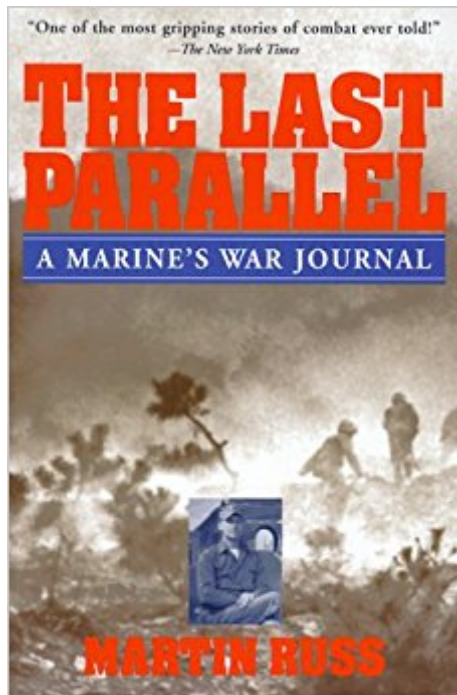




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# The Last Parallel: A Marine's War Journal



## Synopsis

Long regarded as one of the best books about combat written, this book tells of the experiences of combat soldiers during the Korean War.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

8 1.5-hour cassettes --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I read this book in 1960 while I was in high school. It was one of several items that nudged me into joining the Marines.('62 to 66), I am now long retired from the military. During my military career I served in Vietnam as a Marine and in Desert Storm as a soldier. The confusion, boredom, terror described by this author was well depicted.

The standout memoir of the Korean war: comic and tragic by turns, intensely personal but at the same time evocative of a better and saner America.

All good. A fast transaction!

This is good, Korean conflict explained by a grunt, I recommend to anybody who likes a good read, just buy it.

Despite the high praise given to Martin Russ's *The Last Parallel* on the book jacket and from

reviewers here, I found it to be one of the least compelling of the dozens of war memoirs I've read over the years (for the very few who might actually care, see the list at the end of the review). Russ seems to be an intellectual sort, as indicated by his choice of reading material in Korea, yet he isn't anywhere near as clever as he tries to be. He tends to be simultaneously self-deprecating and sarcastic, which becomes tiresome after awhile. One of the biggest problems with the book is the sheer lack of action. For a book praised by the New York Times as "one of the most gripping stories of combat ever told!", there is precious little of combat in it. In fact, by actual page count, 48% of the book takes place on the front lines, and 52% in the rear or in the States. When at the front, most of the action consists of staring out into no-man's land (and seeing nothing of the enemy). I will say this: during the rare times when this war memoir actually has action, it is quite interesting and well-written. My main issue with the book is that these times are far too few. Students of the latter stages of the Korean War, and/or static warfare, may find this an interesting read (at least 48% of it, anyway). For the rest of us, I'd try something else. If it's the Korean conflict you're interested in, James Brady's *The Coldest War* would be my choice. In fact, despite being somewhat short of combat action as well, I found that book to be one of the most insightful and interesting war memoirs I've read. For pulse-pounding, you-are-there combat, try Gary Linderer's memoirs - they make you feel like you're actually in the Nam.

List of war memoirs read:

World War I: 1- *Storm of Steel* - Ernst Junger 2- *Over the Top* - Arthur Guy Empey

World War II: 1- *If You Survive* - George Wilson 2- *Cutthroats* - Robert C. Dick 3- *Popski's Private Army* - Vladimir Peniakoff 4- *Helmet For My Pillow* - Robert Leckie 5- *Submarine Commander* - Rear Adm. Ben Bryant 6- *Brazen Chariots* - Maj. Robert Crisp 7- *Flame Thrower* - Capt. Andrew Wilson 8- *All the Way to Berlin* - James Megellas 9- *Baa Baa Black Sheep* - Col. Gregory Boyington 10- *Thunderbolt!* - Robert S. Johnson 11- *Ill Met by Moonlight* - W. Stanley Moss 12- *Roll Me Over* - Raymond Ganttner 13- *U-Boat Killer* - Capt. Donald McIntyre 14- *70,000 to One* - Lt. G. Manuel, as told to Q. Reynolds 15- *Going to the Wars* - John Verney 16- *Enemy Coast Ahead* - Guy Gibson 17- *With the Old Breed* - E. B. Sledge 18- *Ninety Day Wonder* - John Horton

Korea: 1- *The Coldest War* - James Brady 2- *The Last Parallel* - Martin Russ

Vietnam: 1- *Eyes of the Eagle* - Gary Linderer 2- *Eyes Behind the Lines* - Linderer 3- *Recondo* - Larry Chambers 4- *The Professional LRRP* - Frank Camper 5- *One Soldier* - John Shook 6- *LRRP Team Leader* - John Burford 7- *4/4: A LRP's Narrative* - Gary Douglas Ford 8- *Mekong First Light* - Joseph W. Calloway, Jr. 9- *The Price of Exit* - Tom Marshall 10- *Wings of the Eagle* - W. T. Grant 11- *Lest We Forget* - William C. Meachem 12- *Chickenhawk* - Robert Mason 13- *Death in the Jungle* - G. Smith/Alan Maki 14- *Death in the Delta* - " 15- *Master Chief* - " 16- *Everything We Had* - Al Santoli (ed.) 17- *Charlie Rangers* - D. Ericson/J. Rotundo 18- *Acceptable Loss* - Gregg Jorgenson 19- A

Rumor of War - Phil Caputo<sup>20</sup>- Gone Native - Alan G. Cornett<sup>21</sup>- War Paint - Bill Goshen<sup>22</sup>-  
Brennan's War - Matthew BrennanMISC:1- He Who Dares - Paul Michael Kennedy<sup>2</sup>- Bravo Two  
Zero (partially fictional) - "Andy McNab" (pseud.)

I didn't finish it. I think you need to be very familiar with military terms and strategies in order to understand what is happening. I was too lost all the time so I gave it to my brother-in-law. I'm sure he'll enjoy it.

Just not interesting.

The hardback version deserves 5 stars, but, the Kindle version is shockingly defective in omitting all the drawings. This book is best in its class, for what it is, not a history of the Korean War, but, a journal of one Marine's experiences during his tour of duty there during the last year of the War. Critics might question his editing and maybe they don't like Russ as a person. They miss the point. This is a journal not a concise history of what is important. If you aren't interested in Russ's description of his occasional attempts to make a connection with a woman while on leave, don't bother reading that part. This is the great thing about books. You don't have to read every page. It's not a story where if you skip over part you will not be able to understand what follows. And yes, there isn't a lot of very exciting action described in the book and none of combat was important (except to the men involved). Russ is a writer who strives to communicate clearly, and the book is greatly enhanced by the drawings. Instead of merely using words to describe, the author includes many simple drawings which enable the reader to get a picture of what was going on. This is very rare in military histories. I have seen some which will purport to be a history of a war and won't include even a single map. Of course, anything that isn't text is more expensive for the publisher and I imagine that most writers can't or won't draw. Russ does. So in addition to simple maps where relevant, drawings include: sketches of the terrain and trench locations; trench/fortification cross-sections; a "musical" score depicting an example of how machine gunners would communicate by firing: an advance of a squad in echelon; a 6 man patrol in line; the trajectory of a mortar shell; a cold weather trigger adaption to the M-1 rifle; body armor; etc.. These drawings are not extra's, like the cluster of captioned photographs one sometimes finds in a history, but, an integrated part of the text. So in the Kindle edition of this book, we have the text repeatedly referring to drawings, but the drawings aren't there. So words might explain the purposes of the "fighting hole" and the "bunny hole", Russ's diagram gives the reader an instant understanding. I own several

copies of the hardback version of the book, but, I thought it would be nice to have a copy on my Kindle. Unfortunately the version I bought on .com doesn't have the drawings. (I found a free pdf version online that does).

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