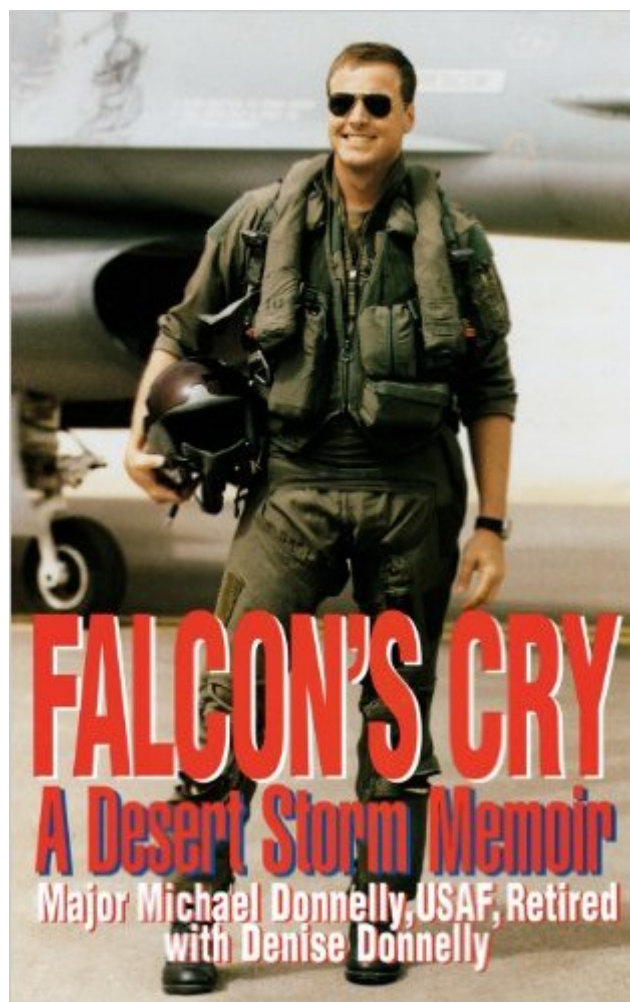


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Falcon's Cry: A Desert Storm Memoir



Synopsis

When Major Michael Donnelly was instructing his U.S. Air Force student pilots, he used to tell them three things: Timing is everything; it's nice to be lucky; and there is no justice. Highly decorated fighter pilot, proud young patriot, loyal friend with a mischievous sense of humor, loving husband and father of two, he could not have imagined the tragic meaning those words would assume just a few years after his tour of duty in Desert Storm. In 1996 Major Donnelly was diagnosed with ALS, Lou Gehrig's Disease, at the unusually young age of 35; the onset of this illness marked the beginning of a kind of torture beyond the scope of even the most rigorous military survival training. Betrayed by his body, eventually paralyzed and confined to a wheelchair, he experienced another betrayal perhaps even more difficult to comprehend—a betrayal by his country. For despite the fact that over 110,000 Desert Storm veterans are sick, many dying of mysterious cancers and neurological diseases, including more than ten times the normal incidence of ALS—and despite all evidence pointing to U.S. troops having been dosed by low levels of Iraqi nerve agents and exposed to chemical weapons' fallout—the Pentagon adamantly denies any connection between their illnesses and their service in the Gulf War. *Falcon's Cry: A Desert Storm Memoir*, Michael Donnelly's unforgettable story, is his courageous attempt to unearth the truth and force an acknowledgment of that truth by the government he and his fellow veterans defended with their lives. Flying 44 fighter jet combat missions in a war fought on an all-or-nothing scale was thrilling for Michael Donnelly. When the war was won, he and his country rejoiced in the knowledge that, unlike in Vietnam, America had gotten it right in the Persian Gulf. Less than a decade later, the world is learning what veterans and their families have known since Desert Storm—we did not get it right at all. Saddam Hussein is still terrorizing a large portion of the globe. Moreover, we did not learn the lesson of Agent Orange which the Department of Defense denied for decades was the cause of early deaths and birth defects among Vietnam veterans and their families. Yet, thanks largely to the testimony of the author before the House of Representatives in 1997, a first step has been taken toward justice for the tens of thousands of Desert Storm veterans who are suffering virtually in isolation, many without any medical or disability benefits. Major Donnelly believes the truth about Gulf War Illnesses will be uncovered by studies funded in the recently passed Omnibus Appropriations bill, as well as through stories like his own, and he fervently hopes that America can, at last, get it right.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Around the time that Generals Powell and Schwarkopf were being feted in the United States as the most conspicuous heroes of the Persian Gulf War, Major Donnelly returned home to an equally jubilant but more modest reception. He had flown more than forty bombing missions during the conflict and emerged unscathed. But coiled tightly within him on his return home was a war related affliction -- amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or ALS, better known as Lou Gherig's disease -- that gradually stripped him of his mobility, leaving his body immobilized, while his mind and senses remained unimpaired and sharp as a tack. *Falcon's Cry: A Desert Storm Memoir* is an action packed memoir of the gulf war told from an F16 pilot's point of view, a record of Major Donnelly's tragic deterioration, and a partial account of his valient and ultimately successful effort to persuade men without chests in the Pentagon that there is indeed a well founded connection between the illnesses suffered by more than 160,000 returning troops and their service in the gulf. Only recently, under much pressure brought by gulf war veterans, Major Donnelly among them, has congress passed a law that would presume gulf war illnesses are related to hazardous wartime exposures, thus ending the agonizing battle fought by sick vets to obtain medical relief for illnesses they suffered in the service of their country. When the subject is flying, Major Donnelly prose takes wing and ascends to poetry. At its best, some passages remind me of St. Exupery's writings on flight. The narrative includes sharp profiles of his comrades in arms, and his story is told with the kind of mildly exaggerated humor that flowed so effortlessly from the pen of Mark Twain.

Colin Pendergast
Ms.Miron
English 9-225
March 2014
Quarter Three
English Book Review
In my opinion, I believe anyone with an interest of : history, warfare, or any type of political interest should

read this book. My reasons for this is Falcons Cry explains the life of a war veteran that served his country off of the ideals and beliefs his forefathers set for the entire country, after the Gulf War Michael Donnelly was permanently crippled by a disease that renders his life to be limited due to Lou Gehrig's disease, a disease that eventually will cause paralysis and destroy his career as an F-16 fighter pilot. This shows the actual intentions of our government and really does provide a keener view of war from another's eyes. I agree with Thirteen Moons post that he was simply cast aside by the bureaucracy in his most desperate time of need, this book too made me laugh and cringe and feel for the family of Michael Donnelly. The reason why this is such a good book is it provides an actual educational background, whether explaining the cause of other wars in the past or talking about politics and how they work in a time of war. Another reason this is such a good book is it has so many literary devices that embellish this book. For instance it provides action when a SAM site may lock onto Michael's jet when he and his squad are tasked to take out Iraqi SCUDs or comedy when Michael explains in great detail what happened in their free time with practical jokes played on one another like when they took sticks and threw them through apples and hurled them at one another while they were kids.

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