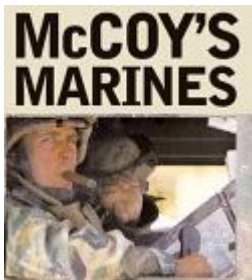


Iraq war from a journalist's perspective

By Kathryn Reed

It took me more than seven years to finally open “McCoy’s Marines: Darkside to Baghdad”. Then it took me a week to read the 304-page hardcover (which is in paperback now).



I couldn't read this book by John Koopman when it came out in 2004 because I was inundated with news about the war in Iraq. And more personally, my nephew is in the Army. He served two stints in Iraq.

While the war was and is personal for so many people on a much deeper level than it is for me, I just couldn't spend my leisure time reading about it.

Then something hit me earlier this month. It was a report on the TV news about the number of journalists killed in the Iraq conflict – about how more died in this war than any other. In large part it has to do with the number of journalists who were in the Mideast compared to other wars.

Then with the U.S. pullout from Iraq it seemed like now would be a good time to tackle the book.

(My nephew is still in the Army; now with Special Forces, so the danger continues.)

A friend and former colleague wrote the book. We worked together at the *San Francisco Examiner* (when it was a real paper) and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

“McCoy’s Marines” is about Koopman’s time spent as an embedded reporter with the Marines. I know I have a skewed view – I

know the editors he writes about, I have met his wife and son. And part of me always wanted to be a war reporter, so this let me live the experience vicariously through my friend.

Even though I have some personal connections to the book, I would still recommend it to anyone who wants to get a glimpse into the world of what it's like for a reporter traveling with a military unit during war.

Despite the title, it's Koopman's story much more than it is Lt. Gen. Bryan McCoy's. What this account does that news stories didn't do was put a human element on the war. It shows some of the fears the men and women in uniform had.

Interspersed are emails from people in the United States reaching out to Koopman in an attempt to make contact with their loved one whom he is traveling. Most of the emails are heartfelt, while some attacked Koopman. I thought including them brought a broader perspective to what goes on during war.

Koopman is still in the Bay Area, now working as a freelance writer.