



The Coldest War: A Memoir of Korea

By James Brady

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America's "forgotten war" lasted just thirty-seven months, yet 54,246 Americans died in that time -- nearly as many as died in ten years in Vietnam. On the fiftieth anniversary of this devastating conflict, James Brady tells the story of his life as a young marine lieutenant in Korea.

In 1947, seeking to avoid the draft, nineteen-year-old Jim Brady volunteered for a Marine Corps program that made him a lieutenant in the reserves on the day he graduated college. He didn't plan to find himself in command of a rifle platoon three years later facing a real enemy, but that is exactly what happened after the Chinese turned a so-called police action into a war.

The Coldest War vividly describes Brady's rapid education in the realities of war and the pressures of command. Opportunities for bold offensives sink in the miasma of trench warfare; death comes in fits and starts as too-accurate artillery on both sides seeks out men in their bunkers; constant alertness is crucial for survival, while brutal cold and a seductive silence conspire to lull soldiers into an often fatal stupor.

The Korean War affected the lives of all Americans, yet is little known beyond the antics of "M*A*S*H." Here is the inside story that deserves to be told, and James Brady is a powerful witness to a vital chapter of our history.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

As a new Marine second lieutenant, Brady, one-time publisher of Women's Wear Daily, joined Dog Company on the front line in Korea on Thanksgiving Day 1951 and departed the following Fourth of July with his hide intact. During that time he learned how to lead an infantry platoon in combat and later served as executive and intelligence officer of the company. The action sequences--patrols, ambushes, prisoner-snatching raids--are vivid and memorable, conveying the unique flavor of the second year of the "peculiar war." Giving the memoir distinction, however, are the author's comments on those he served with, the prickly relations between Marine officers and enlisted men, and the differences between Marine and Army troops. Brady's ingenuous account of how he learned to lead men in combat while he was scared to death is appealing. Photos.

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From School Library Journal

YA-- A compelling account of Brady's year as a Marine lieutenant in the Korean War. This fascinating book packs twice the whallop for being both an informative and judicious look at America's "forgotten war" as well as a page-turner. That more Americans were killed (54,000) in this stand-off than in Vietnam is a fact few young people are aware of, and in these times of increased interest in reassessing our rationale and methods in Vietnam, the Korean war holds a remarkable series of parallels that will leave readers wondering how we could have repeated so many mistakes. Brady has an engaging style, placing poignant memories of lighting up in the trenches with his buddies alongside suspensefully drawn incidents of two-bit and grand-scale skirmishes in which those same buddies are carried off the field on stretchers. An insightful look at the changes that even a so-called liberal young man goes through in the peculiar human and male rituals of war adds to an already rich and satisfying book. --Catherine vanSonnenberg, San Diego Public Library

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From Library Journal

Brady is a popular novelist (the Hampton series, e.g., *The Gin Lane*) and a well-known columnist (*Advertising Age* and *Parade* magazines), but few people know that he was also a platoon leader in the Korean War. Brady's story begins with his arrival in Korea in November 1951. By then, the North Koreans (with the Chinese) and the UN armies stood facing each other halfway down the Korean peninsula. With the region's harsh winter approaching, neither army was preparing any great offensives. Brady's narrative reveals the boredom and physical discomfort of being on the front line for weeks at a time, offset only by the sheer terror of night attacks or patrols crossing the minefields. The war by this time had stabilized into static trench warfare something World War I veterans would recognize. Brady's book is well written, and this reviewer regrets not reading it in one sitting. It compares favorably with Stephen E. Ambrose's *Citizen Soldiers* (LJ 11/15/97), although Brady's work is much shorter. This thoughtful work is recommended for both public and academic libraries. DMark Ellis, Albany State Univ., GA

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Users Review

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