



Soldier: The Life of Colin Powell

Karen DeYoung

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An excellent biography of Colin Powell and his career

Soldier: The Life of Colin Powell Details

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James Seawel says

Like many Americans, I have a deep and abiding respect for Colin Powell. He is a man that should perhaps have been President and as this book mentions, it was given consideration. It's a rare black man in America that can unite our diverse country, but Colin Powell is such a man. His military service is exemplary and honorable. My only quarrel with him (who am I to judge? I know) is pointed out several times throughout this book. He would seriously disagree with the Bush Administration on many an issue, especially Cheney and Rumsfeld, but would stand with them united over and over if W. asked him to. His reasoning was that he would not disrespect the Commander in Chief. Admirable, but even Powell himself acknowledges that the President was wrong or misguided on issues of dire consequence at home and abroad. Was Powell heroic for taking one for the team or would he have been more honorable for standing up for what he believed instead of being the face and mouthpiece for what Halliburton, er, I mean Cheney believed? Still working this one out in my mind. . .

Jason says

Excellent book depicting the life of Colin Powell from childhood to post-Secretary of State. I think the best parts of this book were Powell's lessons on managing people. The book also goes into detail about the weeks leading up to Powell's UN speech on Iraq and the process by which he attempted to decipher the C.I.A. intelligence. A must read for anyone interested in becoming an effective leader and those interested in why a person like Powell would put his reputation on the line over the supposed WMD in Iraq. Karen DeYoung writes in an extremely readable, entertaining, and intelligent manner. I see myself rereading this book a couple times in my life. I continue to admire the character and professionalism of Colin Powell, the guy is truly an American hero.

Julz says

I have always admired Colin Powell, but as the Iraq debacle unfolded, I had to ask, "WHY??!?" The whole thing is so un-Powell-esque. No clear reason, no attempt at diplomacy, no exit strategy, etc.

When I finished this book, I was torn between admiring him for refusing to smear a former employer and being completely flummoxed as to how someone so intelligent can be so inculcated in military culture that he put up with that nonsense as long as he did.

Marks54 says

This is a surprisingly good biography of the former General, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and Secretary of

State. It comes across as an authorized biography but does not gloss over some of the more controversial aspects of Powell's life in government, such as his role in the leadup to the Iraq War on WMDs and his relative ineffectiveness at State in Bush's cabinet. Overall, he comes across to be as a reasonable and capable professional who is committed to his country. The story is also a testimonial to the difficulty of public life at the top and the real problems that reasonable people encounter in times of conflict and overblown ideology.

Powell's life growing up in the army is also engaging and provides a look at a side of American and its culture for both military and for African-Americans that is missing from many accounts. I found this a surprisingly good book.

William says

One of the best biographies of a political character that I have ever read. There are times where I lose track of who the players are and what a particular politician or officer's title means. Yet, overall I was able to follow what was going on and how it affected our nation. Powell did an excellent job of speaking at the Speaker Series. He was smooth and easy to follow with quips and humorous antidotes throughout the evening. He reminded me of that member of everyone's family who is easy to talk to and one who people are drawn to. That is probably why he has been such a great leader of our generation.

Kunwar says

A good book about an interesting character. Looks not only into why Colin Powell acted the way he did in the lead up to the Iraq war, and how his reputation has been tarnished but also traces his entire career and offers tantalizing observations for his future redemption.

Javer Hernandez says

Portraying in words the life of one of America's most notable military personnel is a very arduous task to accomplish, yet one that the author did very well. The way the story begins with the description of humble beginnings up to the position of Secretary of State in the Bush administration, says a lot about the character and moral values of a person. All of those characteristics were well represented in the book by the author. I believe Mr Powell himself was probably satisfied with the work of Mrs DeYoung. The genre is simple an autobiography. The many elements used to describe the many hardships the Mr Powell had to endure during his life are well portrayed in the book through some great imagery and vivid description of events. After reading this book my already highest respect for Mr. Powell stood unchanged. A truly hero of our time, a person deserving of all the merits and awards that the military could give someone. This book taught me a different angle to use in my own writing whenever I decide to write my own story. The language used was very adequate taking into consideration who the main character is and how he wanted to be represented. This is something I paid close attention to since I do too have a military background, not as extensive as Mr. Powell, at least not yet. I believe I can say that I will be using some things I have learned from this work by Mrs. DeYoung.

Bob Schmitz says

Colin Powell was obviously an astounding fellow. Son of Caribbean immigrants who rises to the top of the military and political systems. He is described as a very bright, extremely self controlled charismatic leader. Reading about the workings of the White House in the 2 Iraq and 1 Afghanistan wars was interesting.

This book should be titled "The Good Soldier." At crucial turns Powell willingly participated in illegal, immoral things because he was in essence a company man. My admiration of Powell was tempered by the information in the book about 1. His participation in the coverup of the Mai Lai massacre (He arrive as an officer in that sector of Vietnam a couple of months after the massacre. That something terrible had happened there was common knowledge but when asked about it early on by an army investigator he simply read the action report and criticized the whistle blower.) 2. His participation in the Iran Contra Deal 3. His following the party line in the presentation of the need to invade Iraq by Bush 2 and his lending his gravitas to the presentation before the UN with data he suspected. It reminds me of McNamara's later admissions that he knew V. Nam was a lost cause while he vigorously pursued it. To people with great power comes great responsibility and if Colin refused to go along with being manipulated by the G.W Bush administration there might be a lot fewer dead American soldiers. But in the end he was a loyal company man.

Kyle Kerns says

This book is an exceptional book about one of the greatest political figures of our time. For me, Powell seemed to come "out of nowhere" and lead the US during the Gulf War. His name and face became commonplace during that war, but I never knew who he was. As discussion centered around his possible future political opportunities, I was always amazed with what I learned and wanted to know more. This book provides that chance. Though at times it provided almost too much detail for me, it was a great look into the life of someone who was several times discussed as a possible Presidential candidate. I was particularly interested in his time as Secretary of State and his speech to the UN advocating war with Iraq. I think this moment definitely led to a political down-spiral, and it was interesting to hear his version of events.

Lynn Diane says

Good book about a very complex man. I really want to read his autobiography. In DeYoung's biography, Powell comes across as a fairly casual politician who declares himself a Republican but isn't sure why. He quite possibly could have beaten Clinton in 1992. However, when joining Clinton's cabinet as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Powell really liked Clinton! He admired his super-intelligent mind. Clinton and Powell are kind of a mutual admiration society. I'm going to wait til I can find his newly published autobiography before I make any final judgments.

Daniel says

I have great respect for what I consider one of the finest leaders in recent history.

Sheldon says

I really enjoyed this book. I did the audiobook version and it was interesting to hear more details of his early life and some of the happenings during his time as secretary of state.

Much of the secretary of state details I had heard about through a TV documentary called "Bush's War", which I highly recommend for those interested in the decision making and dynamics that went on during those times... it's worth the 3 hours. :)... But I found the early parts of his life equally as interesting and admire his demeanor on things.

I think the title of the book is great because it seems to speak to what some thing is great about him and what may be his biggest flaw. He's a man who was proud to have served, and seems to take service to "the People" as a very high honor but at times (and it really showed during his time as State Secretary) I think he may have been too much "the good soldier" and that damaged what some think of him.

I remember in elementary school saying that I thought he would be President some day and I still believe he would have been a far better president than any of the one's I've experienced in my lifetime. I'll chalk it up to me being wise beyond my years :)

Eric says

There is much here for people to admire as well as carp at, I suppose. I served at State under Powell, and found service in his Department to be very enjoyable. I recall some of the career Foreign Service types sharpening their knives almost as soon as he was sworn in. DeYoung describes an exchange recalling that Madeleine Albright had real problems, as well, with the career FS types - I guess it goes with the bureaucratic landscape.

I did learn a bit about race in this volume. Powell and his family, hailing from Jamaica, had quite different views on race, even growing up in Brooklyn, that American Blacks did not share. My guess would have to be that some American Blacks would not allow Powell among their ranks.

On balance, I admire Powell's performance; however, (and here I see similarities to my own military service), our generation had quite different outlooks on what it takes to succeed from that of WWII vets. Powell should have been GREAT, I pose, and was really only VERY, VERY GOOD. The descriptions of the infighting in the (Dubya) Bush WH, with the Cheney, Rumsfeld, Armitage, and Rice crowd reveal to me that he was really a political neophyte - and I wonder if, had he served in WWII, he might have been quickly replaced in a really important campaign for being less than effective.
crowd

In any case, a very interesting look at a true soldier and patriot.

Kevin says

I really admire Colin Powell. I saw him speak once at a conference and it is clear how much he loved his country. Through all of the nonsense in the Bush administration (and I am a Republican but I do not like the way Cheney and Rumsfeld controlled Bush), Powell remained a good soldier. In a lot of ways, he was used by that far right administration. I am more of a moderate, like Powell.

Bottom line is that he always did his duty. I wish he would have run for President. Maybe, just maybe, the party would have gone back more to being the party of Abe Lincoln, another leader I admire.

I believe this book was to vent and get his side of the story out. I think the Bush administration tenure and the request for his resignation left him with unfinished business.

Andy says

A great book. I was surprised at the relationship General Powell and President Bush had, I thought it was much closer. You can see the divide between the State department and the VP. The General takes his shots at Cheney & Rumsfeld. Anyone interested in the Iraq war would find this book interesting.
