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Walter Cronkite IV , Maurice Isserman , Tom Brokaw (Foreword)

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A giant in American journalism in the vanguard of The Greatest Generation reveals his World War II....

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Jenny says

This book shed light on what a war correspondent's life was like during WWII. It wasn't always very exciting (lots of drinks and dinners) and neither was this book. His grandson often introduced the letters Cronkite wrote home to his wife and this was often repetitive.

Melinda Crews Kirkley says

I loved reading his letters to Betsy. The love between them was deep, something that is hard to find these days. Even though they were separated for 28 months, they stayed true to each other. Yes, there were very scary times, but Walter never failed to write letters home to assure Betsy he was OK. Also, his love for his little cocker spaniel, Judy was so sweet! He always made sure to include her in his letters. Walter Cronkite IV did a wonderful job explaining who each of the people were in the letters as well as describing the different situations that his grandfather wrote about. I thought this was a very well written book.

Una Tiers says

Walter Cronkite must have been 45 years old when he was born. The letters are read by a family member and are interesting for the most part. He was a romantic kinda guy, who knew?

Andrew says

During the height of his career, Walter Cronkite was, perhaps, the world's most respected and trusted journalist. His career was launched during World War II, when he worked for United Press as a foreign correspondent, reporting on the progress of the Allied efforts to defeat Hitler's Germany in Europe. This collection of letters he wrote home to his wife provide an intimate look into this important early period of his career.

Of course, since these are the letters of a husband separated from the wife he loves, they are first and foremost love letters. The letters portray Cronkite as a man who was very much in love with his wife and incredibly lonely for her presence. They are also a reminder of how much more difficult communications were during this period, when the letter was the only practical way to communicate with distant friends and family. Delivery delays and frequent writing meant that any conversation was somewhat jumbled and confused. These troubles were further compounded by the security requirements for censorship, which almost certainly caused writers to exercise a certain discretion in their letters. Even so, these letters are emotionally intimate, and provide a testament to the strength of Cronkite's relationship with his wife.

But, as a journalist, Cronkite was also aware of the historical importance of the events he was covering, and perhaps even understood that his letters might someday be part of the historical record of the war. The details he provides about his work and his role in covering the war illuminate the conditions in England, especially

London, during this period, as well as on the continent as the war drew to a close. We can sense the excitement and danger of reporting on the war's progress, and gain an appreciation for the amount of work it takes to provide quality journalism under such conditions.

The editors of this book have included explanatory text for most of the letters, which help place the letters into context, which is incredibly helpful, and improves the value of the collection, as do the various transcripts of newspaper articles that Cronkite produced during this period. For those with an interest in journalism or the Second World War, this book provides valuable insights into both, while still being both readable and entertaining.

Cindy says

Excellent view of WWII. Mentions others he knew: Clark Gable (decorated pilot & movie star), Ernest Hemingway, Andy Rooney, Noel Coward, Adele Astaire (Fred's sister), Edward R. Murrow, many with notoriety & without, those who came back & who didn't.

If one does not study history, one is doomed to relive it...so I read this WWII account.

God bless our uniformed defenders - living and passed.

Luke Johnson says

Cronkite's War is a collection of letters between Walter Cronkite and his wife during World War II. Sadly, it's a one side conversation as we have only the letter from Walter, and none of the letters written to him. It's a bit of an open diary as Cronkite moves from the U.S. to England and eventually into continental Europe as the war progresses toward V-E Day.

To me, it paints a rather endearing portrait of the legendary newsman as his love and longing for his wife is evident throughout. However, it's strengths are also it's weakness and the way in which every letter ends with him stating his loneliness without his wife (and all too often and in equal measure, the family dog) gets old very quick. I ended up feeling a little sorry for his wife who seems to be held in equal regard to their cocker spaniel.

Still an enjoyable read with nice glimpses of history and humanity and we get the tale of WWII from a man who is neither entirely soldier or civilian.

Jeni Enjaian says

Once again I bemoan the fact that goodreads does not offer the option of half stars in the rating. This book definitely earned more than an average rating, however, a few things kept me from giving it a four star rating.

As an amateur historian, I absolutely love getting to read and experience primary documents. One of the things I appreciated most from Cronkite IV's narration was his explanation of the discrepancies between his grandfather's memoirs and the letters. In his preview to one of the letters, Cronkite IV explained the reason

most historians prefer primary source documents to remembered histories such as memoirs or autobiographies. I cannot remember Cronkite IV's exact words but I do remember going "yes!" after I read that.

That being said, I think that the book suffered from far too much narration on the part of Cronkite IV. I realize that none of Betsy's letters remain so the role of a narrator was necessary to keep the conversation from being too one sided and to fill in information not covered or referenced obscurely in the text. Cronkite IV added too much in many places which detracted from the letters themselves. This reason alone is why I could not give this book a four star rating. It came close but fell just shy.

This is an excellent book for those who cannot get enough of WWII history and of journalism in general.

Pauline says

This was the story of a man who was born mature. It was pretty interesting although the letters were repetitive. Walter's grandson was the book's narrator. Walter had a strong romantic side.

Jan C says

I started this book as a hardcover I happened to see in the library. So I read the first 100 pp in one format. Then I borrowed the audio copy and listened to it today on my phone (actually mostly in the car now that I have a car that will broadcast from my phone). Made the miles fly by today on my drive home from North Carolina. Actually some of it I re-read since I couldn't really remember where I left off.

Basically this book is made up of letters written by Walter Cronkite, UP reporter in England during WWII, to his wife, Betsy. I love all the references to Judy, their cocker spaniel. I am glad I saw the hardcover of this book in that it showed what a cutie that Judy really was. Betsy looked all right, too. Half of the time Cronkite is trying to get his wife over to England to join him. Then he started trying to get home leave to come home to see her and was told he was too valuable.

He rode in bombers, gliders, etc., going in to dangerous situations. I think they said there was a ratio of 1 out of every 11 correspondents were casualties (killed/injured) so they tried to limit people going into battle areas. Many did but Cronkite was stuck back at the desk coordinating the reports. Feeling sorry for himself because he was left out of the action.

And, of course, this is just what he told his wife. The book does at times compare what he says here with what he later said in A Reporter's Life which were not necessarily exactly the same thing. The editors here, one of whom is Walter's grandson, go with the letters for they were written at the time things were happening, not years later with the benefit of hindsight.

I found some of these letters very beautiful.

Carlisle says

I'm a sucker for WWII and for Walter Cronkite. I'm that dork who would troll around YouTube for old broadcasts. Uncle Walter is one of my heroes, and is the gold standard for journalism and journalistic integrity. I've been eyeing this book on my parents' shelves and I *finally* got around to it after getting

through the Halbertsam book that sucks up to Bill Belichick. Gag. This was a nice palate cleanser book, one you zip through after reading one that makes you want to gouge your eyes out. It confirmed everything: Cronkite is just adorable. His letters to his wife make your teeth hurt, they're so sweet, but they're poignant alongside his war reporting (of which I wish there was a lot more). Not exactly an in-depth biography, but more of a reminder of what a treasure Cronkite was, and that "Uncle Walter" wasn't just a persona, but really him. Read it if you have time, and then wish you had a relationship like Walter and Betsy's.

Old_airman says

Wonderful set of letters telling of a man's love of wife and his experiences in the European theater of World War II. These love letters tell of life and loss in war.

Liz Waters says

Cronkite's War: His World War II Letters Home does not disappoint in its glimpses into the private life of the broadcasting icon as he shared his experiences with the love of his life in letters home. The book is written by Cronkite's grandson in collaboration with Maurice Isserman and is a study in respect and admiration, tinged by just a touch of envy—that envy that every historian feels for those who lived in the world we can only experience vicariously.

As you read the letters the young Walter wrote to his beloved Betsy, you see his brave front in perilous places, and his careful recounting of moments he had to know were historic in order that the woman who shared his life could share these times with him.

I love this historical period, and read and study everything I can about it. That aside, I grew up watching Walter Cronkite bring honest journalism into my world, and now I am reading about the world that formed the man himself. It is heady stuff, and I recommend this book heartily.

theGraveyard Librarian says

it's amazing to think that Cronkite retired from nightly broadcasting in 1981, the year I was born. Yet, reading his letters, I could hear his voice and familiar cadence in my head, a testament to his place in recent history. His letters home were not all that exciting, but I think any fan of Cronkite's would enjoy this peek into his private life. I appreciated the fact that the author doesn't shy away from pointing out possible embellishments or mistaken remembrances of events first described in his letters, and then later in his memoir.

Paulette says

Fascinating account told through documentation and letters, relating the mindset of newly married UP wire service reporter who was reporting from Europe during World War II. Lovely letters home to his wife Betsy. Especially of interest were the missions Cronkite would join to get a first-hand account of what it was like

for the American soldiers. Recommended.

Eric says

This was a somewhat interesting compilation of letters from Walter Cronkite to, mostly, his wife over the course of his service with UP during WWII. It is not quite a memoir, and probably qualifies as history to the extent of the author's commentary on the context in which Cronkite penned/typed his letters home. There are apparently a few instances where Cronkite's letters indicate that his later recollections, when he wrote of his experiences for his books, that he had suffered from the same kinds of problems that later journalists (think Brian Williams) suffer in getting their facts right. But there seems no good reasons from book to attempt removing Cronkite from his place as the most trusted journalist ever.

One interesting tidbit was brought up in both the introduction and in the epilog, and that is that Cronkite went off to college as a young man, but did not finish. In light of what political hay current journalists are making regarding some running for political office, who also did not finish their courses of study, I thought this a bit of irony.

If you wish to learn of WWII, this is not the right place to look - only in a very limited way is there as sense of the scope of the war. One small vignette of Cronkite turning down an invitation to join replacements headed for Bastogne reveals that, while he was often ready to follow the combat, as time wore on he had gained a certain amount of wisdom as to his own mortality.
