

BOOK REVIEW

Dadland

Carew K. *Dadland*. New York, NY: Atlantic Monthly Press; 2016. 420 pages. ISBN: 978-0-8021-2514-9/978.0.8021-9038-3.

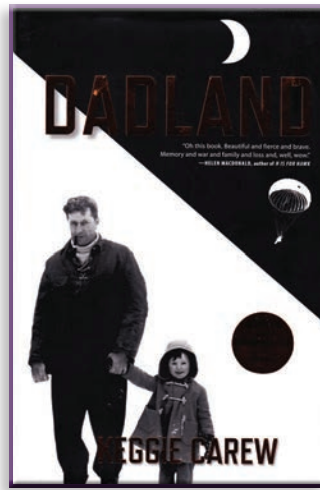
Review by COL (Ret) Warner "Rocky" D. Farr, MD, MPH

This is a book about a British SOE (Special Operations Executive) soldier's life that your spouse or significant other might well want to read when you are done or, in my case, steal before you are done! Praise for *Dadland* includes being named a *San Francisco Chronicle* top 10 book of the year, a best book of the year by NPR's Book Concierge, winner of the Costa Book Award for Biography, #1 nonfiction best-seller in the UK, and an Amazon Best Book of the Month in Biographies & Memoirs. I lost my first copy to a houseguest with no military experience who just had to keep it to finish it.

So what is the "hook"? The author makes it a quite magical voyage of discovery. She gradually uncovers the story of her father's role in the British SOE in World War II while learning how his traits that made him a successful Special Forces soldier did not necessarily make him a "good" husband or father after the war. She is teasing this entire story out from various people while her father struggles with the onset and progression of his Alzheimer disease. She adroitly jumps from stories of the French Maquis to Burma to a Jedburgh reunion at the Special Forces Club in London and then back to Burma.

All this results in a spectacular, moving memoir made even more poignant by his terminal dementia as he tries to extract his personal stories of the war, his several marriages, his Jedburgh training, and his wartime service, particularly in France and Burma. Tom Carew, at the end of the war in Burma, saw the confusion of an imperial Britain with a crumbling empire. He worked extensively with Aung San, the commander of the Burma National Army and leader of the Burmese independence movement, which Carew favored and the British government did not favor. Aung San was the father of Aung San Suu Kyi, who today leads the National League for Democracy in Burma and is the military government's foreign minister and state counselor. Carew kept in contact with her and her husband, Michal Aris, while Aung Saan Suu Kyi was imprisoned.

All and all, this is a great read on many levels—a personal story mixed with military special operations wartime life complexed with a terminal illness and British veteran reunions and stories. Tom Carew, a left-handed stutterer, who had much wit and charm to go along with skill and bravery, is a SOF trooper who we all will recognize in this book, which is a combination of detective story, family history, war stores, and, above all, a memoir of a charmed life.





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