



Wesley K. Clark: A Biography

Antonia Felix

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After winning the war in Kosovo as NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Wesley Clark went down in the history books as one of the great generals of modern times. He successfully ran the first all-air war in history and ended the ruthless dictatorship of Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic without one allied casualty. President Clinton awarded him the Medal of Freedom and dozens of foreign countries lavished him with their highest honors. But in the United States, Clark received no fanfare or parades, as had the generals who came home from Desert Storm a decade earlier. Why?

Now this fascinating biography, filled with insights from those who know him well, addresses this puzzling question, while telling the complex story of this remarkable American hero who has been hailed as one of the most talented, creative, and brilliant officers in the U.S. Army. First in his class at West Point, a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford and quickly promoted, Clark was among the "water-walkers," high-achieving officers whose performances set them apart.

Like every organization though, the Army is a network of alliances that must be carefully maneuvered. And like other top officers, Clark clashed with some colleagues—while earning the loyalty and respect of the majority of other senior officers as well as of the soldiers under his command. During his last command during the war in Kosovo, Clark's clashes with the Pentagon resulted in his low-profile, early retirement. His many allies were furious with his treatment, including Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who had told President Clinton that "Clark was the best partner we could have."

Drawing on research and her extensive interviews with Clark's relatives, friends, military colleagues, and others close to him in Chicago, Little Rock, West Point, among other locales, bestselling biographer Antonia Felix highlights Clark's notable experiences that led to his rise to national prominence. The author brings us memorable descriptions of an immigrant family fleeing persecution in Russia to establish itself in Chicago, of a childhood tragedy and a long-held family secret, of growing up in the South during the civil rights struggle, and of a brilliant mind that brought him extraordinary academic and professional achievement.

Here is the compelling story of a spiritual individual, son of a Jewish father and Methodist mother, later converting to his wife's Catholic faith while fighting in Vietnam, who has made a noble commitment to public service. Wesley Clark truly embodies West Point's ideals of duty, honor, and country. As he stated in February 2004 upon withdrawing from his candidacy for the Democratic nomination for president, "I'll be doing all I can to contribute to building a new and better America."

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