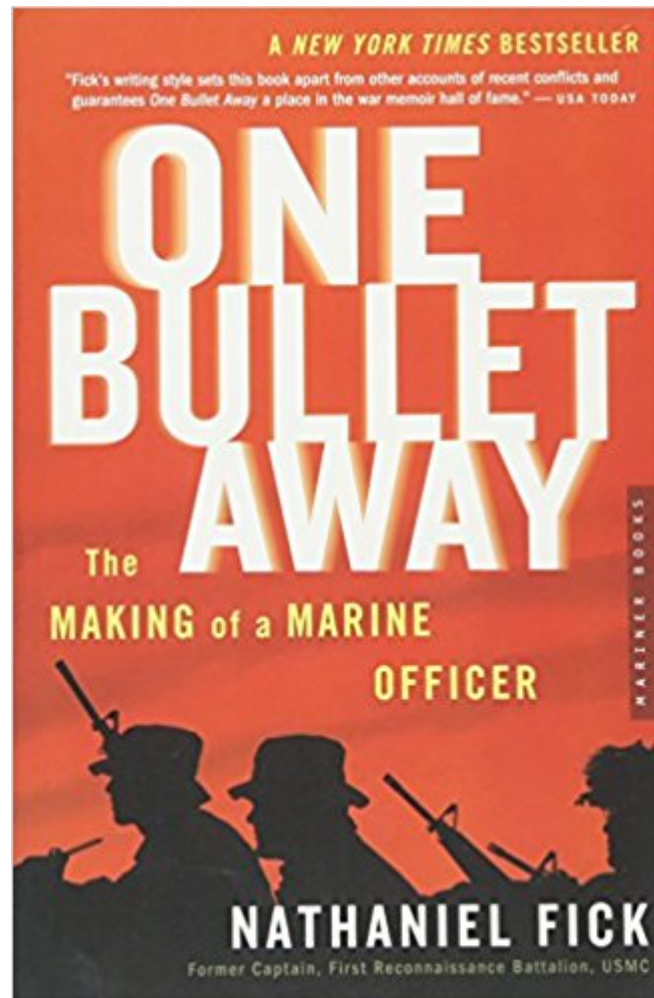




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One Bullet Away: The Making Of A Marine Officer



Synopsis

If the Marines are "the few, the proud," Recon Marines are the fewest and the proudest. Nathaniel Fick's career begins with a hellish summer at Quantico, after his junior year at Dartmouth. He leads a platoon in Afghanistan just after 9/11 and advances to the pinnacle of Recon two years later, on the eve of war with Iraq. His vast skill set puts him in front of the front lines, leading twenty-two Marines into the deadliest conflict since Vietnam. He vows to bring all his men home safely, and to do so he'll need more than his top-flight education. Fick unveils the process that makes Marine officers such legendary leaders and shares his hard-won insights into the differences between military ideals and military practice, which can mock those ideals. In this deeply thoughtful account of what it's like to fight on today's front lines, Fick reveals the crushing pressure on young leaders in combat. Split-second decisions might have national consequences or horrible immediate repercussions, but hesitation isn't an option. *One Bullet Away* never shrinks from blunt truths, but ultimately it is an inspiring account of mastering the art of war.

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Customer Reviews

The global war on terrorism has spawned some excellent combat narratives—mostly by journalists. Warriors, like Marine Corps officer Fick, bring a different and essential perspective to the story. A classics major at Dartmouth, Fick joined the Marines in 1998 because he "wanted to go on

a great adventure... to do something so hard that no one could ever talk shit to me." Thus begins his odyssey through the grueling regimen of Marine training and wartime deployments—•an odyssey that he recounts in vivid detail in this candid and fast-paced memoir. Fick was first deployed to Afghanistan, where he saw little combat, but his Operation [Iraqi] Freedom unit, the elite 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, helped spearhead the invasion of Iraq and "battled through every town on Highway 7" from Nasiriyah to al Kut. (Rolling Stone writer Evan Wright's provocative *Generation Kill* is based on his travels with Fick's unit.) Like the best combat memoirs, Fick's focuses on the men doing the fighting and avoids hyperbole and sensationalism. He does not shrink from the truth—•however personal or unpleasant. "I was aware enough," he admits after a firefight, "to be concerned that I was starting to enjoy it." Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Fick signed up for the Marine Corps Officer Candidates School after receiving a B.A. from Dartmouth in 1999 because he wanted a challenge. He got one. He made it through the school and eventually into the First Recon Battalion (the elite of the elite), and he served in Afghanistan and Iraq before leaving the corps as a captain. The classics major proceeds in classic form, covering his training succinctly but thoroughly and his field experience in well-narrated detail, and concluding with a short epilogue. One of the corps' attractions for him was the chance for leadership in fighting. He quickly learned that the trust between platoon and leader can make the difference between life and death for both, and he builds his combat descriptions around that principle. *One Bullet Away* can be recommended to anyone wanting a frontline description of this country's recent combat theaters and to anyone seeking a personal account of the contemporary Marine Corps. Marines are people, and Captain Fick puts proof of it on paper. Frieda Murray Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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 HBO's 2008 miniseries *GENERATION KILL* (based on Evan Wright'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 doesn'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 Fick'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 I've read, but this account is a more straight-forward, almost sterile one. It isn't devoid of opinions or personal reflection, but that'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, we'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 Fick's account, making it stand on its own as a story of the Wars on Terror, apart from Wright'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 Wright'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 you'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 haven't listened to it and read somewhere that Fick himself wasn'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) - 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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