



Close Combat

W.E.B. Griffin

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CLOSE COMBAT is W.E.B. Griffin's epic novel of World War II--a powerful, dramatic tribute to the brave men and women who lived it...The captain who led his squadron in to the fiercest air battles of the Pacific. The correspondent who learned more about combat than he bargained for. The Marine who embarked on a top secret mission from which there was no certain return...

Close Combat Details

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From Reader Review Close Combat for online ebook

Steve says

Remember the classic 1984 Wendy's television commercial? Remember the iconic "Fluffy Bun" ad? Remember when elderly actress Clara Peller asked the question, "Where's the beef?" Well, when I finished reading this W.E.B. Griffin novel of the U.S. Marine Corps, I could only ask myself, "Where's the combat?"

Oh, there is one brief aerial dogfight at 28,000 feet over the Solomon Islands involving twenty-four Japanese Kates and Vals. You could even throw in a mock "shoot-em-up" between four Grumman F4F4 Wildcats "killing" each other with 16mm motion picture cameras mounted in the wings. But even that event took place over Corey Field in Escambia County, Florida! For a printed chronicle of Marine action in the Pacific Ocean during World War II, for all practical purposes, there's nothing to see here. No action. Zilch. Squat. Nada.

If there's any action between the 406 pages of "Close Combat," most of it takes place between the sheets. In a hotel room or private mansion. And even that is mostly implied. There are no main characters here that the reader would like to get to know or to care about. I'm not even sure who the main characters are! What the reader is left with is a lot of dialogue. Mostly between military brass and their subordinates.

Griffin has a habit of advancing the plot, (if there is a plot here), using setting, date and time stamps in military format, of course, as chapter and sub-chapter headings. Every chapter contains numerous, authentic-looking, "top secret" memos, again, written in military jargon, as an additional plot-advancing tool. If you read just the chapter, sub-chapter headings and the memos, you might actually have a story. In between, Griffin leaves us with lots of dialogue. No action.

On the positive side, Griffin does do a masterful job of re-creating a military atmosphere. And as other reviewers in this forum have noted, Griffin is an artist at painting what life was probably like in World War II America. He makes effective use of actual persons and places from the 1940's. Authentic-sounding but fictional dialogue from Franklin Roosevelt, Frank Knox, Douglas MacArthur, Chester Nimitz and others makes this historical piece come alive. Another favorite Griffin tool is to insert within dialogue the thoughts of the characters in italics. The problem is, sometimes you're never quite sure which character's head you are inside.

A better title might've been "Close Encounters." The military combat here is only talked about or reported in military memos. After the fact. Never in real time. The close combat here is only between the sexes. Over drinks. In the bar. In the bedroom. This is a military soap opera. Lots and lots of F-bombs. Lots and lots of heavy drinking. A chick flick for Leathernecks.

Until I picked up "Close Combat," I was totally unaware that W.E.B. Griffin is the author of more than fifty epic novels in six series, with over fifty million copies in print in more than ten languages. I was not aware that this story is only the sixth installment in a ten-novel series called "The Corps." However, after reading this literary "fluffy bun," I will not be around to sample the other nine or "The Brotherhood of War," "Men at War," "Badge of Honor," "Honor Bound," and "The Presidential Agent" collections. I'm bailing out. Semper Fi.

Michelle says

More World War II in the Pacific. The Coastwatchers are relieved, and we watch the fight to retain Guadalcanal. More unrealistically drawn women wanting nothing more than to land a Marine, but I will forgive Griffin this because, hey, what do I know? Maybe this is truly how women felt during the early 1940's. I love how we get more time with Pick--I enjoy his ridiculous optimism and how he has stayed the same silly man-child throughout.

George says

The story continues. And...it just seems to go on and on and on. After some hero battles, several heroes end up in USMC bond drive. All Griffin's books are great and this one's no different. There's an added character or two and a minimum of combat action. Seems like everyone is getting commissioned after a good performance. There are some good drunks, which I attribute to combat stress. On to Corps #7.

Andy says

Enjoyable, if not quite up to the high standards set by its five predecessors, this one read more like "these are the Days Of Our Corps". I get the feeling that Griffin intended this to be more of a set up novel for the last four, as the reader now knows that Killer McCoy is now going to the Phillipines in the near future to meet a Marine to set up guerilla tactics in Mindinao. Everyone else ended up on a Marine hero recruitment parade. Anxious to see where the author takes those characters...

May says

I didn't realize this was a series of books. I think you have to read the others in the series to really appreciate this book.

Bob Conner says

I fell in love with Griffin's series about the Corps and have read all his awesome works. I can't recall reading a more engaging series with characters all so rich and colorful each of them could be an awesome novel of their own. But Griffin smashes them all together into one nuclear story.

Amazingly colorful characters - Kenneth "Killer" Kelley and his gorgeous wife Ernestine Sage, Jack "NMI" Stecker, Pick Pickering, Sgt Zimmerman, etc..... The list just goes on and on and they never lose their color, their connections to one another, or their vitality throughout the entire series.

I found Griffin's ability to play his characters off of historically real people, events, hell, even US companies were woven into this amazing work, from hotel chain owners to ship builders were played into his storyline.

Once I read the first - "Semper Fi," I was waiting in line for the bookstore to open on release day for the next in the sequence.

Most certainly my all-time favorite military fiction novels. Well, until the Brotherhood of War series came out and claimed some shelf space for my favorite(s).

If books were drugs, there would be no rehab that could fix this addiction.

Paul says

I have read this before but recently listened to the audio book, and since I never reviewed it from my previous reading, I am doing so now.

This book finds all of our major characters finally getting away from the hellish nightmare of Guadalcanal for various reasons, and many of them end up in either the States (for the war bonds tour) or Australia. Many of them find romance, as this is kind of an interim novel that resets the stage for later actions in the Pacific War. For that reason, it's not a great standalone novel, but it's a good respite for the characters and allows for greater character development (Griffin's primary talent).

Their exploits – like most of Griffin's characters – involve a lot of drinking and privileged living (his main characters are almost universally wealthy and/or well-connected), and are mostly people whose competence at their duty allows them to get away with some behaviors that others would be punished for – much like the Hawkeye Pierce (for fans of the TV show M*A*S*H) character, but with more respect for the military.

The storyline includes interactions with MacArthur and insight into his personality and leadership, as well as some interactions with other historical figures like Frank Knox and FDR, and this makes for an interesting enhancement to the fictional characters' actions.

Jim McCulloch says

I think reading a series out of order is ill-advised, yet I did it anyway. I'm sure I would have enjoyed it more had I started with #1. Excellent writing and terrific insight into the "pecking order" and political machinations within the career officers vs reserve dynamic. Not always pretty but very real.

Ronald Wise says

Book VI of *The Corps Series* — I had to skip Book V because there are no surviving copies at the library, and am reading the large print edition of this one because it is the last surviving copy. The same characters re-emerge as the war in the Pacific continues and holding Guadalcanal becomes the main concern. This series was recommended by librarian Nancy Peary in the "World War II Fiction" recommendations of *Book Lust*, and I have recently read two earlier books in the series.

Will says

The Marines Prevail at Guadalcanal; on to Philippine Guerillas. In the process of defending 'Canal,

Galloway, Dunn and Pickering become aces and DFC winners, relegated back to war bond tours. Tom 'Machine Gun' McCoy is awarded the MoH, but is difficult to handle. Dunn and Pick head back as IPs to instruct the next wave of fighter pilots. Pickering prepares to ramp up support for the moled in Americans leading the guerilla battle against the Japs in the Philippines.

Kevin says

A really good read but not what I was hoping for. This focused on... I'm really not sure. It was just basically a lot of romantic vignettes and planning stage vignettes. There was really no action in this book. The only 'close combat' seemed like it was in the boudoir. There was some resolution with one of the more despicable characters of the series but overall it felt like it was setting up the next book more than telling its own tale. Thoroughly enjoyable as it developed some of the characters I've grown to know and love but not up to the same level as the previous books.

Katie says

W.E.B. Griffin makes it work out for his heroes...even if it takes a while, they get promotions and they get the girls. (Even if they immediately have to leave those girls to head back to the front, but hey, we military significant others have a unique strength that gets us through that terrible wait.) If only today's real Marine Corps had people running around instantly promoting those who deserve it and writing eloquently harsh negative reports on those who deserve THAT...there are Macklins and Fellers aplenty without there always being Bannings, Pickerings, Dillons, and Sages around to counter them.

James Burns says

Every book I finish by W.E.B. Griffin is my favorite book he wrote. Were still @ Guadalcanal, The Marines are dug in and reinforced by Marine and U.S. Army Units. The Japanese are gathering forces for a counter-attack. some of our main characters are on a war bond tour and have been awarded medals by The President and the Secretary of the Navy. We are introduced to new characters, and some interesting occurences for the old ones, and surprise daparture by one special case.

Brad T. says

Best book of the series so far

JBradford says

I had not read anything by W.E.B. Griffin before, and I am not sure why I started with Book VI of a series, which I normally try very hard not to do, and it makes reading the precursors a little disappointing, since I

know what is going to happen to some of the characters ... but I am definitely now going to have to go look for some of the others. Not since *Catch 22* have I come across a military book that so aptly described what it was like to be in the service. Of course, this is a little off, because the majority of Griffin's story is about the life accounts of two flip lieutenants who have much too easy a life; they are wealthy and stay in the best hotels, sleep with movie stars, etc. ... but what appealed to me was the way life in the service is described as depending on the whims casual decisions on the part of higher-ups, odd turns of fate, disparate personalities, and the desperate desire to do well -- all of which I remember so well. This book covers the period just after the initial taking of Guadalcanal, when the Japanese came very close to taking it back, with one of their obstructions being a team of American aviators that has dwindled down to three surviving young pilots flying planes that are not really fit to fly. The characters are not all that well rounded out, and actually not too realistic, but the story is well told though a series of vignettes touching the different levels of command, all of which seem oblivious to each other.
