



The Crossroad

Mark Donaldson

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On 2 September 2008, in a valley in eastern Afghanistan, Trooper Mark Donaldson made a split-second decision that would change his life. His display of extraordinary courage that day saw him awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia, making him the first Australian to receive our highest award for bravery in wartime since Keith Payne in 1969.

Yet Mark's journey to those crucial moments in Afghanistan was almost as exceptional as the acts that led to his VC.

He was a rebellious child and teenager, even before the death of his father - a Vietnam veteran - when Mark and his brother were in their mid-teens. A few years later, their mother disappeared, presumed murdered. Her body has never been found.

Mark's decisions could have easily led him down another path, to a life of self-destructiveness and petty crime. But he chose a different road: the army. It proved to be his salvation and he found himself a natural soldier, progressing unerringly to the SAS, the peak of the Australian military.

From his turbulent early years to the stark realities of combat in the mountains and valleys of Afghanistan, Mark's book is the frank and compelling story of a man who turned his life around by sheer determination and strength of mind.

The Crossroad Details

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From Reader Review The Crossroad for online ebook

Phil Alcock says

The more I think back about the experience that I had whilst reading this book, the more I appreciate it. Inspiring is a simple word but when used in the correct context it can be the only word. Mark Donaldson is truly an inspiration, as someone who is humble and determined to do well for the World. I now have this sense of feeling of what it is like to be in Army, and how it truly seems from the inside. I enjoyed this book immensely and I highly recommend it to anyone.

Tom says

This is a book of the highest quality. One of the best boots-on-the-ground account of war you'll find in modern military history, in addition to being a fascinating personal memoir and an in depth account of SAS recruitment and training. It's also a valuable examination of Australia's involvement in the Afghanistan War from a soldier's perspective.

Mark Donaldson was a tearaway teenager who grew up in Dorrig, NSW. He suffered incredible personal tragedy as a young person and the sum of all his childhood experience would ultimately lead him to a career in the Australian Army. Although shy to admit it, Mark was determined from the outset to join the SAS Regiment. He was inevitably tapped on the shoulder and survived the incredibly harsh training program to become a member of Australia's elite special forces. While on patrol with Afghan and US Forces, Mark's unit was ambushed. The circumstances of that ambush would require Mark to fulfil an act of singular bravery that ultimately led to him being Australia's first Victoria Cross recipient in 40 years.

At times tragic , at other times amusing and at all times informative. This important book is a must read for modern military enthusiasts and anyone interested in Australia's longest war.

FIVE STARS...

Sophia says

I usually read YA so this is quite a departure from my standard fare. The first thing that struck my interest was MD's dignified posed on the cover and the second was my embarrassment to think I didn't remember an Australian winning the VC. This book is a great read MD has had a very interesting life from the tragic death of his parents, to being a terrible shit of a kid (I was shocked at how bad he was). To turning that all around. No matter what you think of going to war this is easy to read and leaves you with a lot to think about.

Neven says

The Crossroad is a personal account of Mark Donaldson's life leading up to and after his awarding of the VC. A very honest and humbling story of his country upbringing, his tumultuous teenage and young adult years

whilst spending some time overseas leading up to his decision to join the Army. The book details heavily about Mark Donaldson's personal life and how the VC has affected his career as well as what could have been, as well as the actions which has given him the fame and commendation he has received. It is an overall honest account of an ordinary Aussie and his troubles growing up and the crossroads he made when he enlisted, leading up to the moment where he rescues the interpreter which he was awarded the Victorian Cross.

It is well written and an enjoyable account of the lead up to the soldier that is Mark Donaldson.

Gary Lawrence says

This was much more than a war book! It was a biography of a young man, a very different coming of age story, the history of a military campaign told through the gun site of a private soldier and an inside, intimate view of elite fighting force. It was narrated by the best Australian accented voice I have heard. A magnificent performance. It was wonderfully written indeed. I would love to know what kind of support Mark had in writing his story. It comes across so honest and straightforward, but such a simple writing style is not easy to produce. Mark Donaldson does not need the suffix VC to prove that he is the real deal, a complete and interesting man, whose life by the age of 34 was worthwhile, not just as a book but as an example to there. It could have been so easily different. His first 23 years seemed such a waste. He idolised his emotionally distant Vietnam vet father, and then lost him in early teens to a heart attack. His reaction was to immerse himself in a grungy world of alcoholic self abuse and behaviour equally destructive of the feelings and properties of others. In short he seemed to become a self absorbed grub. This becomes even more pronounced when his mother is murdered, leaving him a parent less teenager. His behaviour patter seems to have become set on the obsessive position on the dial.

The best thing about the structure of the book is that the preamble has given us just a glimpse of the action which was to win him Australia's highest award for Valour, before we flash back to the child who was to become the man/warrior.

The fine book contains lots of detail on how the SAs select and train the members of "The Regiment" and bullet by bullet information of many of the engagements in which these men fought in the Afghanistan campaigns between 2006 and 2014. I highly recommend this book.

Shelley says

I met Mark & his wife Emma at the Melbourne Cup in 2011, I felt it a privilege to meet someone who has been awarded the Defence Forces highest honor. He's a very humble person, and I felt he was genuinely appreciative of my words of thanks to him. His story is interesting, albeit sometimes the fighting bits are a little boring to me because I'm more interested in the people behind war. It shows that people can do anything when they set their mind to it, and I'm grateful every day for what our Defence boys do. If you want a war adventure, read Game of Thrones. If you want a true story about the hell of war, start with something like this, there is not too much detail but it's real enough to slap you in the face. I'm glad I read it.

Birgit says

WOW!

First up a huge congratulations to David Tredinnick for the awesome reading of this book. Job extremely well done.

At the end of this book Mark Donaldson was explaining to his daughter why he had to go away again and he basically sums it up with saying "we stop bad people doing bad stuff so they don't come into our country to do bad stuff". She replied with "thank you Daddy". I echo that, thank you Mark Donaldson and everyone else in the armed services for keeping us and others safe.

It was an enormous privilege to read this book, thank you for writing it.

Gaysel says

Enjoyable is not the right word ...but an eye opening, enlightening, inspiring read perhaps? Thank you Mark for an honest....and humble account of the good and bad, happy and sad and even horrendous times you have experienced.

Dubs says

This is the book of a great Australian who has battled both at home and in war. His story is one that will motivate and make you proud of the type of bloke who serves on the frontline. He bears the burden of the cross with humility and stands among our greatest heroes. A great read.

Vanessa Edwards says

Thank you to Mark Donaldson for trying to make us 'civilians' understand - if only a little - what an elite SAS soldier endures both mentally and physically in order to make us feel safe from war and terrorism. The book provides an insight into the Regiment selection process which I'm in awe of. Mark's honest account of a troubled young adulthood and the tragic loss of his mother is heartbreaking. Great book.

Thomas Edmund says

The Crossroad by Victoria Cross Recipient Mark Donaldson is not dramatically written, crafted for enjoyment nor does it contain any amazing soundbite messages of hope or bravery.

Indeed what this book does contain is honesty and candor. I don't think I've read any autobiographical piece that simply laid everything out in plain language and allowed the reader to simply make their own mind up about it. Donaldson doesn't use his platform to plug politics, beliefs social issues, nothing its just his story as he found it. Humble he breezes over the actual actions that got him the VC and explains his connections to his army brothers, his family and what day-to-day life was like in Afghanistan.

Particularly poignant was a reflection Donaldson made after killing another soldier. While Donaldson presents himself as a simple man he clearly has a heart.

I do have to say one piece that probably won't go down well with other fans of the book, but as a pacifist and generally anti-war person Donaldson's story highlights just how messed up modern warfare is, the number of innocent people he almost shot, the mayhem of firefights, the conflict between on the ground soldiers and brass and even Donaldson's reaction to getting shot all remind us that war isn't glorious its ugly, dirty and violent

Clinton Sweet says

When he got his VC, that was a good story. But the rest of his story probably wasn't worthy of a book

Shona says

I heard an interview with him on the radio and bought the book on the strength of that. It was a great read. Very inspirational as well as sad and in places brutal. I liked that he acknowledged that it wasn't easy for his wife being left at home (my hubby was a submariner for 10 years). There were also humorous parts and some of the antics that the guys got up to made me laugh. All up a fascinating look into his life and the SAS.

Suzanne says

This man's journey sounds amazing. Listened to a radio interview today. Sounds like a 'to read' for everyone.

Joan Thompson says

Inspirational book. Such admiration for the man.
