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An underemployed, skateboarding party animal, Colby Buzzell traded a dead-end future for the army--and ended up as a machine gunner in Iraq. To make sense of the absurd and frightening events surrounding him, he started writing a blog about the war--and how it differed from the government's official version. But as his blog's popularity grew, Buzzell became the embedded reporter the Army couldn't control--despite its often hilarious 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; the first, fierce firefight against the "men in black." 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.

My War: Killing Time in Iraq Details

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Author : Colby Buzzell

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Elena says

Che bello! Non ho letto molti altri libri di guerra quindi non posso fare un paragone vero e proprio però mi è piaciuto moltissimo.

Nelle descrizioni Colby è immediato, efficace, senza fronzoli, come dovrebbero essere tutte le testimonianze sulla guerra.

Descrive molto bene le missioni e le impressioni di quella che è la maggior parte dei soldati che partono senza veramente sapere cosa si aspettano. Perché la vera guerra non è quella dei film e se c'è un modo per avvicinarsi a capire come sia senza viverla in prima persona è attraverso questo libro!

Matthew Komatsu says

I'd have to check in with Pete Molin over at Time Now (he shared his far-more-intelligent-thoughts on My War) but I believe that Buzzell's My War: Killing Time in Iraq was one of the first, if not THE first, literary memoir to emerge from Iraq. First published in October of 2005, the flash-to-bang on the memoir's production was incredibly tight: Buzzell deployed to Iraq in 2003 with the Army, and came home in 2004. Which means what I'd estimate to have been less than a year to write and finish the book. Coincidentally, Buzzell deployed at roughly the same time as Brian Turner (My Life as a Foreign Country), who was also stationed at Ft Lewis, WA. Two remarkable writers in the same neighborhood: I have to wonder if their paths crossed at some point. It's hard to remember now, but blogging was kind of a new thing back then. Blogs were springing up all across the web, and being heralded as a kind of democratic approach to journalism. And those deployed to Iraq were taking advantage of the medium for a variety of purposes as well. I can recall coming across one while I was in Iraq, established by a guy I knew deployed at the same time as me, as a way of keeping his family updated. Colby Buzzell, on the other hand, was by all accounts looking for a way to pass the time. So he established an anonymous blog that ended up going viral. He's still got the original blog posts up at Blogspot if you want to check them out.

I probably read the book within a year of its release and its raw prose blew me away. Unlike the repetitive autobiographies of trigger-pullers and generals, it was clear that Buzzell was grappling with the larger story of what it all meant. That last sentence is important to me in terms of taxonomy: for the most part, I don't read non-literary war memoirs. If all you've got in your story is a bunch of things that happened to you, Godspeed. Those stories are important, and I'm glad they're available. They are, or can be, art. A literary memoir, however, is at least trying to be Art, and does so by chasing the meaning of an experience.

That right there is the lesson of My War for war memoirists (and maybe even any author in general.) You need to be able to answer the question, "what's this all about?" And my gut feeling is that answer can't be, "it's about me going to war," unless you've got one hell of an exciting or unique perspective. There needs to be some kind of through-line. Slaughterhouse Five is certainly a war novel. But above that, it is about the moral complicity and guilt Vonnegut felt as a result of what he experienced during WWII.

My War answers the question adequately enough -- and it didn't hurt that Buzzell's voice was fresh and unique. But most importantly, there's enough connective tissue in there to take it beyond a disparate collection of things that happened and into literary territory.

Outoftunetoo says

Cool unbiased look at the war in Iraq by a soldier who kind of brought the "blogging while at war" deal to the forefront.

Jared Beach says

Buzell's take on war is a good chance to see what the majority of troops actually experience: confusion and boredom.

Sam Reaves says

Soldiers' memoirs vary in quality; usually the less filtered through co-authors, editors, high-ranking officers and the like, the better they are. This one's terrific.

Colby Buzzell was a Bay-area guy not up to much at age twenty-six, a skateboarder and punk music enthusiast, a bit of a hoodlum, who was tired of dead-end jobs, tired of being broke. A two-year enlistment in the army started to sound like a pretty good deal. And not for the vocational skills, either: Buzzell wanted the infantry, because he wanted the adventure. By late 2003 he was in Mosul with the 101st Airborne, getting all the adventure he could handle.

What makes this memoir special is that this Generation X wild child turned trigger-puller is also an independent thinker, a curious and voracious reader, and a keen observer willing to put it all down unfiltered by much of anything. It makes for compelling reading. Buzzell records the tedium and the terror of an infantryman's existence; he casts a skeptical eye on military foolishness while remaining committed to the mission and his fellow soldiers. If you want to know who's fighting our wars and what it does to them, check out this soldier's tale.

Nathan says

My War is an autobiographical collection of blog entries, anecdotes and musings about life in the US army in Iraq. The writing is not amazing, but the guy's got a really solid voice and his story-telling is very honest and funny.

Colby, on the subject of a fellow soldier insisting that he give his machine gun a name:

I thought about it for a second, and then I told him that I would name my M240 "Rosebud." He said that was a cool name, and then with a smile asked me, "So who's Rosebud?" I could tell that he was probably suspecting Rosebud to be the name of some lap-dancing stripper or something like that. When I broke the news to him that it was inspired by the movie *Citizen Kane*, he said, "Citizen what?"

I then explained to him that *Citizen Kane* was an old black-and-white Orson Welles movie, and that Rosebud was the name of the main character's sled, which in the movie symbolized Kane's lost childhood, and then I joked that if I got killed while behind the gun I'd probably mutter the word "Rosebud" as my last dying word. He then called me a weirdo and walked away.

Jody says

Pretty good book that can be read quick. Has a little something for everyone. Didn't know what a Stryker was until I read this book. Looked them up on the web and we were very impressed. Also, I was able to look up some things the author mentioned and that made the book more real for me. Found this on a list here at Goodreads and am glad I took the time to read it.

Andy Getch says

A worthwhile read with excerpts from a blog/diary written from the POV of an infantry soldier

RandomAnthony says

Colby Buzzell's *My War* is very good. Buzzell manages to write without pretension; he doesn't seem to engage in scenes in order to write about them, nor does he seem to exaggerate to make himself look authorly. This is a harder trick, I imagine, than it looks. I've never been in the military, so I can't speak to the realistic/unrealistic question related to *My War*, but I appreciate how honest Buzzell sounds. He's patriotic without fanaticism, critical without self-righteousness, and humble without affectation. I feel like I've got a better sense of a soldier's life, particularly in Iraq, from *My War*; I'm too old for that gig, no doubt, but I appreciate the way Buzzell breaks down the complexity of all the theoretical talk down to what it's like for a guy, for example, running a checkpoint during an urban evacuation. Excellent work, Mr. Buzzell. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

Sean McLachlan says

I read Buzzell's famous memoir in preparation for my own trip to Iraq. While I was going as a tourist and not a soldier, I found this book to be really informative.

For example, Buzzell says, "[the women] would stare at us but as soon as you made eye contact, they would look away. The Iraqi men were a little different. They stare too, but don't look away, and if you wave, which is something they never initiate, they wave back, nervously."

That was 2003-4. In October 2012 the women still look away, except for a few younger ones. The men are more forthcoming. On the street they rarely wave first, but when you wave or say *salaam alaykum* most burst into a smile and return your greeting. If they're in a place where they feel more comfortable, like a mosque, they'll often come up to you first and start a conversation.

While this is a war memoir, much of the book is about Buzzell's personal growth and the uncomfortable position he gets in when the blog he's writing becomes famous. The Army had never had to deal with this before and its policy on blogging was pretty much created because of him.

The subtitle, "Killing Time in Iraq" more accurately reads, "Killing *Time* in Iraq". Buzzell discovers all too well the truth of that old saying, "War is long periods of boredom punctuated by moments of sheer terror."

The boredom is narrated with hilarious cynicism. The terror is some of the best combat writing I've ever read. If you want to know about the war in Iraq from a grunt's-eye view, read this book.

Joanna says

Based on his blog (of the same title and that caused great controversy a few years back when the Army got all pissed off about it) this book is a first hand account of life as a foot soldier in Iraq. Buzzell captures the sentiments of someone in transition--he joined the army not out of patriotism but as a means to escape his going nowhere life back in the States. As his story progresses he begins to question the sanity of the Army and the legality of the Iraq war. What's being reported on the mass media news is (surprise surprise) quite different from what's happening on the ground. Buzzell is fairly conservative--more libertarian than left leaning in his views. He makes no bones about putting on hard core music before going out in his Stryker to "secure" an area. But neither does he hide his fear when his platoon is ambushed. It's interesting and important to see his transformation from a "regular Army guy" to a person who is aware of the consequences of his actions by participating in military "operations."

One may ask why I'm reading (my husband Noah says somewhat obsessively) all these accounts of life as a soldier in Iraq. I don't usually gravitate to these types of books. However, as this war drags on and on and on and on and thousands are killed, people who are actually fighting (not embedded media) can give us a more personal look into the costs of war. It's also nice to see soldiers speaking out against an illegal and unjust war.

Sarah (East of the Sun & West of the Moon) says

In actual fact, I'd put this at 4.5 stars. Quite possibly one of my favourite wartime autobiographies from this century. It's incredibly readable and immensely down to earth. Nothing high flung about it. The honesty reminded me of 'Restrepo' in the form of a book. In any case, I read this a while ago, so a full review will come once I'm home for the summer and can grab my copy (and stars may potentially be amended - we'll see).

Alex McCorkindale says

Very interesting and engaging look at a Stryker unit operating in Iraq from the perspective of an unlikely Soldier. An awful lot of time is spent on the backstory of how the author ended up joining the Army, and the tone gets a little self-congratulatory at times, but a good read overall.

George says

Hooah!

Lauren says

Colby Buzzell is a California slacker turned soldier turned professional writer. His hold on literary technique is astounding. He is a natural writer.

This book is the story of a slacker's search for change and excitement, his experience as a soldier in Iraq, and his thoughts on the operation of the Army and the war in Iraq. The images of war he creates in the reader's mind are like those written in great war novels - but then you realize that this stuff really happened and still happens every day.

It's fascinating. I recommend it to anybody interested in a soldier's account of today's Iraq War.

The only pitfall this book has is the continuously extensive use of foul language. At first, it threw me off. But, with time, it developed a solid character, and then that character became more and more endearing with each new foul word that he used. I came to love him and his voice in this book because it was flawed and it was real.
