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The Last Stand Of Fox Company: A True Story Of U.S. Marines In Combat



THE LAST STAND *of* FOX COMPANY

BOB DRURY AND TOM CLAVIN



Synopsis

November 1950, the Korean Peninsula. After General MacArthur ignores Mao's warnings and pushes his UN forces deep into North Korea, his 10,000 First Division Marines find themselves surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered by 100,000 Chinese soldiers near the Chosin Reservoir. Their only chance for survival is to fight their way south through the Toktong Pass, a narrow gorge in the Nangnim Mountains. It will need to be held open at all costs. The mission is handed to Captain William Barber and the 246 Marines of Fox Company, a courageous but undermanned unit of the First Marines. Barber and his men are ordered to climb seven miles of frozen terrain to a rocky promontory overlooking the pass. The Marines have no way of knowing that the ground they occupy-it is soon dubbed "Fox Hill"-is surrounded by 10,000 Chinese soldiers. As the sun sets on the hill, and the temperature plunges to thirty degrees below zero, Barber's men dig in for the night. At two in the morning they are awakened by the sound-bugles, whistles, cymbals, and drumbeats-of a massive assault by thousands of enemy infantry. The attack is just the first wave of four days and five nights of nearly continuous Chinese attempts to take Fox Hill, during which Barber's beleaguered company clings to the high ground and allows the First Marine Division to battle south. Amid the relentless violence, three-quarters of Fox Company's Marines are killed, wounded, or captured. Just when it looks like the outfit will be overrun, Lieutenant Colonel Raymond Davis, a fearless Marine officer who is fighting south from Chosin, volunteers to lead a force of 500 men on a daring mission that cuts a hole in the Chinese lines and relieves the men of Fox Company. The Last Stand of Fox Company is a fast-paced and gripping account of heroism and self-sacrifice in the face of impossible odds. The authors have conducted dozens of firsthand interviews with the battle's survivors, and they narrate the story with the immediacy of such classic accounts of single battles as Guadalcanal Diary, Pork Chop Hill, and Black Hawk Down. --This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

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Customer Reviews

This fast paced, well researched and well written account of one of the battles fought by Marines as the Chinese Army surrounded them at North Korea's Chosin Reservoir provides a vivid view of front line warfare. There is a little something here for everyone. For the armchair warrior who never was a Marine, this is a chance to see what it is/was like. For the compassionate soul who recognizes the human waste of war, this provides ample evidence, not just of the waste of American lives but also of the waste of Chinese lives. For the military tactician, here is a brilliant case study. For the psychology oriented reader interested in the behavior of men under stress, this book provides many examples of individual behavior and reassures us that despite the brutality of battle some soldiers on both sides see the humanity of their enemy. For the person curious about how soldiers get recommended for medals you see it here in the action of Lieutenant McCarthy; of course an officer has to survive to make his recommendations. Perhaps the real truth about medals is that everyone, from the lowest grunt to the Company commander should be decorated or none should be. The sarcastic reader will say that just about everyone in Fox Company earned a Purple Heart but that's not what I mean. In a story like this one either every Marine was just doing his job or each one was operating above and beyond the call of duty regardless of rank. Although little is said in this book about the leadership of the Korean War, enough is said to remind us all that those in high military command positions should hold command for strictly limited periods of time. Had this happened with McArthur, then perhaps this narcissistic, arrogant and ultimately megalomaniacal general would not have failed so miserably in his last great military assignment and caused the purposeless deaths of countless American and United Nations soldiers. And for those who revere the military command structure as somehow unfailing, there is enough here to underscore its tragic weaknesses. But even those can be overcome when field commanders receiving a series of consistently irrational orders disconnected from the reality on the ground, formulate and execute their own plans. In just a few words, this book illuminates the creative and hard headed thinking of Colonel "Blitzen" Litzen as the moment of truth arrives. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in military history at the "ground" level where the contest of arms is truly held and won or lost.

The brotherhood or esprit de corps in the USMC is something that can only be appreciated by serving in the Corp during battle. Excellent infantry training, loyalty to brothers, a stubborn but steadfast commitment to get the job done. All these are apparent, yet again, in the description of a marine unit faced with impossible odds (elements as well as a determined foe). None of us readers, unless undergoing the same experience, can really conceive the pain of dwelling in a foxhole during a blizzard at sub-zero temperatures and then asked to do battle at the same time; this book, however, does an excellent job in its portrayal of the conditions - I could almost imagine it. The toys and trials of the relief column are really outstanding; I mean the navigation at night in mountain terrain, at night, in a blizzard, leading an entire foot battalion? Man, this goes beyond bravery and commitment, this is downright professionalism at its peak! Frequent maps allowed a feeling of the terrain; they could be better - but sufficient.

A true story and grand slice of US Marine history recounting the duty, heroism, persistence and courage of a relatively small band of men in Fox Company who hold off an overwhelming number of Red Chinese in bitterly cold North Korean weather where weapons froze and grenades failed to trigger. Uncommon valor kept open an area that might otherwise been a killing ground for thousands of US Marines headed south toward safety and evacuation. An incredible slice of Marine history, told in the vernacular of the US Marines and well worth the read.

Here is proof that the truth is better than fiction. Drury and Clavin talked to the amazing men who fought and survived on this desolate chunk of ground and weave their stories into a gripping narrative of courage and endurance. When it's all over you may want to take a road trip to spit on MacArthur's grave, but you will want to finish the book first. The authors include follow-up with the men who still gather for reunions.

Great story of men who did what was assigned of them and ultimately it was a key piece of the plan to evaluate the Chosin reservoir. These men did things for their fellow Marines/soldiers that the rest of us can only hope that if it was us in that position that we could perform at least half of what they accomplished. If you think your a bad ass, the story about the men of Fox company will humble you pretty quickly.

The only military history I know of that provides accurate maps and descriptions of movements of units. First rate interviews of participants; original material, not a rewrite of a rewrite. Only fault is the

confusing use of flashback in the beginning. I wish writers knew that the story is what happened chronologically, the plot is how you tell the story. The use of flashback is a part of a writer's choice as to how to tell the story. Flashbacks should be barred unless the writer know how to clearly signal what happened when and not risk mixing them up. That aside, a really valuable book.

Amazing story of Marine Valor in a pretty much forgotten war. Images of what these young men went thru and the hardships they were able to endure are truly beyond the comprehension of almost all of us.. Read it asap....

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