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## When I Was a Young Man: A Memoir

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is a political leader? Explanations of these quirks provide colorful insight into this man's character.

Violence is a pervasive theme of Arafat's life. Despite his professed commitment to the peace process, Arafat is a demonstrated man of violence, the Rubins charge, well connected to global terrorism. The Rubins present strong evidence that Arafat not only has a long history of duplicity in terrorist events but in many cases personally plotted, encouraged, and triggered the violence himself. As early as the mid-1970s, the Palestinian Liberation Army had a record of involvement in skyjackings, bombings, assassinations, and murders. Arafat learned from experience, despite what world leaders told him, that violence paid.

Overall, the Rubins evince abhorrence of Arafat. It appears there really is little to like about the man. Among other traits, in the Rubins' view, he is petty, arrogant, megalomaniacal, and disingenuous. The Rubins carefully place evidential anecdotes to support their portrayal. Typical is Arafat's purported response to the question of why he lied so much—"I would kill for Palestine, so you don't want me to lie for Palestine?" The book keeps his deplorable traits in plain sight, as a policeman would say, "where it can't hurt you." However much one would just want him to go away, his prominent role in contemporary Middle Eastern affairs cannot be ignored.

This book performs a valuable service as a primer on the characters, organizations, and connections in the shadowy world of Middle Eastern terrorism and Islamic radicalism. A short but useful glossary and chronology further help one make these associations.

This is a pure biography. It is impressively documented with thoughtful analysis, deliberately focused on Yasir Arafat. It is not intended as a history of the Middle East, the Arab-Israeli conflict, or Israel. However, for readers who are already certain about Arafat's character, the Rubins' account may surpass even the most critical assessments.

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Kerrey, Bob. *When I Was a Young Man: A Memoir*. New York: Harcourt, 2002. 270pp. \$26

Bob Kerrey's absorbing memoir tells the story of his coming of age in the Midwest and his loss of innocence in Vietnam, where he was grievously wounded. Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, former governor and senator from Nebraska, Kerrey opens and closes his book by describing his efforts to keep a promise he made to his dying father—to learn how his father's brother died in World War II. He states that he wanted this work to be about his father and his uncle but that the story he ended up telling "is not the story I intended to tell."

Kerrey first recounts his vintage childhood in Lincoln, Nebraska, and earning his pharmacology degree at the University of Nebraska. In 1966, knowing he would likely be drafted, and inspired by Herman Wouk's *The Caine Mutiny*, Kerrey joined the Navy and entered Officer Candidate School. Once commissioned, he volunteered for underwater demolition team training, and after completion, he was selected for the

Navy's new special-mission SEAL (sea, air, land) combat teams.

After more arduous training in weapons and tactics, Kerrey was soon sent to Vietnam. He writes, "To say that I barely had a clue about what I was doing in Vietnam understates the case." He led two SEAL missions in Vietnam in early 1969 that redefined and transformed his life. In the first mission, he led his six-man squad at night into the small village of Thanh Phong, where high-level Vietcong were suspected of meeting. The resulting firefight, in which women and children were killed, caused Kerrey to feel "a sickness in my heart for what we had done." He states, "The young, innocent, man who went into Vietnam died that night. . . . I had become someone I did not recognize." On his next mission, just over two weeks later, his right foot was nearly entirely blown off. Kerrey writes, "With difficulty I pulled myself upright so I could direct my men." He tied off his mangled leg with a tourniquet and injected himself with morphine. His war had lasted barely two months.

Kerrey had much of his right leg amputated. He then started the long and painful process of recovery at the Philadelphia Naval Hospital. He chose Philadelphia because it was the farthest from his home and the people he knew. He wanted to recover alone, and he "did not want to have to answer questions

about what I had done in the war."

While there, Kerrey also learned that he had been submitted for the Medal of Honor for his last mission. Not feeling deserving, he was told by friends that "no one ever does," and that he must "accept this award for everyone who should have been recognized but was not." Kerrey's chronicle of his recovery with other critically wounded is perhaps the most poignant and memorable portion of this eloquent memoir. He was discharged from the Navy in December 1969, determined to make the most of his second chance and "begin his second life with gratitude."

Kerrey's candid and moving story starts and ends with a quest, but he does not offer a neat resolution for the anguish caused by his violence in Vietnam. Although unable to find out enough information about his uncle's death in the Philippines in 1944, he was perhaps able to keep his promise to his father after all, by honoring his uncle as a soldier "who should have been recognized but was not." Kerrey was also able to come to terms with his experiences during the war. Kerrey's spare and haunting story is a meaningful addition to the literature of war.

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