



On the Fireline: Living and Dying with Wildland Firefighters

Matthew Desmond

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In this rugged account of a rugged profession, Matthew Desmond explores the heart and soul of the wildland firefighter. Having joined a firecrew in Northern Arizona as a young man, Desmond relates his experiences with intimate knowledge and native ease, adroitly balancing emotion with analysis and action with insight. *On the Fireline* shows that these firefighters aren't the adrenaline junkies or romantic heroes as they're so often portrayed.

An immersion into a dangerous world, *On the Fireline* is also a sophisticated analysis of a high-risk profession—and a captivating read.

“Gripping . . . a masterful account of how young men are able to face down wildfire, and why they volunteer for such an enterprise in the first place.”—David Grazian, *Sociological Forum*

“Along with the risks and sorrow, Desmond also presents the humor and camaraderie of ordinary men performing extraordinary tasks. . . . A good complement to Norman Maclean's *Young Men and Fire*. Recommended.”—*Library Journal*

On the Fireline: Living and Dying with Wildland Firefighters Details

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Author : Matthew Desmond

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From Reader Review On the Fireline: Living and Dying with Wildland Firefighters for online ebook

Audrey says

This book is amazing.. You can tell this author put there heart into writing this book. I highly recommend it. I definitely will be reading more of Matthew Desmond's work.

Tim Neale says

Understandably, this book is not as good a 'read' as Evicted. It is based on Desmond's Masters thesis and has some of the staging of a thesis throughout. Nonetheless, the examples and narratives are well-chosen, and it wears its grounding in sociology/scholarship lightly enough for a broad spectrum of readers.

Dirk says

This is the best ethnography I have been reading in recent years. Desmond spend more than 2 years in the fire service and developed an ethnography that adds to various areas of research, including the sociology of organisations, the work I risky domains, addresses the question why people take on life threatening jobs as well as the current debate about causality and ethnography. The book is very well written and highly recommendable also to those working in the fire service and managing risky organisations.

Molly says

at least it wasn't too preachy.

Brayden says

I normally don't review my "work books" on here because I figure my friends don't care to read them, but this one might be interesting to a lot of you, whether you're sociologists or not. The book details what it's like to be a wildland firefighter in Arizona, describing the risks and physical demands of the job and explaining how firefighters overcome the uncertainty of the job to put themselves in dangerous situations. Desmond describes the inner life of the firefighter as being guided by a "country masculinity" that makes certain jobs, duties, and tasks more or less routine for the worker, without ever having to go through extensive on-the-job training. So, for example, minor car repair, even though it's not part of the official training of being a firefighter, is the sort of thing that a "real man" living in rural Arizona should do. Most of the firefighters have picked these needed skills up over the course of their training to be men.

Of course, being a real man entails more than just knowing how to do a few useful things around the farm or house. Much of manliness encompasses a range of social skills that help the men get along and survive the

boredom of waiting for the next big fire. The skills involved things like knowing how to tell the right dirty jokes, how to tease other men, figuring out the right level of cleanliness, etc. Some of the men Desmond worked with were better at this than others. The cost for not using these skills in the right way was not fitting in and becoming the butt of jokes and endless teasing. You feel pity for the poor guy who lacked country masculinity.

I liked the book because it described a kind of manliness that I grew up with in rural Idaho. I worked for the Forest Service for a year in high school, and so the people Desmond describes in the book were very real to me. It brought back a lot of memories and made me a bit nostalgic for rural life. Desmond writes with compassion, clarity, and sufficient humor to make this anything but text-bookish.

Brian says

A good ethnography of wildland firefighters, though could have used some more editing in places. Definitely felt like more of a PhD dissertation than Evicted.

Alexis says

This was very well done. If there is anyone out there who would like to really understand fire this is the book to read. The author captures all the little nuances that are so many times lost by Maclean and other fire authors because they have not fought fire.

There were a few things that were definitely crew-specific, and he didn't point those out and seems to believe that that is the way all fire crews think and are, which I have seen different. But again, overall it was very authentic and painted a good picture of what fire is like.
