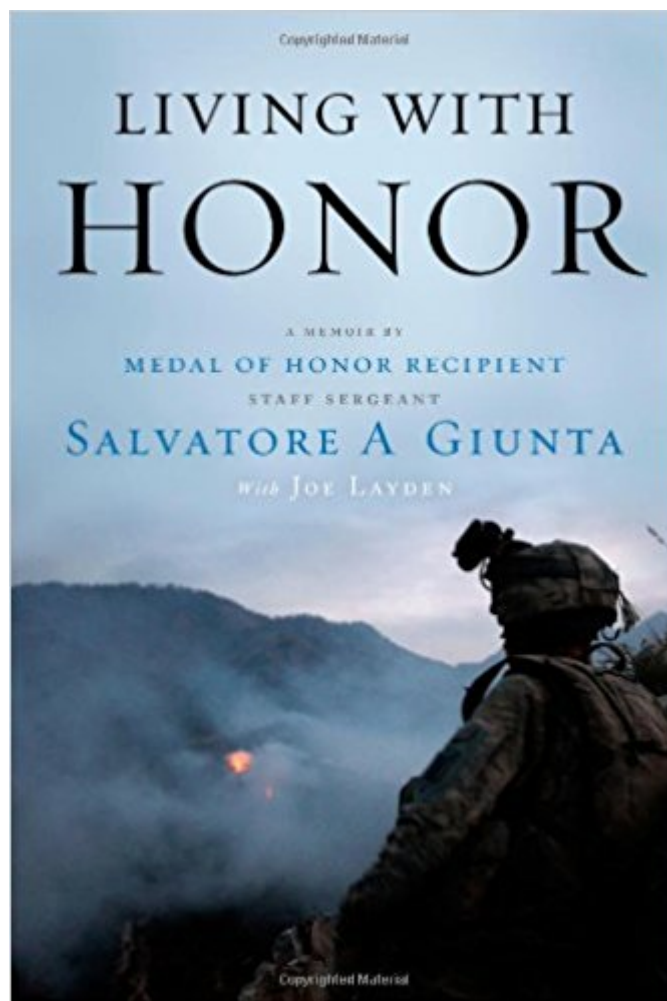


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Living With Honor: A Memoir



Synopsis

A compelling memoir from a true hero—and one of the few living persons to ever be awarded the celebrated Medal of Honor. There was the sound of a single bullet, and then . . . a deafening barrage of gunfire and explosions. There were, literally, thousands of bullets in the air at once, and more tracers streaking across the sky than there were stars overhead. It was a miracle that most of us weren't killed instantly. Staff Sergeant Salvatore, "Sal," Giunta was the first living person to receive the Medal of Honor—the highest honor presented by the U.S. military—since the conclusion of the Vietnam War. In *Living with Honor*, this hero who maintains he is "just a soldier" tells us the story of the fateful day in Afghanistan that led to his receiving the unique honor. With candor, insight, and humility, Giunta not only recounts the harrowing events leading up to when he and his company fell under siege, but also illustrates the empowering, invaluable lessons he learned. As a seventeen-year-old teen working at Subway, Giunta was like any other kid trying to figure out which step to take next with his life after graduating from high school. When Giunta walked into the local Army recruiting center in his hometown, he just wanted a free T-shirt. But when he walked out, his curiosity had been piqued and he enlisted in the Army. Deployed to Afghanistan, Giunta soon learned from the more seasoned soldiers how "different" this war was compared to others that America had fought. Stationed with the 173rd Airborne Brigade near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in the Korengal Valley—also known as the "Valley of Death"—Giunta and his company were ambushed by Taliban insurgents. Giunta went into action after seeing that his squad leader had fallen. Exposing himself to blistering enemy fire, Giunta charged toward his squad leader and administered first aid while he covered him with his own body. Though Giunta was struck by the relentless barrage of bullets, he engaged the enemy and then attempted to reach additional wounded soldiers. When he realized that yet another soldier was separated from his unit, he advanced forward. Discovering two rebels carrying away a U.S. soldier, Giunta killed one insurgent and wounded the other, and immediately provided aid to the injured soldier. More than just a remarkable memoir by a remarkable person, *Living with Honor* is a powerful testament to the human spirit and all that one can achieve when faced with seemingly impossible obstacles. *** The President clasps the medal around my neck. Applause fills the room. But I know it's not for me alone. I look at my mom and dad. I look at Brennan's parents and I look at Mendoza's. And I try to communicate to Brennan and Mendoza wordlessly: This is for you . . . and for everyone who has fought and died. For everyone who has made the ultimate sacrifice. I am not a hero. I'm just a soldier. —Salvatore A. Giunta, from *Living with Honor*

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Customer Reviews

“More than anything, it’s his genuineness and humility that will make you appreciate Giunta’s spirit and his memoir. If we as a nation are still capable of producing young men like him, we’re doing okay.” (Time Magazine) “Candid, confessional...a simply told account that reminds us of the awesome weight accompanying this signal honor.” (Kirkus Reviews) “An adept observer of human nature, Giunta’s portraits of his comrades-in-arms are full of wit and warmth about their foibles and admiration for their combat skills...With clarity and maturity, Giunta shows he understands the complexities of contemporary Afghan society.” (Publishers Weekly)

Salvatore A. Giunta retired from active duty in 2011. Prior to that, he was responsible for the health, welfare, morale, training, and accountability of the soldiers in his company in the Army, working to ensure all unit family members were well taken care of while their spouses were deployed in Afghanistan. He is one of the few living persons to ever be awarded the Medal of Honor, and he was presented the award by President Obama in a White House ceremony on November 16, 2010. Giunta has also received numerous other commendations, including the Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal and the Purple Heart. He lives in Colorado with his wife, Jen, and their daughter. >Joe Layden has authored or coauthored more than thirty books, including multiple New York Times bestsellers.

One of the awesome responsibilities of someone who receives the Medal of Honor is representing all warriors who have served their country. Sal Giunta tells his story well in this memoir. Just as

importantly, he understands the role he will play for the rest of his life. To quote him, "Every time the Medal of Honor comes up, I get patted on the back and thanked for my service and all I can do is politely say 'Thank you' and swallow what I really feel. How can I be so great if I allowed two of my friends to get killed? That comes with the territory, I guess. It is part of the responsibility of accepting the Medal of Honor and all that it represents. I understand more as time goes on that the medal stands for something much larger, something incredibly important, but it doesn't obscure the reality of what happened. " I highly recommend Staff Sergeant Sal Giunta book. His book along with Medal of Honor by Peter Collier and If Not Now, When? by Medal of Honor recipient Jack Jacobs make wonderful additions to the library anyone who is looking for outstanding role models.

First, and above all, thank you for serving our country. This book is not an "action" book, but the story of someone who served our country, willing to make the ultimate sacrifice, and was designated for the highest honor that can be awarded to a serviceman in the military. It's about the person and his journey from his youth, to the military, events in Afghanistan, to falling in love. It's about his love of country and the loss of people who he loved - who he would give his life for and theirs for him. It is a relationship that only they can experience and understand. It is like none other that exists. I have read numerous books lately by men who have served in Afghanistan. They all speak of their reasons for joining the military and the common thread is they love their country. Some serve for that purpose only and others serve for that reason as well as some very personal reasons - many having a need to find themselves, had a troubled past, knew that they needed structure and order to their life. The more I read the more heartbreaking I find these stories on the one hand, on the other, I am proud to be an American and have the world's greatest military protecting my rights and freedom. This book speaks of the conditions that they serve under and the length of time they can be asked to serve. I came to learn through Sal that when you volunteer to join for 4 years, 4 years can turn into 8 years, 4 years tacked on involuntarily. How meaningful the care packages from home are. These aren't presents, they are treasures to them. When they are home how much it means when someone acknowledges their service with a "thank you". How they feel this country has abandoned them. Read this book and you will realize, what many have, that they are doing the impossible. In my opinion, they are being asked to go beyond serving their country and find themselves at times serving the enemy. They are asked to take on tasks that are not military; our military was not designed to nation build but to fight and protect the United States of America. It is evident to these men who had boots on the ground that this war is not to be won; not in this century at least. I personally don't support the US going about nation building or when war is used as a

disguise for a hidden government agenda, nor do I understand why this country continues to put Americans in harms way because it is so stubborn about pulling out of Afghanistan and finding a way to gracefully withdraw with the appearance of not having lost. In spite of that, I will ALWAYS support the enlisted men and women and non-military of all branches of military service that are willing to serve this country. I will ALWAYS support those who serve in the military who undertake whatever mission they are ordered to carry out. And I don't forget, for even a day, that there are thousands who are willing to give their life for this country, nor do I forget those who have. Sal has also reminded me that the 4th of July is not just a day to celebrate our rights and freedom, but it is also a day to take time out and thank those, maybe offer up a small prayer, for those that fought to protect those rights and freedom.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book! Giunta's story should resonate with a wide range of men. We have all been young and dumb, and he makes no bones about his past and the mistakes that he's made in his life. Self deprecating at times, this book is an honest and straight-forward account of how an ordinary man became a soldier, and how that soldier earned our nation's highest honor for fighting men. If you've seen any interviews that he gave after he was awarded the Medal of Honor, you'll see that this is just who he is; it's not an act. My one qualm with the book is that he is so humble, I don't think he does his story justice! I would've liked some interviews with the men in his platoon or under his command so they could've hammered home exactly how brave and selfless his actions during Rock Avalanche truly were. Overall, great and easy read!

I have met two Medal of Honor recipients in my life and they both wear our nation's highest military award with humility and an awareness that they wear it as representatives of all the men and women who experience combat particularly their comrades in arms who never came home. Salvatore Giunta is no exception. His memoir should be read by every young man or woman who thinks they might someday want to serve in the infantry. Sal Giunta decided to join the Army almost on a whim. He became a paratrooper assigned to the famous 173rd Airborne Brigade stationed in Italy. He served two tours in Afghanistan the last in the ill-fated venture into the Korengal Valley. His description of the day-to-day existence during both tours and his insights into the frustration of fighting a war we seem to have no chance of winning illustrates why this war is different than any other our military has fought. The "grunts" who are the tip of the spear for up to 15 months (Marines' tours are for 6-8 months and the Air Force is as little as 4) experience combat day after day unlike earlier wars in which even infantrymen got a break after a relatively few days of fighting. Read this

and you'll understand why PTSD is experienced by about half of all those who are in combat units. Giunta describes the action for which he was awarded the MOH in a matter-of-fact manner. Afterwards, when his company commander tells him that he is putting him in for the "Blue Max" Giunta responds "F-you". (Warning; the "F-bomb" is dropped a lot in this book.) Three years later he receives a phone call from President Obama telling him he will be the first living recipient of the Medal of Honor since the Vietnam War. During the ceremony in the White House, when he looks out at the eight living recipients he will join and the families of his comrades who made the ultimate sacrifice Sal Giunta realizes what the MOH represents.

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