



# We Were Warriors

*Johnny Mercer*

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*The rounds were single shot from the same two enemy positions, trying to pick me off. They were kicking up the dirt around me. Then all hell broke loose as the gunship's Gatling vomited ammo right over my head. The sound was deafening. It was now or never. I got up and ran.*

A captain in 29 Commando, Johnny Mercer served in the army for twelve years. On his third tour of Afghanistan he was a Joint Fires Controller, with the pressurized job of bringing down artillery and air strikes in close proximity to his own troops. Based in an area of northern Helmand that was riddled with Taliban leaders, he walked into danger with every patrol, determined to protect them. Then one morning, in brutal close quarter combat, everything changed...

In *We Were Warriors* Johnny takes us from his commando training to the heat, blood and chaos of battle. With brutal honesty, he describes what it is like to risk your life every day, pushing through the fear that follows watching your friends die. He took the fight back to the enemy with a relentless efficiency that came at a high personal cost. Back in the UK, seeing the inadequate care available for veterans and their families, he was inspired to run for Parliament in the hope he could improve their plight. Unflinching, action-packed and laced with wry humour, *We Were Warriors* is a compelling read.

## We Were Warriors Details

Date : Published June 1st 2017 by Sidgwick & Jackson (first published May 30th 2017)

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Author : Johnny Mercer

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# **From Reader Review We Were Warriors for online ebook**

## **Peter says**

A very intereseting and gripping read. The politics of fighting in Afghanistan were very small part of the story it was all about surviving a patrol and the comradeship developed between the members of the patrol as they relied on each other for their survival. Even with some very sophisticated weaponry they found it very difficult to get the upper hand over the Taliban. This left Johnny Mercer with a feeling that the soldiers were not given due consideration in the tasks they were asked to undertake. Many of them were also not given the support to live successful lives after being discharged from the army which was one of the main reasons for becoming an MP to give voice to these people.

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## **DaveRed says**

Absolutely loved it. A very honest book . Has the rare combination of humour and the horrific . On many occasions I had to re read a paragraph to help the seriousness of what happened settle in. I genuinely shed a tear during this book too.

I really do hope we see more being written by Johnny Mercer , until then keep an eye out for him in the capacity of the MP for Plymouth Moor View. A great author and man in the making.

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## **Ailsa says**

Fantastic book, charting Mercer's Strict Baptist background (which has left its mark on him, and not always in a positive way) to public school scholarship, 12 years as an Army officer to member of parliament determined to do better for servicemen and women (fighting Conservative party snobbishness along the way), this is at times a very emotive read. Johnny Mercer MP's maiden speech will bring a tear to the eye.

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## **Stuart says**

I've read a LOT of military biographies and by goodness, this is one of the most frank and open first hand accounts of warfare I have ever come across.

Clearly an exceptional solider, writer and, I'm sure, MP!

Bravo Captain!

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## **clanger3920 says**

**A life times journey**

An excellent read of how not matter what your background d can with determination, courage and a steely resolve of self belief and determination and with the support of a good woman/partner can achieve and make a difference

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## **Steve Woods says**

Afghanistan was not my war. I spent mine in the jungles of Indochina so I have had little idea of what things might have been like for our more recent veterans. This account provides that insight. No piece of writing can ever present the full sensory experience of being in combat to those who have not had the experience, for those of us who have our own experience fills in the intangibles so we get it!

It is an unpretentious account. Interestingly, Mercer like so many others who seek their place in the services, had a difficult childhood. Such was also the case for me. So, the account of his early days and the impact those experiences had on him resonated with me as did his account of what the army did for him, to help over ride much of that unfortunate inheritance. In my case also the army provided a sense of purpose, competence and belonging that were lacking in my life.

His accounts of combat have been selective, a whole swathe that involved special operations has been omitted, more's the pity. I would have liked to hear about those experiences also. Nonetheless there was enough to get the picture.

There are all sorts of statistics about ptsd around and the devolution of the definition in the DSM has meant that the catchall now gathers up many who, to my mind, though they may be suffering, they are not suffering from combat related ptsd as this man did. Since WW1 there has been argument and discussion of the role of predisposition in determining vulnerability to the stress that leads to ptsd. There have also been many different figures put on the proportion of troops in theater who end up with this disorder. Those estimates vary widely depending on time and criteria. No one though, to my knowledge has ever quantified the correlation between childhood trauma and combat related ptsd. My own instincts would suggest that it is probably very high indeed. Psychological testing prior to enlistment has been a failure in identifying those who might be susceptible, because as the Americans found in the early days of WW2, these tests if rigorously applied would leave too few to fill the ranks. Only the most egregious examples seem to be culled out. Any way this with a difficult past often want to get into the service and are hesitant to disclose anything that might harm their chances to do so.

I suspect from casual observation that the proportion of frontline soldiers in the arms (infantry, artillery, armor) who have had such a background could be as high as 50%. A substantial pool.

Whatever the case for most, as Mercer found, the system fails them completely on their return. I suppose if governments can't even properly equip troops before they deploy it's a bit much to expect self interested politicians to do anything substantial for them on their return. The same applies in Australia, the US, Canada and the UK and I have no doubt in other countries as well. Unfortunately it seems it's all forming into a major problem f]given the length of the Afghanistan and Iraq deployments, the number of tours individual soldiers undertake and the large numbers who cycle through the system. It won't be ignored, common sense would dictate that government services for veterans pull their "finger out" and come to grips with it now instead of their usual political response of mouthing platitudes and kicking the can down the road. We can only hope that the destructive experience we had after Vietnam will not be repeated, the signs so far are not good!

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## **Anthony Cassidy, Mr says**

### **True reality**

What an immense change to read an honest account of military life and it's demands on self and family that the 'others' cannot hope to understand least of all the politicians who put service personnel there in the first place.

Something I could never get across.

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## **Matt says**

A powerful and descriptive account of the fighting in Afghanistan in this century. At times, tense, frustrating, funny but above all, deeply moving. The book closes with the authors maiden speech in the House of Commons, bringing a tear to my eye.

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## **Gary Owen says**

### **Heart-wrenching, heart-warming story of bravery**

I saw Jonny Mercer interviewed on This Morning and thought I would read his book, especially as my own son has a desire to join the army as an officer. This book provided a very candid account of daily life for our service personnel and the incredible bravery they demonstrate every time they set foot in hostile territory. This book made me laugh and cry in equal measure. However my overriding feelings were of pride. Proud of the military personnel our great country continues to produce, proud that these brave men and women operate under such pressure and fear, proud that my son wants to continue these traditions.

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## **Iola Morgan says**

I've given this 5\* as I can't do 4.5\*. This is most definitely a harrowing tale to be sure, but the humanity in it, along with one warring with oneself on a daily basis cannot be faulted. The struggles this person went through would test the most mentally healthy person on the planet. I suffer with mental health and I can't even begin to imagine dealing with this guy's life. He is one very brave man and deserves kudos aplenty. To go from Army officer into a whole new career he barely knew anything about? That takes guts, courage and as he said a good partner backing him all the way. I wish him well in his new career and I hope he gets the changes he's after, although, somehow, I can't see that happening.

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## **Rose Auburn says**

A must-read, and I say this as someone who has no particular interest or background in the military.

Compelling from start to finish, honest and incredibly thought-provoking. It is a book that will stay with me for some time. Highly recommended.

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### **Nathan Fletcher says**

This is a great read. My respect to all who serve their country. This is an incredible read about a life many of us will never know thankfully. The book details the effort in war and after war by a captain. Highly recommend reading.

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### **Yolanda says**

Should be compulsory reading for anyone with an interest in modern British politics or in mental health. Anyone who comes from a heavily militarised area of the UK, or who knows anyone who has toured Afghanistan, will recognise the depiction of the Army life, too. As it happens, I've a mate who survived being blown up by an IED, and I really felt as though I were there while reading Johnny Mercer's descriptions. Given that Mercer is not a professional author, to say this is a job well done is an understatement.

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### **Dave says**

Johnny really focuses his account of his tours in Afghanistan on the personal impact of war and how it affected him as a soldier and a person. I finished more than one chapter with tears in my eyes and even struggled to describe what I had read to my wife. I did not know anything about Johnny's post army life, but after reading the depth of his experiences, I completely understand why he made the decision to stand as an MP.

The narrative follows the usual military biographical account, starting with his early life and what led him to the army. We spend a few chapters centred around Johnny's training leading to his career as an officer. Finally we arrive in Afghanistan where Johnny completed 3 tours, witnessing the changing landscape of a drawn out conflict and endured losses that affected him deeply. The book takes a twist toward the end when we spend a few chapters reading about Johnny's attempts to launch his political career.

The book is an interesting read that is defined by a very personal story that is well told.

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### **Charlie says**

My first foray into the realm of soldier's memoir. The most gripping part was when he was stranded alone and under heavy fire from the Taliban. But there are some parts which are left unsaid, where the author says he can't write about. Perhaps because the author is now an MP, and it would not be appropriate for a politician to say those things. However, the harsh realities of combat and losing friends is not spared.

