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Book Reviews

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My Men Are My Heroes: The Brad Kasal Story, by Brad Kasal as told to Nathaniel R. Helms

Des Moines, IA: Meredith Books. Pp. 286. Illus., map, table, glossary. \$24.95. ISBN:0-696-23236-7.

One of the iconic images of the Battle of Fallujah in November, 2004, was that of a Marine being assisted as he left a house, still holding a nine-millimeter pistol in his right hand. The story behind this picture is an amazing tale of heroism under fire, on par with past Marine heroes like Hector Cafferata during the Korean War or Jacklyn H. Lucas during World War II. The Marine in that photo was First Sergeant Brad Kasal (since promoted to Sergeant Major), who received the Navy Cross for his actions.

My Men Are My Heroes tells the story behind the photo, and starts at the beginning. Kasal's story is told – including growing up in Afton, Iowa. Kasal doesn't go into many details about boot camp. When it comes to his career in the Marine Corps, the book tells much more, and even provides details of how Kasal started out as a Dragon gunner, his experience in Desert Storm, and the details of his stint as a recruiter in the 1990s (during which he earned two medals).

Kasal's book detours slightly to discuss an incident involving a terrorist attacks on Marines training in Kuwait. Then, it turns to discussing his participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom, including the fighting in An Nasariyah. Kasal's return to Iraq in 2004 is then discussed, and he sets the stage for the Battle of Fallujah.

The Battle of Fallujah, including Kasal's heroic actions, is described in detail over several chapters. One gets the sense of just what the street fighting in Fallujah was like. One of the more notable details in this account is the discovery of stuff that Chechens were known to wear. Finally, the events of November 13, 2004, are discussed. Kasal's account of what he did that day is modest – almost in keeping with the title of this book.

That said, the reviewer must, with all due respect, disagree with Sergeant Major Kasal. Yes, the Marines who ultimately helped evacuate him and the other wounded Marines were heroes, but Sergeant Major Kasal is a hero, too. Based on this book, his conduct was in line with countless acts of heroism in the annals of the Marine Corps. Sergeant Major Kasal deserves every accolade he receives and more.

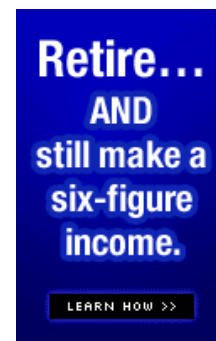
Kasal himself mentions the media coverage of the war. The reviewer cannot echo his sentiments more strongly. What is most appalling is that this is a story that many outlets of the mainstream media could have run, but didn't – often preferring to focus on flimsy allegations of torture at Guantanamo Bay, the misbehavior of a small number of MPs at Abu Ghraib, or other negative aspects, including "milestone" casualties (the media held a watch



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for the 3,000th casualty). It is even worse when reports that an embedded reporter's account was heavily re-written by editors because it made American troops appear too heroic. There seems to be a pattern of ignoring the heroes that pervades the mainstream media in favor of death and disaster – and reports of the latter may be greatly exaggerated.

Ultimately, *My Men Are My Heroes* is a book well worth reading. It shows that the American military still has heroes – ones that are as worthy as those who fought in the wars of the past. It is also a fine read, and should be in the library of anyone who wants to see a view of Fallujah from one of those who fought there.

Reviewer: Harold C. Hutchison [Buy it at Amazon.com](#)

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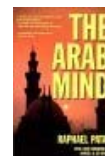
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