FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Autobiography & Memoir

Once a Marine: An Iraq War Tank Commander's Inspirational Memoir of Combat, Courage, and Recovery

Mike Steere
Nick Popaditch
Savas Beatie

978-1-932714-47-0
(August 31, 2008)

He never saw the second guy. He saw the first guy on a rooftop in Fallujah, one of Iraq's major cities and the site of a horrendous battle in 2004. Marine Gunnery Sergeant Nick Popaditch got his tank crew to stop and swung his caliber-50 machine gun to target the fighter. The Iraqi's rocket propelled grenade blasted the tank, but did no damage. It was the last scene the Sergeant will ever see or hear completely because an unseen attacker fired a second RPG that hit Popaditch's helmet, frying his future in the Marines in an instant.

Popaditch lost one eye completely and most of the vision in other. He lost his hearing in one ear and with it, his balance. He lost his sense of smell. But what is most painful, he lost his hard-fought spot as a tank commander. Popaditch, a father of two, tells readers in his own gruff Marine Corps way how he faced the next set of challenges: he had to relearn how to live and move and be useful. He was forced to piece together a fair medical assessment within the confines of a rusty military medical bureaucracy.

Within his own family, he deals with anger, pity, and adolescent rebellion: "It's got to be tough on them watching Dad fumble and struggle…My family always wants to jump in and help…[M]y loved ones must understand that easy is a prison where I could be locked up for life." So he does what he's been trained to do: fight. Born in Indiana, Popaditch joined the Marines in 1986. He wrote this book of personal perseverance with Mike Steere, a freelance writer who also assisted on *Brothers of Iron* and who has been published in *Wired*, the *New York Times*, and *Men's Journal*, to thank those who helped him and as tribute to the Marine Corps he loved.

Courage, fortitude, and the refusal to surrender permeates *Once a Marine*. Popaditch is unequivocal in his support for the war in Iraq and his part in it. He lets his punches fly when

describing a jaded and stingy layer of bureaucrats who try to push him to settle for a less-than-accurate description of his injuries for his medical record. Popaditch may not have seen the second RPG coming, but his inspiring post-injury battle shows that he was trained and ready for it.

Deirdre Sinnott