



The Last Stand of Fox Company: A True Story of U.S. Marines in Combat

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The Last Stand of Fox Company: A True Story of U.S. Marines in Combat Bob Drury , Tom Clavin 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 that will need to be held open at all costs. The mission is handed to Captain William Barber and the 234 Marines of Fox Company, a courageous but undermanned unit of the First Marines. Barber and his men climb seven miles of frozen terrain to a rocky promontory overlooking the pass, where they will endure four days and five nights of nearly continuous Chinese attempts to take Fox Hill. Amid the relentless violence, three-quarters of Fox's Marines are killed, wounded, or captured. Just when it looks like they will be overrun, Lt. Colonel Raymond Davis, a fearless Marine officer who is fighting south from Chosin, volunteers to lead a daring mission that will seek to cut a hole in the Chinese lines and relieve the men of Fox. This is a fast-paced and gripping account of heroism in the face of impossible odds."

The Last Stand of Fox Company: A True Story of U.S. Marines in Combat Details

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Dakota Jones says

I am not a Marine and I don't imagine that I ever will be. However, I don't think you need to be a Marine to appreciate the story of heroism and brotherhood that is this book. This is not a book that glorifies war or attempts to justify war in any way. There is nothing political about it. This book is about the men who were asked to fight in the name of the United States in a country that one Marine Officer claimed Genghis Khan wouldn't have tried to tackle. Throughout this book the experiences of several Marines are woven together so that the reader can gain an understanding, or at least an appreciation, of the hardships that soldiers endure at the request of their country.

I would like to say that this book was over dramatized, but can you overdramatize war? Can you use the word "overdramatize" without a derogatory overtone? I don't think so; so I will say that some parts of this book may have been exaggerated or better yet, assumed. Obviously the author had some holes to fill. Part of being a great story teller is not so much lying about what happened, but making what did happen more accessible. I am sure that some of the dialogue was created by Drury and that some of the scenes were not so cut and dry, but I don't think that I would have had the same feelings about this book if it had read like a research paper rather than a novel.

A lot of the imagery was well written and I was able to connect with the people in the story through the descriptions of the harsh winter and brutal combat. I don't feel that the battle scenes were made too grotesque or too unrealistic; I actually think that the way he described those scenes was genuine. Throughout the story I felt there was a very authentic tone which helped me "enjoy" it even more.

The ending really got me. I won't bother putting any spoilers, but I will say that on the last page before the Epilogue I could understand why someone would get choked up. I'm not saying I did, but I could see why someone would. Okay, so I was pretty choked up.

Overall, this was an enduring story that took me almost a year to finally finish. I wish I would have just focused on one book at a time, but I did finish this one and I am better for the experience. Much love to the Men and Women of our Military.

Jason Koivu says

Whenever something's titled "the last stand of" you know it doesn't end well for whoever's name is unfortunate enough to come after the "of".

Bob Drury and Tom Clavin's *The Last Stand of Fox Company* spotlights a horrendous engagement during the Korean War, the Battle of Chosin Reservoir. Extreme freezing temperatures, the introduction of Chinese forces fighting on the North Korean's side, and the enemy's overwhelming numbers created one of the most adverse battle conditions in military history. Some even liken it to the Battle of Thermopylae (what the kids now call "300" due to the popular movie).

Though this is about one battle between essentially two armies, this book feels like it includes a cast of thousands. There are so many stories to be told and many end in sadness. Regardless, they are all intertwined nicely. A soldier's tale maybe be told in one, quick gulp if that's all the reader would be interested in. The tale of others may stretch through out the book, such as that of Colonel William E. Barber, then a captain and

veteran of WWII. Loose strings like that are handled deftly and all is tied up satisfactorily in the end.

Lee says

I've ranted about crappy editing in military works for years. Now, I need to add clueless book narrators to the mix. I may read this in print someday, but I couldn't listen to the reader mispronounce "X Corps" and "Garland rifle" after the first disc.

K.M. Weiland says

One of the points this book makes is that the Korean War is often overlooked altogether, particularly in comparison to its "big brother" WWII. This was certainly the case for me. Historical wars are of particular interest for me, but what I've read about Korea could fill a teaspoon. Not only was this book a fascinating primer on the subject, it is also an incredibly good tale in its own right.

The authors do a great job of interweaving the soldiers' personal stories with the overall schematics of the battle itself. In many ways, it reminded me of Stephen Ambrose's spectacular Band of Brothers. Definitely worth the read for anyone interested in warfare and particularly the conflict in Korea.

Julie says

An amazing and horrific account! For those of us whose awareness of the Korean War comes mostly from watching Alan Alda and Loretta Swift (like me), this book is a must read. I feel a bit foolish admitting that I had no idea what this war was about, and I certainly was even more clueless about Fox Company and what those Marines faced, endured, and survived.

I "read" this as an audiobook. The narrator sounded like a news anchor from the 50s, but his gruff style was effective in portraying Marines.

Semper fi.

Matthew Phelps says

Fantastic story of the heroic Marines of Fox Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, near the Chosin Reservoir of North Korea in November, 1950. Although it reads like a novel and as one of the most accessible battle accounts I've read, it is very real and based on interviews of survivors and historical reports. I paused several times in pure awe of the men who fought and died, and by the end was having to pause every few paragraphs to choke back tears. As a Marine, this book speaks to me on a level of both kinship and great appreciation and respect for the Marines who fought before me. Any American who has ever wondered what it means to be a Marine and why we value and honor our history should read this book, and reflect on the countless tales of selfless contributions and sacrifice for the nation's history.

Bethanyweed says

And suddenly I'm interested in the Korean War! CRAZY CRAZY stuff these men went through. So much respect and admiration. The story of Fox Company, who was required to hold one stupid hill at all costs-for days-through below freezing conditions and constant attack by an innumerable enemy...

Mike says

At the Marine Museum, four signature 20th Century battles are honored. We all know about 3 of them, Belleau Wood, Iwo Jima, Khe Sanh...but Fox Hill? I had never heard of this battle. The Last Stand of Fox Company: A True Story of U.S. Marines in Combat is one of the best accounts of a small-unit action in a major battle I have come across. For 6 days, Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, Seventh Regiment fought off the CCF 59th Division and held open a key choke point on the main supply route to the Chosin Reservoir. Three Medals of Honor were awarded for this fight. The cold weather is as much an enemy as anything else.

The book has a perfect balance of placing the importance of this fight in the wider context, along with maps and diagrams of the defensive positions, the troop movements, the attacks and the wider battlefield. It had just the right amount of detail for me. Strangely, the style of writing here worked just fine in jumping from the fight to discussing the backgrounds of the participants. I had complained about this technique in Drury and Clavin's other book, Last Men Out: The True Story of America's Heroic Final Hours in Vietnam. One clear difference is the riveting accounts of the individual battles.

Fox Company fought by themselves for 6 days, only resupplied on a few occasions by airdrops. They had to scrounge weapons and ammunition on the battlefield. Much of it came from the Chinese forces. Here is one picture after two nights of battle.

As a result of the airdrops and the captured weapons, each American foxhole now resembled an international gun show. At least that was Dick Bonelli's thoughts as he eyed the armaments lining the parapet of the hole near his light machine gun emplacement up on the east crest. Walt Klein and Frank Valtierra had covered the rim with two Thompson submachine guns, an 8-mm Mauser rifle, a forty-five caliber American-made Grease Gun, a German-made machine pistol with a sack of ammo, and a 1903 Springfield rifle complete with stripper-clipped ammunition rounds. Their M1s were crisscrossed across a box of grenades.

“Startin’ a war?” Bonnelli yelled.

This is a mandatory addition to the permanent Korean War bookshelf. Great story.

Colleen says

This remarkable book tells the unbelievable story of a small company of Marines fighting to hold open a mountain pass in Korea. Out-numbered and out-gunned, these 246 Marines hold off 10,000 Chinese soldiers determined to overtake the Toktong Pass near the Choisin Reservoir. The story of their eight day battle is a

moving account of bravery and of sacrifice.

Drury and Clavin have given the reader a riveting day-by-day picture of the efforts of this extraordinary group of soliders. The narrative is enriched by what are obviously first-hand accounts from the soldiers themselves. The horrors of the days, where the Marines must battle both the elements and the enemy, are meticulously detailed, as are the ever-mounting casualties.

This book is not an easy read by any means, but even knowing the staggering losses that would be presented, I found it hard to put down. Both the writing and the story itself draw the reader in, and make finishing this book an imperative. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in U.S. military history.

Carol Storm says

Everything the titles promises and more -- non stop action, inspirational stories, a look at a breed of fighting men who have never been equaled anywhere -- the United States Marines!

Jack says

I finished this one in record time. Nothing is more thrilling than reading about those surrounded by vastly superior numbers holding on by a thread and ultimately winning. Oh yeah, throw in an extreme winter to top it off. One of the hallmark episodes of the vaunted US Marine Corps is the battle of Fox Company on Fox hill. No one truly knows how many Chinese soldiers perished during the siege of approximately 1 week. One to three thousand Chinese died attempting to throw the Marines off the hill. Unfortunately for them, they were not prepared for the stubbornness or firepower of a Marine Rifle Company.

The setting is the drive to the Yalu. The American/UN forces have separated into the 8th Army and the 10th Corps which cannot support each other. Red China has broadcast warnings to the UN that it will intervene if the drive continues. The drive continues and Marshall Peng's "volunteer" army streams South. The Chinese are superb at avoiding detection yet the Americans have warnings of a new player on the street. Unfamiliar prisoners speaking a different language appear. The firefights are not with retreating North Korean soldiers but with someone else who is far more proficient. The South Koreans catch a few of these new soldiers and appear very afraid of them. They should be. The Red Chinese Army is composed of battle hardened veterans who just ousted Chang Kai Shek's Nationalist Chinese into exile on Taiwan. They have plenty of experience and they are well armed thanks to all the US weaponry they captured from the surrendering and retreating Chinese Nationalist Army. Worst of all, these are Manchurian soldiers well acquainted with the harsh winter climate. They favored night attacks and flowed around the UN flanks. The UN forces with their drive to the Yalu was becoming a potential rout of their forces. Enter the Marines of Fox Company. Fox Hill was located behind the retreating Marine Division. If Fox fell, the 8000 Marines would be cut more than they already were. The Chinese expected to easily subdue the single company with a battalion of soldiers. The night attack caught the Marines by surprise but the Marines had a few surprises of their own. Most were well trained and experienced from their Inchon landings. Also they were well led by combat veterans from the Pacific Crucible. Battalion after battalion broke upon the Marine riflemen. The Marines held while the retreating Marines (aka the Ridgerunners) began a night breakout from their isolated position in the North to link up with Fox Company. It was completed in one night. The retreating Marines were surprised to see massive piles of bunkering in front of each Fox rifle foxhole. Upon closer inspection they were horrified to

see that the Fox soldiers had used Chinese corpses to fortify their rifle positions. Marines could not step on the ground because of the massive piles of dead Chinese soldiers.

Eleanor Roosevelt stated, "Thank God for the United States Marine Corps!" Many stated the same during the harsh days of the Korean War.

Jeffrey Miller says

Of all the accounts of specific battles of the Korean War, none are more vivid, riveting, and intense as the one described in *The Last Stand of Fox Company: A True Story of US Marines in Combat*. The authors place you right there with the Marines on Fox Hill in one of the most gallant, heroic stands of the Korean War. Although there have been numerous firsthand accounts of the war, specifically Martin Russ's *The Last Parallel: A Marine's War Journal* and Joe Owen's *Colder than Hell, The Last Stand of Fox Company: A True Story of US Marines in Combat* deserves a place among these classic accounts of the conflict.

To be sure, the authors describe the horrors of those days and nights on Fox Hill from the perspective of the men who fought, survived, and died there. You shiver when you read how cold it was for the men; you almost can hear the bullets whizzing overhead, smell the cordite in the air and breathe a sigh of relief when the men of Fox Company survive another night. The authors excel in their detailed accounts of battle that allows readers to have some basic understanding of what it was like for the Marines on the hill as they fought to stay alive, surviving one attack after another, until help arrived.

In 2000, as a feature writer for the *Korea Times*, the oldest English language newspaper in Korea, I had the honor to meet two of the men who survived that ordeal: General (ret.) Raymond Davis, who led the rescue mission from Yudam-ni, and Henry Danilowski, who was a member of Fox Company. I was covering one of the Korean War commemorative events, which just happened to fall on a frigid Veteran's Day, in the Yongsan Garrison in Seoul. Davis talked about how treacherous it was for him to lead his men, the ridgerunners, over those frozen, craggy ridges to rescue Fox Company. The soft-spoken Davis, stopped a few times as he recalled that mission and that night, his voice filled with emotion when he described how the sudden appearance of a star in the sky on that very dark night was a sign that he and his men would reach the beleaguered men of Fox Company and survive that night as well as how he hoped he could return to Hagaru-ri one day and bring back the Marines still buried there.

If you want to remember and honor those men who fought in this so-called "forgotten war" this is one book that should be at the top of your list.

Gerry says

This was a harrowing account of a battle location that held strategic importance for the rear movement of the American Forces leaving the Chosin Reservoir during the Korean War. There were only minor parts in this book that I didn't care for but the detail on the battle and struggle over the course of 6 days + 2 more were well accounted for. Some of these young men lost their lives in a place far away that is all but forgotten today by the vast majority of Americans. This story is of Fox Company, 2nd Bn, 7th Mar, 1st MarDiv which were located at Toksong-san pass on Fox Hill located just off the MSR between Yudam-ni and Hagaru-ri to

the southeast of Chosin. I would have preferred a better detail account along the story line of where the big picture laid and less negative comments about MacArthur (though not enough negativity in my view could ever be expressed toward Ned Almond.)

For people that enjoy reading military history and specific engagements then this would be a good book for you. It is graphic, real, and forces a person to revisit the horrors of Korea before the years of Vietnam and after the conclusion of the Second World War.

Jennifer Harper says

The TV show MASH brought the Korean War into the living rooms of millions, but if you want to know what it was like for the soldiers on the field, this book is a must read. It is a testament to the indomitable human spirit and tells the tale of how ordinary young men, most of them teenagers, rose up against seemingly insurmountable odds to become heroes.

Bob Drury and Tom Clavin provide a revealing glimpse into the life of a Marine grunt. You can feel the bitter cold, the pain, the hunger of the men, live those horrifying days of attack with them in these pages as they experience the bittersweet highs and the horrendous losses. If you are interested in military history--or if you simply want to find out what the life of a combat solider is like--then this book should be on your shelf.

Wally says

I am amazed that this story isn't taught to our children in school. How did we get to the point where we forgot the heroism of our ancestors? This story of courage and dedication make me proud of my heritage as an American and ashamed that I am just now finding out about it. How could I be so blind to not have learned about what our educators have worked so hard to discredit?
