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THE UNFORGIVING MINUTE

A Soldier's Education

CRAIG M. MULLANEY

"Young Captain Mullaney's admirable, literate autobiography, that of a veteran of combat in Afghanistan, adds much to knowledge of the modern army and makes a valuable contribution to the ongoing debate over what a 'warrior' is these days. Mullaney wryly recounts his years at West Point and as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, then writes eloquently of infantry combat and the persistent burden of guilt for not bringing all his men home even as he makes his account a tribute to his fellow warriors. . . .Almost impossible to put down for anyone interested in the modern U.S. Army or in modern warfare in general." — *ALA Booklist*

"Keenly intelligent war memoir whose central question is, 'What is a man?' First-time author Mullaney, a West Point graduate, Rhodes Scholar and veteran of combat in Afghanistan, searches for the answer while investigating a second question: What kind of man is a soldier? . . . A philosophically ambitious account of coming to adulthood." — *Kirkus Reviews*

Craig Mullaney grew up in a blue-collar, Irish-Catholic family in Rhode Island. A voracious reader, he was drawn to the rigor and symbolism of a West Point education. He graduated from the Academy second in his class in 2000, and went on to become an Airborne Ranger and a Rhodes Scholar. But for all of his training in and out of the classroom, one question lingered in his mind—when the moment came to lead his men into battle would he be ready?

In ***THE UNFORGIVING MINUTE: A Soldier's Education*** (The Penguin Press; Publication date: February 23, 2009) Craig offers us a fascinating inside look at a rather singular education. He begins with an often comical plebe's eye view of the West Point experience, which starts with an ignominious arrival that didn't bode well for future success. After some eye-opening and mortifying experiences, he manages to graduate 2nd in his class. From there, he goes on to endure a miserably character-building experience of sleep-deprivation and calorie-restriction in Ranger School, in which he tastes both excruciating failure and bittersweet success. Next stop: a two-year whirlwind of scintillating debate over champagne toasts and pub crawls as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford. The four years he spent at West Point readied him for a career in the Army, but his subsequent experience at Oxford conferred an unorthodox education that would be surprisingly relevant as a combat leader.

Mullaney would face the challenge of taking all that he had learned in the classroom and Ranger training ground in one unforgiving minute in 2003, when as a captain in the U.S. Army, he and his platoon were caught in a deadly firefight with Al Qaeda fighters on Losano Ridge, on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. A message came over the radio that they had sustained a casualty. One of his soldiers had been killed in action. While Craig's education had been relentlessly preparing him for that moment, nothing matched the reality of war and the brutality of death to teach him the kind of keen and nuanced leadership necessary to lead men into danger.

Years later, after that unforgettable and searing experience in Afghanistan, Craig returned to the United States to finish out his military service teaching history to future Navy and Marine Corps officers at the Naval Academy. He had been in their seats once, and he had put his education to the test. Would he now be able to use his own life-changing experience to teach war? And if he failed, what would the consequences for his students be?

From the parade grounds of West Point to the swamps and mountains of Ranger School to the hallowed halls of Oxford, Craig's winding path to the battlegrounds of Afghanistan was a unique and remarkable one. This is the extraordinary story of one soldier's education, and his attempt to wrestle with the weight of his hard-earned knowledge.

Visit www.craigmullaney.com for more information and photos

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Craig Mullaney currently serves as Chief of Staff for the President-elect's Pentagon Transition Team.

Born in Rhode Island in 1978, Mullaney received his nomination to the U.S. Military Academy from the late Senator John Chafee. He graduated West Point in 2000 and was commissioned in the United States Army. After completing Ranger School, Mullaney continued to the University of Oxford on a Rhodes scholarship. At Oxford, he completed two masters degrees.

In 2003, Mullaney led an infantry rifle platoon along the hostile border between Afghanistan and Pakistan with the 10th Mountain Division as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. His platoon operated along the entire spectrum of military operations—from humanitarian assistance with the first Provincial Reconstruction Team established in Afghanistan to combat engagements against Al Qaeda and the Taliban. Following his return to the United States, Craig joined the elite 3rd Infantry Regiment, "The Old Guard," in Arlington, Virginia, responsible for Arlington Ceremonial burials, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and defense of the National Capital Region. He served for three years as the Army Exchange Officer to the history faculty of the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland where he focused on American foreign policy and directed the international scholarships program.

After leaving the military, Mullaney served as a national security adviser on Barack Obama's presidential campaign, led veterans outreach efforts in western Pennsylvania, and was the Chief of Staff for the President-elect's Department of Defense Review Team. His military decorations include the Bronze Star, Army Commendation Medal with "V" device, Combat Infantryman's Badge, Ranger Tab, and Parachutist Badge.

EXTRAORDINARY ADVANCE PRAISE FOR THE UNFORGIVING MINUTE: A SOLDIER'S EDUCATION

"The Unforgiving Minute is a wonderful, beautifully written story of the education and development of a young soldier-scholar, the coming of age of an infantry officer, and the exercise of a small unit leader's responsibilities in a tough, complex, and frustrating situation in Afghanistan. It captures particularly eloquently and movingly the relationships among those who walk point for our nation as part of that most elite of fraternities, the brotherhood of the close fight."

—General David Petraeus, Commander, U.S. Central Command

“Craig Mullaney has lived every kind of American life—he has been a working-man’s son, a prize scholar, a soldier—and what’s come out of it is a classic memoir about what it means to be American. By marching so many terrains, he has covered the subjects central to every life: courage, pain, loyalty, honor, friendship, love and the tests any good life faces, year by year, minute by minute. He has also produced a page-turner, a brutally honest account of West Point life, the innocence-abandoned experiences of an American abroad at Oxford, and ultimately an indelible story of life and death on the battlefield. In words his squadmates might recognize, I recommend *The Unforgiving Minute* without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion.”

—David Lipsky, contributing editor to *Rolling Stone* and author of *Absolutely American*

“*The Unforgiving Minute* is the ultimate’s soldier’s book--universal in its raw emotion and its understanding of the larger issues of life and death. Mullaney, a master storyteller, plunges the depths of self-doubt, endurance, and courage. The result: a riveting, suspenseful human story, beautifully told. This is a book written under fire--a lyrical, spellbinding tale of war, love, and courage. *The Unforgiving Minute* is the *Three Cups of Tea* of soldiering.” **—Ahmed Rashid, author of *Taliban* and *Descent into Chaos***

“Mullaney writes a great story—a true privilege to read. Entertaining, balanced, and graceful, *The Unforgiving Minute* is a powerful narrative of purpose, responsibility, courage, and personal growth. Every young man and woman in America should read this book, and aspire to his standard of public service.”

—General Wesley Clark, USA (Ret.)

“*The Unforgiving Minute* is one of the most compelling memoirs yet to emerge from America’s 9/11 era. Craig Mullaney has given us an unusually honest, funny, accessible, and vivid account of a soldier’s coming of age. This is more than a soldier’s story; it is a work of literature.”

—Steve Coll, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Ghost Wars* and *The Bin Ladens*

“Craig Mullaney’s memoir is a thoughtful, introspective work reminiscent of the great British memoirs of World War I. A thousand years from now, historians wanting to know about life in America after 9/11 would do well to look at this book. Equally important, it is an enjoyable and honest book. Read it.” **—Thomas E. Ricks, author of *FIASCO: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* and senior military correspondent, *The Washington Post***

“Craig Mullaney has written a poignant and evocative book about the great hurdles in coming of age: love, death, belief, and betrayal. Learning from his experience can help us face our own unforgiving minutes. I couldn’t stop reading.”

—Nathaniel Fick, author of *One Bullet Away*

“Craig Mullaney is an exemplar of the next great generation of Americans, those who are serving and sacrificing on the front lines in Afghanistan and Iraq. This is a compelling, can’t-put-down book, a well-written, memorable description of preparing for war and leading in combat.”

—Joe Klein, *Time Magazine* political columnist and author of *Primary Colors*

“*The Unforgiving Minute* is the poignant true story of a young man’s unusual education from the classrooms of West Point and Oxford to his development as a leader, son, brother, husband and friend. In this powerful book, we share in the remarkable experiences of a Rhodes scholar, and the heartache and pride of a soldier. I admire Craig Mullaney’s courage, and thank him for his service.”

—Senator Richard Lugar, former Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

“No matter how many books you have read about the rigors of basic training and the terrors of war, you should read this one. Mullaney’s keen eye for detail, lively narrative style, and capacity for self-reflection—unusual in many soldiers—make an old story new and gripping.” **—Anne-Marie Slaughter, Dean of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University**

“Craig Mullaney adds his name to the very few among of us who have the intelligence, sensitivity and skill to share the unforgiving sadness and the unparalleled joy of leading men and women in combat. *The Unforgiving Minute* should be required reading for all who serve in the White House and Congress and for those who aspire to leadership. Read it. Twice.”

—Paul Bucha, West Point Class of 1965, Medal of Honor recipient and past president of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society

“Craig Mullaney puts the reader in the muddy boots of a combat leader as he marches a path from West Point to Afghanistan and back again. Weaving action and reflection, *The Unforgiving Minute* is fast-paced, entertaining, and rich with insight and wisdom. A great debut from a leader to watch.”

—**General Barry McCaffrey, USA (Ret.)**

“Intimate and evocative in the tradition of the best coming-of-age memoirs, *The Unforgiving Minute* accurately captures what it is to prepare for the ultimate responsibility of leading soldiers in war, a demand as much intellectual as physical, as much about compassion as discipline. By turns thoughtful, hilarious, gut-wrenching, and inspiring, *The Unforgiving Minute* is as gripping and addictive as it is perceptive and honest.”

—**Lieutenant General F.L. Hagenbeck, U.S. Army**

“Craig Mullaney has served his country twice: first by leading his men at war, and now by remembering. He has done both with skill and honor. Mullaney’s memoir is the thinking soldier’s guide to modern combat, told with a novelist’s eye for detail and a philosopher’s penchant for perspective. It is a story well worth reading.”

—**Bill Murphy Jr., author of *IN A TIME OF WAR: the Proud & Perilous Journey of West Point’s Class of 2002***

“No one describes more clearly how a boy becomes a man than Craig Mullaney in this masterpiece of self-awareness. No American can read this book and ever again forget what we owe to others for giving to us a society filled with so many choices that we have the freedom to make for ourselves.”

—**David L. Boren, former U.S. Senator and longest serving chairman of the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee**

“A searingly honest and brilliant tale, full of small victories, significant losses, self-awareness and understanding. This is a marvelous read, full of life lessons on every page, written in a modest and unflinching style—a classic memoir.”

—**Admiral James Stavridis, Commander, U.S. Southern Command**

“An honest account of the closeness and the distance between a father and a son and the highs and lows of military life. A heart-breaking account of what it is like to be responsible for the life and death of America’s most precious asset: the Combat Warrior. A must read for all combat leaders.”

—**Lieutenant General Ronald Coleman, U.S. Marine Corps**

“*The Unforgiving Minute* tells the story of a fiercely passionate young man and provides important insight into a new greatest generation—his comrades in arms who serve in a time of war. Read this book to get a sense of their courage and sacrifice.”

—**Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl, USA (Ret.), author of *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife***

“*The Unforgiving Minute* is a literate and thoughtful memoir that is a valuable contribution to both the genre and to our understanding of contemporary conflict.”

—**Andrew Exum, author of *This Man’s Army***

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By Craig Mullaney

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