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# The COLDEST WAR: A MEMOIR OF KOREA



## Synopsis

Recounts the personal experiences of James Brady, who received a commission in the 1950 Marine Corps Reserve and fought in the war in Korea, where he and his fellow soldiers endured the harsh elements of the land and its battles. Reissue.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

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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James Brady, *The Coldest War: A Memoir of Korea* (1990, New York: Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martin's Griffin edn., 2000) This is a splendid little book about what one American statesman characterized, quite accurately, as "a sour little war." The reasons are clear. With the possible exception of the Falkland Islands War, no other conflict in the second half of the 20th century was fought over ground as consistently inhospitable as the three-year struggle in barren, frigid Korea. Author James Brady, who served as a Marine lieutenant there, describes the essence of the problem early in the book: "Hard enough fighting a war; in Korea, the cold could kill you." And he invokes the horrors of combat in the First World War and the Civil War when he makes this point: "In some ways, it wasn't a modern war at all, more like Flanders or the Somme or even the Wilderness campaign." Brady is a wonderful writer and creates marvelous word pictures of the war. Many operations took place after dark, and he writes: "The grenade, the knife, the shotgun, even the shovel and the axe were the weapons of night patrols." Brady also offers telling observations about matters important and trivial, including fearing the night as shells roared out "very low and directly overhead," feeling chagrined when he could not answer a colonel's question about the location of two machine guns which he commanded, using a wooden ammunition box as a toilet, urinating on his rifle to thaw it for firing, not changing underwear for 46 days while "on the line, living in holes," and subsisting for weeks at a time on c-rations. Nevertheless, according to Brady: "There was a purity about life on the line, a crude priesthood of combat." And he also remarks: "When you weren't fighting, the war was pretty good." Readers may be offended by some of Brady's recollection, including the incessant references to Koreans as "gooks" (except when he visits a village and addresses the inhabitants as "our Korean brothers"): The Korean bearers who deliver supplies to the line are known by everyone as the "gook train," and the universal eating utensil manufactured from a shell casing is known as a "gook spoon." Chinese soldiers always are "chinks." However, I found Brady's honesty engaging, even when it was politically incorrect. Brady's memoir is

remarkably free of rancor, and, in fact, he appears to have respected his adversaries. Brady reports that some of the one million Chinese engaged in the war had been fighting continuously since the mid-1930s, first against the Japanese, then amongst themselves in the civil war which preceded the victory of Mao Zedong's Communists, and finally against the Republic of Korea, the United States, and their Allies. Nevertheless, Brady saves his highest accolades for his own First Marine Division, which he characterizes, without false modesty, as being "as powerful an infantry division as there had ever been in combat anywhere." Brady saves some of his most wry observations for superior officers, but he had unbridled admiration for his company commander Captain John Chafee, a graduate of Yale and Harvard Law School, who later was elected governor of Rhode Island and then had a distinguished career in the U.S. Senate. This book is not about grand strategy, national policy, or the geopolitics of the early Cold War. It provides a very narrow view of the Korean War. But, taken on its own terms, as the account of one Marine officer's experience, it is excellent.

James Brady is an excellent writer and he wrote an excellent picture of what it was like to serve with the First Marine Division in Korea in 1951 -1952. Korea was my first war and second service in a Marine Division having served first with the Second Marine Division at Camp Lejeune and on operations outside the country. Korea was a very cold but beautiful country. The enemy we fought were many but though outnumbered our leadership was superb and we had many WW II vets in the senior enlisted ranks. This book covers the war very well from a human perspective and I thoroughly enjoyed reading it and learning more about the Korean war before I got there. My fifteen months there were a challenge but nothing like you will gain an understanding about if you read this book. I was a time when land was fought for and taken, lost and retaken with cost of considerable human sacrifice. James Brady also wrote a good book about returning to Vietnam title *The Scariest Place in the World: A Marine Returns to North Korea*. Only thing I thought strange is Brady said he didn't have much in common with enlisted. I was both and served as a SNCO and officer, I had a lot in common with both enlisted and officers, junior to senior and would love to meet them any chance I could. But then Brady didn't get that much exposure to both sides.

Brady's novel, *The Marines of Autumn*, covers much of the same action his memoir, *The Coldest War*. Both are eminently readable, but the memoir is actually more moving than the novel. As a combat veteran, I have found most descriptions of war do not evoke the feeling of being there--and perhaps no written description of battle can do that adequately. But Brady comes closer in *The Coldest War* than any other book I've read. One can feel some of the misery our Korean veterans

had to endure. Brady's book helps us understand their sacrifices, and I can only hope a wider readership of it will enable the achievements of the Coldest War veterans to be placed in proper perspective.

Just as advertised and at a bargain price.

The call up order for my Army MASH unit, was cancelled when, "Everyone will be home for Christmas". It has been until now before I wanted to read about the frozen Hell others endured. Brady is a very good writer, and HE LIVED IT! His account is very readable, and factual. NOW I know what it was like to be there. He went in on "Thanksgiving weekend" and was rotated out in September. The Lines of Maximum Resistance for both armies, when he left, were within 10 or 15 miles of where they had been when he went in. All that suffering, freezing, dying, for a "Draw"

very interesting new look at what those men and women went thru, and all the deaths and wounded while truce negotiation's for over a year!!!

The very best record of true life war experiences that I have ever read. James Brady has the knack of telling a story in a manner such that you feel that he had sat in your home and told you what he had been through! As there are few books written about the Korean War - it makes this book even more memorable.

An incredible memoir by a man who was there in the thick of it. Provides a detailed and unglorified account of the war as Brady saw it, down to dingleberries and dead buddies. A very "inside" look at Korea. It would be a great book to have college students read, as it will be a personal novel rather than a "boring" political, economic, diplomatic account. Brady holds nothing back, does not make himself out to be a hero at all, and essentially walks you through his time in Korea with him. I can't say enough good things about this book. READ IT!

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