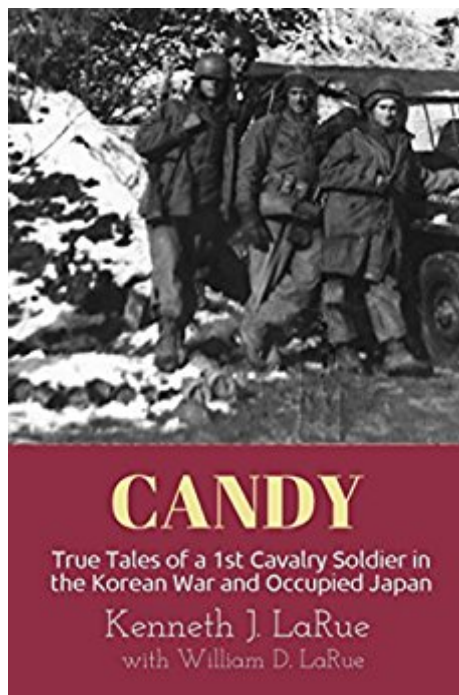




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CANDY: True Tales Of A 1st Cavalry Soldier In The Korean War And Occupied Japan



Synopsis

"CANDY: True Tales of a 1st Cavalry Soldier in the Korean War and Occupied Japan" is the coming-of-age autobiography of a small-town teenager going to war in 1950. Kenny LaRue is like many young men at that time who volunteer for the Army out of a sense of patriotism and duty. Through quirky circumstances, he ends up on the front line of Korea, where he remains firmly in denial he might be killed -- until he sees a buddy blown up by an enemy shell. Kenneth J. LaRue, in collaboration with his son William, tells this story in a no-nonsense way steeped in humanity and humor, including recollections of off-duty antics in Occupied Japan. The title "CANDY" is inspired in part by mispronunciation of Kenny's name by the young "bar girls" in Japan. Candy happens to be, too, a recurring element of his story, from the treats he gives to beggar children in Korea to the Army candy he used to settle his stomach after a brutal battle on Thanksgiving 1951.

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Customer Reviews

A first-person account of the daily life of an ordinary, small-town American boy who finds himself fighting in the Korean War. An observant and descriptive account of the details of daily life, told as if said to a friend.

The successful return of the old fashioned narrative. That is how I would summarize William D. LaRue's delightful Korean War memoir of his father, Kenneth J. LaRue. Written in the first person, but reflecting the objective voice of the third person, LaRue has written a very personal story that is entertaining, cozy, and factual. At a time when writers take the easy way out in invoking the first person "I," LaRue uses it to microscope the action from above, as if the author were observing or telling his story, say, from the moon, looking down at earth. This stereoscopic or microscopic technique is particularly compelling in the battle scenes in Korea. The Chinese enemy is viewed from both above and in a straight line vision, amplified by night time flares that American forces shoot up at intervals to try to locate their enemy. Like the Tom Hanks "every guy" character in the movie, "Saving Private Ryan," Kenneth LaRue is presented as an ordinary citizen doing his duty. The author, for example, only notes that his father served in Korea in the 1st Calvary Division, but makes no melodramatic attempt to inform the reader that it is the most famous division in the Army, nick named "Big Red One," led by Douglas MacArthur in World War I, and so on. The author does an excellent job of describing the innocence and friendly warmth of small town Norwood, New York, "nestled in a valley along the Racquette River in the far reaches of upstate New York. It's a few miles south of the Canadian border, kind of geographically and socially isolated from the rest of the country." In Norwood, everybody knows everybody else, and as LaRue writes, "Back then, Norwood had everything within walking distance" "restaurants, churches, grocery stores, bank, schools and a movie theater." Naturally, Kenneth LaRue knew everybody in Norwood who was thinking of joining the US Army after the Korean War broke out in 1950, just at the time he was graduating from high school. A classmate named Paul suggested they join up together in Ogdensburg, some 30 miles away. In one of the funniest incidents in the book, LaRue's father arrived at Paul's house on the appointed morning to join up, only to find Paul in bed, having decided not to join up after all. Once in the Army, Kenneth LaRue decided the task of a radio technician would be a good job, and perhaps keep him away from the front lines in Korea. In a story familiar to anyone who joined the Army expecting to be doing one thing, but then was ordered to do another, LaRue was sent to radar repair school at Fort Bliss, Texas. LaRue was shipped across the Pacific, first to Japan, then on to Pusan, Korea, where he acquired the nickname "Candy" for

handing out candy to children. In October, 1951, LaRue was sent to replace a radar repairman with the 1st Calvary Division, at Uijeongbu, Korea. Located some 10 to 15 miles behind the battle front, La Rue expected to spend the rest of his Army days repairing the radar systems. Of course, LaRue was sent to the front instead. He was stunned. He uttered to his company captain, "Sir, I just spent 11 months in radar repair and maintenance school. I'm a radar repairman. As generations before and since learned, when you're in the Army now, you do what you're told. LaRue was told you report to the battlelines, located north of the city of Yonchon. He described his new surroundings: "I looked around. Our section of the line was a series of sharp hills, some hundreds of feet high with very sharp drops on the backside to the south and sloping gradually toward the enemy line to the north. In front of us was a huge valley studded with isolated hills in the center. Directly in front of us, behind a line of barbed wire, were minefields that any enemy would have to go through to reach us. The enemy would eventually test the minefields, but those are details for readers to see for themselves. In a narrative masterpiece about an "every man" of the Korean War, a minor imperfection is the same one engaged in by director Steven Spielberg in making "Finding Private Ryan" about World War II. In that movie, Spielberg should have dropped the credits the instant Matt Damon is located. Instead, Spielberg drags the film through an unnecessary attempt to milk the audience of every last ounce of emotion with a walk through the Normandy Cemetery. Likewise, LaRue's powerful narrative has a natural ending with his family reunion returning from Korea. The narrative is weakened, therefore, by an afterward where Kenneth LaRue gives a bit of an update on his Korean War buddies and provides his opinions on the television show MASH and how it represented the views of the Vietnam War more than of the Korean War it was supposed to humanize. Yet that, as we say in the law, is the exception, not the rule. "Candy" is a splendid read and the kind of narrative contemporary writing often misses. Indeed, it would not be a bad idea to make "Candy" required reading so that new generations of Americans could learn how to write narrative again.[All of Hansen Alexander's books, including most recently, "The Life and Trials of Roger Clemens," are available from .]

I enjoyed the easy and honest manner in which this story is told. You get a great variety of experience when reading this story. It is more than the Author's combat experience, it is a story of his entire Army experience.

A first hand "this is what I saw" account of an Army Trooper. If you like knowing what really went on

at the soldier level this is for you. Well worth the price and the read.

This was a fine book that gives the reader insight into the life of an ordinary combat veteran of the Korean War. The scenes of battle depicted are not graphic but are related in a realistic way. Many of the "off duty" stories told are humorous and give the book a nice balance. Very well written!

very good story!

Read this book in almost one sitting. It is beautifully written and carries the memory and life of Ken LaRue on while still adding realness and humor to a horrifying period of time. For a small town man, he lived an extraordinary life.

Well written chronology of a man's journey to war. From a small town in upstate NY to fighting in the Korean War, and then to occupation duty in Japan's northernmost island, Hokkaido. Highly recommended.

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