special interest is the reaction CB's chain of command had to his blog once it was discovered. The higher ups' personal vs. official public views of the blog did not always mesh. I read My War solely for educational purposes, to help me get a grip on what soldiers are thinking and feeling but may not share with me.

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