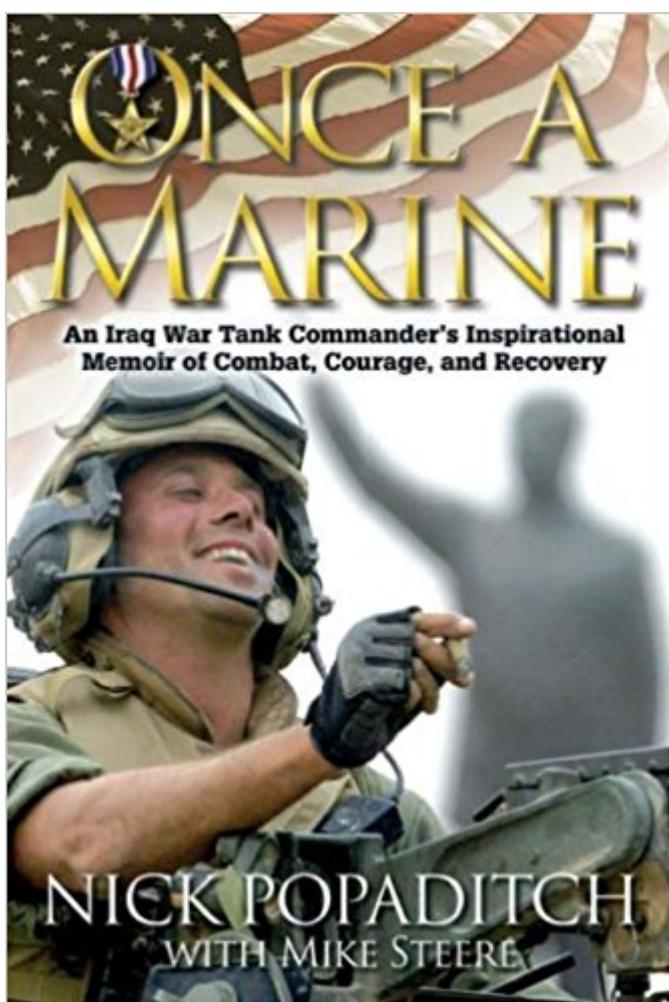


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# Once A Marine: An Iraq War Tank Commander's Inspirational Memoir Of Combat, Courage, And Recovery



## Synopsis

May 6, 1986: Nick Popaditch arrives at the Receiving Barracks, Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, California. April 9, 2003: An AP photographer captures a striking image seen around the world of the Gunnery Sergeant smoking a victory cigar in his tank, the haunting statue of Saddam Hussein hovering in the background. Popaditch is immortalized forever as "The Cigar Marine." April 6, 2004: The tanker fights heroically in the battle for Fallujah and suffers grievous head wounds that leave him legally blind and partially deaf. The USMC awards him with a Silver Star for his valor and combat innovation. April 18, 2004: "Gunny Pop" comes home to face the toughest fight of his life—a battle to remain the man and Marine he was. This is the central drama of Nick's inspiring memoir, *Once a Marine: An Iraq War Tank Commander's Inspirational Memoir of Combat, Courage, and Recovery*. Readers in and out of the military will stand up and cheer for this valiant Marine's Marine, a man who embodies everything noble and proud in the Corps' long tradition. Never has modern mechanized combat seemed so immediate and real, or the fight in Iraq seemed so human and worth believing in. At first, Nick fights to get back to where he was in Iraq—in the cupola of an M1A1 main battle tank, leading Marines in combat at the point of the spear. As the seriousness and permanence of his disabilities become more evident, Nick fights to remain in the Corps in any capacity, to help the brothers in arms he so aches to rejoin. Facing the inevitable following a medical retirement, he battles for rightful recognition and compensation for his permanent disabilities. Throughout his harrowing ordeal, Nick fights to maintain his honor and loyalty, waging all these battles the same way—the Marine way—because anything less would be a betrayal of all he holds dear. The real triumph in *Once a Marine* is its previously untold, behind-the-scenes tale of the day-to-day life of a career Marine noncommissioned staff officer. In most books and movies, a "Gunny" is little more than a cardboard character. Nick's portrayal is a man complete: a husband and father, as well as a warrior and a molder of young warriors. He reveals himself completely, something no memoirist in his position has ever done before. This includes our very personal introduction to his wife April, whose heroics in the story equal Nick's, together with dozens of others who, as Sgt. Popaditch writes, gave so much, so selflessly and freely, to him. Like the man himself, *Once a Marine* is full of gratitude and refreshingly free of false bravado and braggadocio. All Americans, of all political persuasions, have a duty to meet this courageous and admirable fighting man, an exemplar of all our military men and women who give so much out of love for their nation. Meeting Gunnery Sergeant Popaditch through the pages of his inspirational memoir offers up new reasons to be proud and shoulder our own responsibilities as Americans. *Once a Marine* will instantly take its place among outstanding combat classics. And once you read this remarkable and

uplifting book, The Marine's Hymn will never sound the same.FINALIST: The Indie Book Awards, Autobiography / Memoirs 2009 REVIEWS " Nick Popaditch's transcendent memoir of military service and its personal consequences should be read by every one of our nation's political leaders-to help them understand the incomparable quality of those who fight on the front lines. Read this inspiring story, recommend it to friends-and send a copy to your member of Congress!"- Ralph Peters (Lt. Col., ret.), New York Post columnist and author of Looking For Trouble and Wars Of Blood and Faith"Retired Gunny Sergeant Nick Popaditch's narrative will burn through your heart, and then settle deep in your gut. . . . Readers will shed a tear, and simultaneously burst out with eagle, globe and anchor emotive-pride....

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This is a very well written book, from the perspective that Savas Beatie has not edited the rawness out of Popaditch's Marine bluster as he struggles with his horrendous injuries in Iraq. Though the whole book, Popaditch continues to hold the Marine Corps and his role in a war with questionable

beginnings in the best light possible. He never loses faith in the Corps, except briefly when he feels he might be getting screwed by the establishment, but in the end the Corps comes through as untarnished as it went in. Particularly interesting is Popaditch's descriptions of his relationship with his wife throughout the ordeal, as they both struggle with the severity of the injuries and their uncertain future. Also interesting is his journey through the medical world, eventually ending up with the help he needed but wasn't aware existed to bring him back into a semi-normal existence. Those who haven't encountered veterans from the war, particularly Marines, may find his enthusiasm for war and belief in his cause over the top. I can vouch for the fact that it is not. His belief in the cause and the Corps is unbelievably deep, and he really does believe what he writes and feels. The constant cheerleading gets a little tiring over the course of the book, and the book tails off in a way that leaves the reader slightly disappointed, but overall it is a good read. The one thing that struck me as odd is his total lack of addressing the PTSD issue, either in himself or others. One would think he must have suffered from it to some extent, but the reader is forced to believe that he did not, and if it was encountered in others he did not comment on it. Never is there a negative word on the war or the leadership that dragged us into it. But overall, it was a story that needed to be told, and it would be difficult to do a better job of it than Nick Popaditch performed. I recommend it.

I came to know Gunny Pop and his beautiful wife April when Nick was running through Congress - other Marines helped me come to know these amazing people. I am still disappointed that Nick was elected to Congress because we need people like him on the hill. As the years have progressed I've come to know them through emails and social media. They are the kindest most down to earth real people I've ever had the pleasure of knowing. As a Marine I've always had, and will always have, a soft spot for Marines. My career was excellant and I'd do it again if asked. Gunny Pop's book, Once a Marine, came from the warrior heart. I love that he talked about Honor - Courage - and Commitment. I love that he talked of his dark times but doesn't dwell on them. It was heartwarming to read that he doesn't hate Muslims, he doesn't hate Iraqi's he doesn't regret his service, his time in combat, or his role in combat. He understood the mission and he understands that not all Muslims are bad. I love that Gunny shared some of his deepest darkest secrets and the love he shows for his wife is what every young man needs to hear. I pray that he continues to excel in his life and pray one day he'll serve this great nation in a way to help us recover. This book is a MUST read. I've read books by several authors (male and female) regarding their time in service and most of them are books that cut to the core because they are all negative. This book is about the pride of serving this nation, honor, getting through the tough times, and reaching deep. Thank you Gunny Pop and

April for sharing with us.

I found this remarkable memoir when looking on for my own novel by the same name, Once a Marine. I just finished reading Gunny Pop's story. I can't begin to express my admiration for Nick and every one of the brave men of the Marine Corps. That goes from 1803 and in to the future. We owe these guys so much. Nick is a fearless warrior and also a funny and optimistic guy. His head is squarely on his shoulders. I was touched by his references to his wife and sons, and particularly how he tells about leaving the drill Sargent on the base and coming home as Dad, just Dad. I can't imagine how he compartmentalizes his life that way. You will love this realistic read about what our service members face while we sit comfortably in front of the TV, safe and sound thanks to them. Nick was born to be a Marine. Thank you, Gunny Pop..

I had not heard of this book until I found myself in conversation with GySgt Popaditch in San Diego one evening a few years ago. A mutual friend knew of my interest in the Corps and introduced me. GySgt Popaditch is a great guy, and the book he's written about his experiences is fantastic. Highly recommended. Also, if you are interested in joining the Marine Corps as I am, I would suggest GySgt Popaditch's other book (listed below), which is a guide to recruit training. He was a Drill Instructor, so he knows a thing or two about the process. He really cares about the Corps and helping young people get the most out of the experience and become successful. **ULTIMATE MARINE RECRUIT TRAINING GUIDEBOOK: A Drill Instructor's Strategies and Tactics for Success**

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