

BOOK REVIEWS

Missoula: Rape and the Justice System in a College Town

by Jon Krakauer

New York: Doubleday, 2015

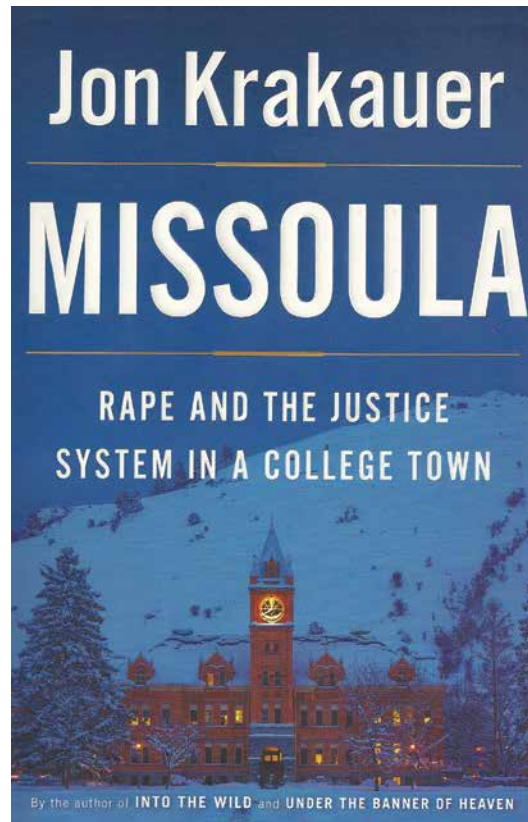
367 pages, \$34.00 Hard Cover

ISBN 978-0-385-53873-2

Reviewed by
Michael Wickson

Jon Krakauer is an excellent storyteller who has authored several great books, including *Into Thin Air* (1997), and *Where Men Win Glory: The Odyssey of Pat Tillman* (2009). His latest publication is named *Missoula*, and it has absolutely nothing to do with the military. However, it explores several incidents in a small college town where the male dominance of the local football team created a rape culture that rapidly grew out of control, and the justice system was unable to properly address the issue. With the recent release of the Deschamps report and the commitment of the CDS to reforming the culture of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), this volume addresses a 'worst-case scenario,' and all military leaders should read it in order to understand how the underlying cultural nuances of a male dominated society can progress to an unacceptable level of sexual misconduct. This book is not intended *primarily* for women. Rather, it is largely meant for men to try to get them to understand the nature of how sexual deviance *can* and *does* occur in society, and how it needs to be addressed to prevent such crimes from being perpetuated.

Krakauer intertwines several case studies with other relevant interviews to present a cohesive understanding of rape culturally, and how the greater society in Missoula was hesitant to address the issue. The focus of the case studies is based upon incidents that transpired in Missoula, and they largely involved students from the University of Montana campus and the local college football team. These case studies progress in complexity, based upon whether they were prosecuted by the college administrative system and/or the local criminal justice system. They demonstrate the importance of removing preconceptions regarding sexual assault when processing disciplinary or criminal investigations, as well



as the relevance of administrative punishments, despite any inactivity by the criminal justice system. All Military Police and Commanding Officers will see value in these case studies.

The author is truly a gifted writer who uses powerful and hauntingly graphic language throughout the book. There were times while reading it when I felt truly sick to my stomach and had difficulty believing the situations that were being described. However, the graphic language was necessary, and disbelief is exactly how rape culture survives. It is largely ignored by society, as most people want to believe the men they know would never do such things. Unfortunately, these types of crimes do occur, and rape and sexual violence need to be understood and addressed. It is made quite clear throughout the book that the author's view is clearly sympathetic toward the victims, and he is critical of many of the investigating police officers. However, he saves his greatest criticisms

for the local prosecutor, who repeatedly refused to pursue cases despite clear evidence, appeared at a college administrative hearing in defence of an alleged perpetrator, and eagerly defended another in court.

Despite the absence of pure military content, the book is of great value for military leaders attempting to understand the nature of rape culture and sexual violence. As the situations described in the book are a 'worst-case scenario,' we would all like to believe this not representative of the CAF. However, as the CAF reflects greater society, and is undeniably a male-dominated organization, it would be naïve to think that the CAF is immune to the underlying culture that allows rape and sexual misconduct to exist. With the recent commitments by the CDS to address these issues in the CAF, I highly recommend this book to all members.

Captain Michael Wickson, *an infantry officer, has a BSc. from the University of Calgary, and is completing a BMASc. from the Royal Military College of Canada. He is currently serving as the Operations Officer for the Third Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.*