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James E. Wise, Jr. and Scott Baron, *The Navy Cross: Extraordinary Heroism in Iraq , Afghanistan , and Other Conflicts*, Annapolis , MD : Naval Institute, 2007, 272 pp.

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The Navy Cross, the Navy's second highest award for valor was established by an act of Congress on February 4, 1919. The award was created in order to honor those serving in the United States Navy and the Marine Corps, who demonstrate extraordinary heroism under adverse circumstances. To date, the Navy Cross has been awarded 6, 921 times; including twenty times for actions involving men in Iraq and Afghanistan as part of the current war on terrorism.

After six years of media coverage of America's war on terror and the daily deluge of negative stories, *The Navy Cross* offers a counter to the negative story line. Former Naval Aviator James E. Wise and Vietnam veteran Scott Baron deliver more than the title implies. The authors present brief biographical sketches of the twenty men who were awarded the Navy Cross as a result of their heroic efforts in Iraq and/or Afghanistan but also move beyond the discussion of these twenty men, and include some other recipients of the Navy Cross, including Marine icons, Lt. General Lewis "Chesty" Puller and Major Gregory "Pappy" Boyington.

Contained within the pages of this book the reader will encounter the withering fire and the remarkable efforts of men who set the standard for bravery. Through the use of Navy citations, newspaper accounts, and other relevant sources, the authors recount in spine-tingling fashion, military history at its best. The result is a collection of stories that have been underreported, and so the authors readily employ the pen and their military

backgrounds to bring these stories to light. Among the principal players are Navy SEALs CPO Stephen Bass and CPO Britt Slabinski, Capt. Brent Morel, Sgt. Willie Copeland III, Sgt. Robert J. Mitchell, and 1st Sgt. Bradley Kasal.

The reviewer marveled at the actions of a group of Marines known collectively as the “Fallujah Seven.” In the days after the collapse of the Hussein regime, Fallujah became a center of insurgent activity. The insurgents engaged in looting and attacked American convoys with rocket propelled grenades in order to attract media attention, and to thwart American progress. In what became a major turning point in the Iraqi theatre of war, Marines were inserted into the city to eliminate the pockets of resistance. What followed was among the worst urban fighting in the history of the United States Marine Corps. While under heavy enemy fire, Marine Corporal Jeremiah Workman, for example, organized his squad of Marines to successfully rescue a group of isolated Marines, then with the expanded numbers extracted some wounded comrades, before turning attention to neutralizing the militants.

The biographical format of *The Navy Cross* makes it the sort of book that one can read over the course of several sessions without losing track of the overall motif. The authors intended the work to be a good read, packed with interesting bits of information, and a direct counter to the mainstream media’s negative emphasis on the American war effort. By in large, the authors have succeeded. In the process, they have provided the story of twenty extraordinary men, who were called upon in a moment when the lives of others were at stake, and these men answered in a manner that surpasses the imagination of most Hollywood script writers.



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