



# The Marines of Autumn

*James Brady*

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## **The Marines of Autumn** James Brady

War has been the inspiration of such great novels as *The Red Badge of Courage* and *A Farewell to Arms*, and daring feats of courage and tragic mistakes have been the foundation for such classic works. Now, for the first time ever, the Korean War has a novel that captures that courage and sacrifice.

When Captain Thomas Verity, USMC, is called back to action, he must leave his Georgetown home, career, and young daughter and rush to Korea to monitor Chinese radio transmissions. At first acting in an advisory role, he is abruptly thrust into MacArthur's last daring and disastrous foray-the Chosin Reservoir campaign-and then its desperate retreat.

*Time* magazine at the time recounted the retreat this way: "The running fight of the Marines...was a battle unparalleled in U.S. military history. It had some aspects of Bataan, some of Anzio, some of Dunkirk, some of Valley Forge, and some of 'the retreat of the 10,000' as described in Xenophon's *Anabasis*."

*The Marines of Autumn* is a stunning, shattering novel of war illuminated only by courage, determination, and Marine Corps discipline. And by love: of soldier for soldier, of men and their women, and of a small girl in Georgetown, whose father promised she would dance with him on the bridges of Paris. A child Captain Tom Verity fears he may never see again.

In *The Marines of Autumn*, James Brady captures our imagination and shocks us into a new understanding of war.

## **The Marines of Autumn Details**

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Author : James Brady

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## From Reader Review The Marines of Autumn for online ebook

### Donna Herrick says

An eye-opening, poignant story of the Korean War

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### Int'l librarian says

One retreat. 270 pages to fall back from Point A to Point B. And my biggest complaint is that the brief pauses for contextual character development get in the way of the backward motion. It's just enough of a complaint to make this novel very good instead of great.

The setting is the Chosin Reservoir area, during the Korean War. The setup and flashbacks help to explain why our hero, Tom Verity, is there, and why he wishes he wasn't. But that doesn't make up for the fact that civilian Tom has the slightly slick demeanor of a 1950s soft-spoken sophisticated man's man. A married James Bond, with all the appreciative objectification of women that implies.

Tom's wife comes across as this impossibly tough, sharp, super-hot trophy. All the more of a trophy because she's been dead for years. That scenario might make sense within the context of the story and the time period, but it still feels oily.

The war zone, on the other hand, is both frozen solid and fetid. The US-led offensive is over as soon as it begins, crushed by -20F snowstorms and an overwhelming swarm of Chinese soldiers on a desperate counter-attack.

That's the story Brady tells best. He led a Marine combat platoon in Korea. He knows how poorly equipped the Marines were for winter weather. How out-manned they were. How arrogant and power-hungry the US military leaders, especially Douglas MacArthur, were. And he knows what the snow and ice did to vehicles, weapons and bodies. He captures all of that in the march back from Chosin to the sea. Everybody suffers. Thousands die. And Tom Verity takes each step one at a time.

I don't know the factual details well enough to dispute Brady's account. My only recourse is to sit back in awe of each imagined soldier's struggle to survive, or surrender to the elements. And when the retreat ends, and the story becomes a different story once again, I no longer mind so much.

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### Rob says

I wanted to like the book more than I did. This book with respect to the quality of writing had too many ups and downs with regard to engaging the reader. I frequently found characters to be rather stereotypical and from my perspective failed to evoke much of anything with regard to their particular plights.

However, that said, there are moments in this story where the particular dilemmas experienced caused this reader to stop and consider the situation portrayed in this winter withdrawal from the Chosin Reservoir Region of North Korea.

As a Marine I wondered how I might have performed under these circumstances, and while glad not to have been there, I am grateful to those who were.

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### **Laura Edwards says**

Okay. An easy read. I think James Brady's writing style is more conducive to non-fiction. And I do have a book of non-fiction by him on my shelf which I plan on reading in the future. Don't know if I'll try anymore fiction by him though.

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## **Emliu says**

Author James Brady does a spectacular job of illustrating the hardships and struggles both physically and emotionally of the often forgotten Korean War. He puts the reader into a first person perspective of the Korean War through the eyes of Captain Tom Verity. *Marines of Autumn* evokes the emotional side of the reader through Captain Verity's deep connection with the Chinese culture and also his constant heartaches of his wife Elizabeth and his daughter Kate. Tom Verity is a marine reservist who last fought as an enlisted man in the Pacific theater of war. He was called back into service during the Korean War for his intricate relationship and knowledge of the Chinese. Besides Brady's ability to intimately relate the reader to the main character, he also does a fantastic job of depicting the actual war itself. Brady- a Korean War veteran himself- does a great job telling the story of the disastrous Chosin Reservoir campaign by the United States Marines from autumn into winter during the 1950's. With the North Koreans already largely defeated, the U.S. continues pushing them closer and closer to the Korean/ Chinese border, but before they can be beat all the way back, the Chinese intervened with thousands of troops. The harsh winters depicted in the book kill many on both sides as each army pushes for control. All in all, *Marines of Autumn* by James Brady was an emotionally moving book with its close knit relationship to Captain Verity. It also helps readers grasp a understanding of the true hardships faced by soldiers throughout the "forgotten" war, the Korean War.

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## **Ken Sherman says**

Good novel of Chosen Reservoir

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## **Scottnshana says**

Full disclosure: I had a high school English teacher that survived both Chosin and the POW experience in Korea, and this man was one of the big mentors I needed as a young man (in the 1980s) and one of the islands in the archipelago of experiences that make up this review. While I never personally heard him speak of it, I was reacquainted with this focal moment in American military history around the time he passed on (during that blissful historical moment between Y2K and 9/11) via the best non-fiction account I've read on Chosin, Martin Russ's "Breakout". The pull-back action from Chosin--and Mr. Russ's book makes this explicitly clear--was in essence a hellish, freezing, bloody, and superlatively awful road trip. Military historians will of course compare this to Napoleon's or the Wehrmacht's retreats from Russia ("Twenty-five below now. For the first time, the division was counting more casualties from the cold and frostbite than from wounds.") or Xenophon's "Anabasis", but I think Mr. James Brady has instead handed off a classic more reminiscent of other road trip adventures like the "Lord of the Rings". In fact, the book has a quote from Kurt Vonnegut on the cover comparing it to the "Iliad"; I think it more closely resembles "The Odyssey", with its "Be dead by then. Or, better, home." theme. These comparisons, though, are tempered by the fact that General Oliver Smith managed to bring a large portion of his force back to a port and subsequent evacuation (from a tent at Hagaru--"Not a retreat, he told himself, but a march.") testifies to the leadership that flowed downward to the officers and NCOs slogging along the roads and mountainsides. Mr. Brady explores the relationship inside the chain of command throughout the novel, using his three principal characters--for example: "Gunnery sergeants had ways; they looked up their officers. If a man were going to issue an order that might kill you, you deserved to know more than his name, rank, and serial number. Gunnery sergeants took care of each other. [Captain] Verity was always aware he was being measured. Marines did that. On Guadalcanal he'd been measured as a kid enlisted man; on Okinawa as a young officer. He was being measured now." This was, however, a chain of command that again was in one

of the most inhospitable landscapes on the planet, and Brady reads a lot like Hemingway when he consistently reminds the reader of that, again through the eyes of the company-grade officer: "Verity once might have felt guilty about having a roof and a fire while other men huddled out of the wind in open fields, squatting or lying on frozen ground with only a bit of canvas for shelter. Not now. Cold did that to men, reducing them to clever, self-absorbed animals ready to do anything for warmth, almost anything to survive." These details are interspersed with scenes describing the herculean efforts necessary to bring off the aforementioned evacuation, for instance when "Verity and his two men drew hot rations from the engineer battalion hacking out the airstrip and ate sitting on the warm hood of the jeep, watching the engineers work. It was interesting to see, especially if you didn't have to do it." In this short passage, the book has conveyed one of those memorable moments in war--the break to see to your men's needs in the midst of something monumental (I have a similar personal moment I often come back to--drinking coffee with on HESCO barriers adjacent the runway at Bagram Airfield, discussing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan with a superior) and the importance of providing hot chow and warming tents in the field. This is not something one who has never seen a war can adequately convey, and it speaks to the fact that the author himself stacked time leading a rifle platoon in Korea. I think that Brady's examination of the also-present and iconic Chesty Puller is also just enough to keep the narrative going without overwhelming it. Details of Puller's style-- "favoring old sergeants over young officers"; recognizing the value of foreign area officers (trust me, this isn't a universal trait in military leadership) and seeking their advice; and Puller's documented proclivity for "not taking names and numbers and writing people up, just taking direct action"--are included, but again do not take anything away from the essential story as the 3 protagonists drive to the coast and home. Mr. Brady puts the Chosin story in historical context through those characters' discussions on their long jeep ride about not only Xenophon's 10,000, but also the Donner Party, Custer, and Nathan Bedford Forrest. He attempts to elicit the physical pain and endurance of those who survived this event via coagulating blood, prisoners left barefoot on the side of the road to freeze, and the men "who just shit in their trousers as they marched." The book ends with the statement that the men at Chosin were "Crazy or froze or dead. Or all three." There is more here though than a generalization on the men trapped under fire at Chosin. "The Marines of Autumn" is a rumination on leadership, home/hearth, and the extraordinary practice of keepin'on keepin' on in order to do a job under horrible conditions. It is about character and the people we send to do our business in war; and I personally believe that the passage of 65 years has not diminished the legend or the example that these men bequeathed us at Chosin.

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### **Brent Bergman says**

Marines of Autumn was a novel that portrayed this period of military history much further than anything else written about it. This book shows you even if the toughest times fight harder and you will prosper. The soldiers throughout this story line were always outnumbered due to their enemy being such a large country. Reading this book wouldn't be a disappointment but that's none of my business. I had high hopes for reading this because its based upon the Chosin Reservoir, in which my grandfather fought in. So there is a sole reason for me to read this novel. Anyone that enjoys history or military at that would enjoy this undeniably. I also recommend this novel to anyone leery about this time in history or would like a first hand account of the war of the Chosin Reservoir.

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### **Rob says**

This one is hard to put down. It's an eye-opening introduction to the Korean War – often referred to as the Forgotten War – and an accurate treatment of the disastrous Chosin Reservoir campaign in North Korea in the fall and early winter of 1950. Brady does a great job describing the brutality of fighting dozens of

Chinese divisions during a severe winter and how Americans were unprepared to do so. If you always wondered why Gen. Douglas MacArthur was relieved of command by President Truman, "The Marines of Autumn" describes MacArthur's arrogance and incompetence for allowing UN forces to penetrate so far into North Korea, only to be driven back with incredible losses. It's a good tale, especially one that Marines would enjoy.

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### **Jennifer Collins says**

Brady's work has a ring of truth to it, from start to finish. Very nearly reading as if it's a piece of nonfiction, but for its strict focus on the story and the characters at hand, the work brings to life moments of humor, love, and misery, and does so with such attention to setting and attitude that the reader becomes something of a fly on the wall of Captain Verity's journey... and is just so horrified by it as they are thankful for Brady's crafting of such a narrative.

It took me some time to discover Brady, though I'd heard his name. When I thought of war literature, I thought of Norman Mailer and Tim O'Brien, and of All Quiet on the Western Front and a handful of others. Yet, there's something about The Marines of Autumn--a sort of authenticity that comes through in Brady's style--that I'm not sure I've quite seen elsewhere. There were moments here where I was reminded I was reading fiction, but more often than not, that wasn't how I felt at all.

Absolutely recommended.

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### **Bob says**

Haunting. Not all heroes are victorious. These unsung heroes illustrate the courage and commitment that keeps us free. Thanks to the Marines of Autumn!

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### **Harry says**

I have been a Marine for 46 years. I have heard the stories of the Chosin reservoir my entire adult life. This book and The Frozen Hours have brought the honor, courage and sacrifice of these men to life. It has cemented my admiration and profound respect for Chesty Puller and all the other Marines who served there. Goodnight Chesty, wherever you are.

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### **Wayne says**

I never read a book like this. It was a gut wrenching story of our military and how they had to retreat when the Chinese crossed into North Korea by the thousands. The north Koreans had already been defeated and the Korean war was thought to be nearing the end. It was bitterly cold, 20 below and the weather was killing our men as well as the Chinese. Captain Verity had been drawn into this conflict because his understanding of the Chinese people having spent his childhood in China. This story, written around Captain Verity was very moving. No one can read this book without marveling at the courage and toughness under fire of our U.S. Marines. Douglas MacArthur was not spoken well of. This book was an inspiration and a learning

experience for me. I very much recommend every American read it.

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### **Matt Howard says**

There are few books on the Korean war, and even fewer fiction books on the subject. This novel did it's job in being an entertaining read for the most part. It did well in giving the reader the sense of desperation that must have been felt on the march out of the Chosin Reservoir.

I did have a couple of problems with this book. The foreshadowing that was present from almost the beginning of this book can really give away the story a perceptive reader. The ending of the book didn't fit with the rest of the story at all, and was hard and sometimes difficult to finish because it had an almost comical sense to it. Other events in the book seemed really unnecessary and only served to mess with the emotions of the reader without contributing anything to the story.

The book is a good mixture of true events, historical accounts, and pretty decent story telling. I would recommend this book to readers who were interested in the subject matter, but I would caution the casual reader.

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