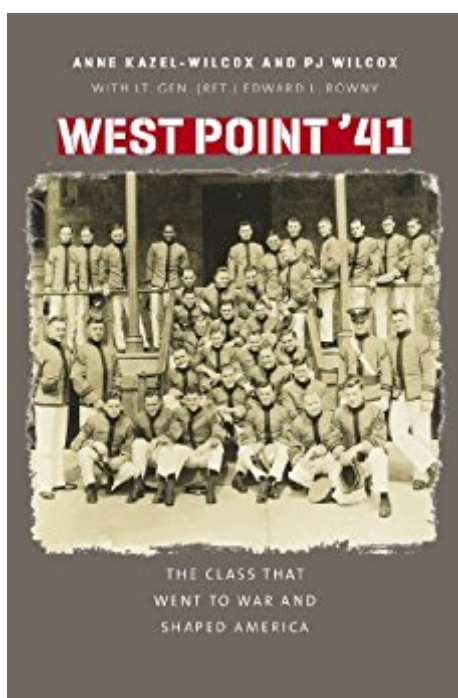


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West Point '41: The Class That Went To War And Shaped America



Synopsis

The inspiring true story of the West Point class of 1941, which graduated into combat leadership in World War II and went on to shape policy in Korea, during the Cold War, and in Vietnam

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Customer Reviews

Consider this a personal review. My father-in-law, a member of West Point's Class of 1941, was killed in France on Dec. 1, 1941. Before her death in 1991, his daughter often pondered what her father's career would have been, had he returned from World War II to his wife and two-year-old daughter. Anne Kazel-Wilcox answers her question. Ms. Wilcox carefully blends military records and personal discussions with the remaining members of the men of West Point '41 into an enlightening biography of "the class that went to war and shaped America." Members of the class, including my father-in-law, played pivotal roles in World War II. Many continued to lead troops in Korea and some in Vietnam. And while their names are not often mentioned in history texts, others rose to prominence during the Cold War, some

playing vital roles in intelligence gathering and others using their engineering and managerial skills to lead the U.S. space program. Ms. Kazel-Wilcox tells of class members who counseled Presidents and of one who resigned in opposition to a treaty negotiated by the Carter administration, only to become chief negotiator of a more favorable treaty in the Reagan administration.

“West Point ’41: The Class That Went to War and Shaped America” should be required reading in American history classes, but I doubt that it will. For me, it provides the answer to the question of a hero’s daughter, which I intend to pass on to her grandchildren.

This is a very solid effort. The writing is good enough, with some annoying editing flubs, such as the repeated use of "honing in" when they meant "homing in." But the book has a good heart, and the stories of these men deserve to be told. The unfortunate problem is that, while "dozens" of class members are mentioned at some point, the book by necessity focuses on the careers of far fewer -- the men still around and able to tell their stories to the authors, who are also some of the men who were career military. The rest get much shorter shrift. We don't hear much at all from men who left the service after WW2, or Korea. Nor do we hear much about the class members (I assume there were some, out of a class numbering over 400) who failed in their assignments. This is a book focused on accentuating the positive. So the book, while sharpening its focus on fewer and fewer men as it covers later decades, also sort of runs out of steam, and by the chapter on Vietnam, only a few guys have any stories to tell. The book is clearly strongest in the first half -- covering WWII, when many of the men were thrust into leadership roles at young ages, many were killed, and the class members were strewn all over the globe in various roles -- and gradually peters out (as do we all). To sum up, the book focuses primarily on the careers of a small percentage of the West Point '41 class. These are not household names, but they did great things, and for that reason should not be forgotten. But don't expect to learn much if anything about most members of this illustrious class -- some make cameo appearances in the book, and many others are never seen at all.

A very disappointing read. While the subject is very interesting - covering the careers of several officers throughout their careers in WW2, the writing is similar to that of an amateur novelist. Other than brief snippets, you do not get a feel of what these brave men underwent throughout their experiences in WW2. The timing of events jump quite a bit as well. What a pity as I believe the accounts and lives of these men could have been written so much better. A great book read on a similar topic (although covering the Class of 1966 and the Vietnam War instead) is Rick Atkinson's

The Long Gray Line.

What defines West Point '41: The Class That Went to War and Shaped America is the fast-paced, action-packed first-person recollections of the men and high-ranking officers trained at West Point who led America to victory during WWII. I found their never-before published stories engrossing and unforgettable; their close friendships and comradery remarkable, and, often-times, quite humorous. This engrossing book is the biography of fifteen Army and Army Air Corp officers, all retired, that covered not one, but three wars where constant innovation was necessary. The Class of '41 were taught a method of war used in WWI that quickly became obsolete as the nature of war changed forcing them to alter how to direct the next conflicts. This changing environment challenged and disciplined them. And through it all they helped create an era of technology that shaped the future of America which we all are affected daily by. In fact, I found surprising the list of accomplishments these officers have been credited with that have led us to this computer age. One thing that came through loud and clear as I read West Point '41 - No matter what the challenges, each officer lived by high standards of self-discipline and were shining examples of self-sacrifice as they shaped America's future. In this respect, they are models for us all. Many thanks to the authors, Anne Kazel Wilcox and PJ Wilcox, for smoothly pulling together in a superb book incredible and previously unknown tales that were part of the lives of brave men who served their country well in the course of war as well as in times of peace. WHAT AN EXCITING READ!!

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