



I Heard My Country Calling: A Memoir

James Webb

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In this brilliantly received memoir, former senator James Webb has outdone himself. It is rare in America that one individual is recognized for the highest levels of combat valor, as a respected member of the literary and journalistic world, and as a blunt-spoken leader in national politics. In this extraordinary memoir, Webb writes vividly about the early years that shaped such a remarkable personal journey.

Webb's mother grew up in the poverty-stricken cotton fields of East Arkansas. His father and lifetime hero was the first in many generations of Webbs, whose roots are in Appalachia, to finish high school. He flew bombers in World War II and cargo planes in the Berlin Airlift, graduated from college in middle age, and became an expert in the nation's most advanced weaponry.

Webb's account of his childhood is a tremendous American saga as the family endures the constant moves and challenges of the rarely examined post-World War II military, with a stern but emotionally invested father, a loving mother who had borne four children by the age of twenty-four, a granite-like grandmother who held the family together during his father's frequent deployments, and a rich assortment of aunts, siblings, and cousins. Webb tells of his four years at Annapolis in a voice that is painfully honest but in the end triumphant.

His description of Vietnam's most brutal battlefields breaks new literary ground. One of the most highly decorated combat Marines of that war, he is a respected expert on the history and conduct of the war. Webb's novelist's eyes and ears invest this work with remarkable power, whether he is describing the resiliency that grew from constant relocations during his childhood, the longing for his absent father, his poignant good-bye to his parents as he leaves for Vietnam, his role as a twenty-three-year-old lieutenant through months of constant combat, or his election to the Senate, where he was a leader on national defense, foreign policy, and economic fairness. This is a life that could happen only in America.

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