



Life in the U.S. Armed Forces: (Not) Just Another Job

Anni Baker

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Anni Baker has created a fascinating exploration of life in the armed forces, as it has been experienced by millions of men, women, and children over the past six decades. Her book examines the factors that shape military service and military culture, from grueling training exercises to sexual relations with local women, from overseas duty to the peculiar life of the military brat. The book begins with an examination of the enlistment process, follows the military lifecycle through career decisions, promotions, raising families, and retirement, explores the impact of war on military society, and ends with a discussion of the place of the armed forces in the United States. A wide variety of sources were used in this study, including contemporary scholarship, government and military records, public media, and, most important, interviews and written materials from military personnel, retirees, family members, and civilian employees. Using a lively and readable style, Baker blends clear explanations of elements of military life, information on the development of military society, and the voices of those who serve into an insightful account of this fascinating subculture.

It is the author's view that not only is study of the U.S. military a valuable undertaking in itself, but in addition it will enrich our perspective on civilian life and culture in the United States. The military is a distinct society based on a set of common values that are sometimes, though not always, at odds with those of civilian society. The extent to which active duty personnel, family members and civilians internalize these values dictates their comfort with military life and their choice of a military career. Through a discussion of life in the military, Baker examines how the values, traditions and norms of the armed forces are articulated and shared, how they influence the individual and the institution, and what their role is in American society as a whole.

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