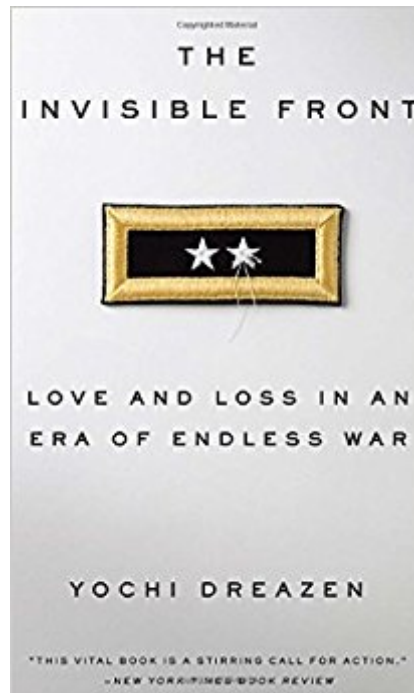




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# The Invisible Front: Love And Loss In An Era Of Endless War



## Synopsis

The unforgettable story of a military family that lost two sons—one to suicide and one in combat—and channeled their grief into fighting the armed forces' suicide epidemic. Major General Mark Graham was a decorated two-star officer whose integrity and patriotism inspired his sons, Jeff and Kevin, to pursue military careers of their own. His wife Carol was a teacher who held the family together while Mark's career took them to bases around the world. When Kevin and Jeff die within nine months of each other—Kevin commits suicide and Jeff is killed by a roadside bomb in Iraq—Mark and Carol are astonished by the drastically different responses their sons' deaths receive from the Army. While Jeff is lauded as a hero, Kevin's death is met with silence, evidence of the terrible stigma that surrounds suicide and mental illness in the military. Convinced that their sons died fighting different battles, Mark and Carol commit themselves to transforming the institution that is the cornerstone of their lives. *The Invisible Front* is the story of how one family tries to set aside their grief and find purpose in almost unimaginable loss. The Grahams work to change how the Army treats those with PTSD and to erase the stigma that prevents suicidal troops from getting the help they need before making the darkest of choices. Their fight offers a window into the military's institutional shortcomings and its resistance to change the failures that have allowed more than 3,000 troops to take their own lives since 2001. Yochi Dreazen, an award-winning journalist who has covered the military since 2003, has been granted remarkable access to the Graham family and tells their story in the full context of two of America's longest wars. Dreazen places Mark and Carol's personal journey, which begins when they fall in love in college and continues through the end of Mark's thirty-four year career in the Army, against the backdrop of the military's ongoing suicide spike, which shows no signs of slowing. With great sympathy and profound insight, *The Invisible Front* details America's problematic treatment of the troops who return from war far different than when they'd left and uses the Graham family's work as a new way of understanding the human cost of war and its lingering effects off the battlefield. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An Best Book of the Month, October 2014: If I were to tell you that this fascinating book chronicles the life of a war hero, you'd likely expect to be reading about a Patton-like figure barking out orders or a Mark Owen telling of the capture of Osama Bin Laden. But while Mark Graham was a lifelong soldier who saw more than his share of fighting, it is his actions off the traditional battlefield that make him impressive. (I say "traditional" battlefield, because the way author Yochi Dreazen depicts the complicated, violent life of soldiers pre and post deployment, you get the feeling an American army base is almost as horrific a theater of war as just one that's more local.) Churchgoing Mark and Carol Graham were a typical lifelong Army couple: they lived on bases and had two sons and one daughter, all of whom were friendly, popular, patriotic kids who roomed together while students at the University of Kentucky; Kevin and Mark were both in ROTC and both planned to deploy to Iraq or Afghanistan. Kevin never made it: he committed suicide a few weeks after his graduation from officer training school; Jeff was blown to bits soon after his arrival overseas. What surely would have destroyed most families strangely fortified theirs; instead of quitting the army, which Mark briefly considered, he vowed to devote the rest of his career to "fixing" it. Realizing that some troops suffered wounds you could not see, he launched programs to remove the stigma of suicide and to educate leaders about Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. Along the way he met with extraordinary resistance from bosses and underlings (some of them women) for being too "soft"; one particularly disturbing incident involved a fake "Hurt Feelings" questionnaire, devised by soldiers themselves, in which respondents were asked to declare themselves either a "pussy" or a "queer" or "a little bitch" for seeking help. Eventually, some of Graham's ideas were implemented, but it was a case of too little too late; suicides and PTSD violent incidents continued to

increase and eventually, he was forced out of the service. Still, the Grahams persevere, rejecting high paying consultancies in the private sector in favor of giving speeches and seminars around the country so that other families won't suffer as they have. And if that doesn't make them heroes, it's hard to say what would. --Sara Nelson --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

A New York Times Book Review Notable Book  
An Best Book of the Year  
J. Anthony Lukas  
Work-in-Progress Award Finalist  
Winner of the 2015 Christopher Award  
"Harrowing, a courageous effort  
|This vital book is a stirring call for action to better aid American soldiers who struggle alone with depression and civilians who suffer from our most stigmatized disease as well.  
• New York Times Book Review  
"Yochi Dreazen recounts the family's story with great humanity. The Grahams' compassion and wisdom as they turned their sorrow into a mission of suicide prevention moved me to tears  
| [Dreazen] writes wonderfully.  
• Washington Post  
"In his superb new book, *The Invisible Front*, Yochi Dreazen paints a deeply disturbing portrait of the overstretched United States Army, downsizing in Afghanistan while deploying against the latest threats of the Islamic State and Ebola.  
• Washington Times  
"[An] enthralling and enraging report about the Army's traditional stigma about mental illness.  
• Military Times  
"A journalistic tale that shines a revealing and a disturbing light on the ongoing emotional legacy of America's two most recent wars.  
• Publishers Weekly  
"What a moving book about a remarkable family's heartbreak and courage. *The Invisible Front* blends compassion and hard-nosed reporting to tell an important story in need of all of the visibility it can get.  
• David Finkel, winner of the Pulitzer Prize and author of *The Good Soldiers* and *Thank You For Your Service*  
"This book begins fast and accelerates, telling an astonishing tale of contemporary America. When you read this book, you will likely come away feeling that General Graham and his wife Carol are American heroes of different types than we normally are told about, but true heroes still.  
• Thomas E. Ricks, winner of the Pulitzer Prize and author of *Fiasco* and *The Generals*  
"Yochi Dreazen has always been a first-rate reporter, and now with *The Invisible Front* he has delivered a compelling narrative which will haunt and inspire you. This is a treasure.  
• James Andrew Miller, author of *Live From New York*  
"Yochi Dreazen has poignantly crafted one American family's story that is too sad to be true. Despite the horror of their twin losses, Major General Mark Graham, and his wife Carol have gallantly turned their grief into action. The White House, Congress, Department

of Defense, VA, Statehouses, along with your average American family must read this book. The Invisible Front will play a seminal role as we chart moving forward on mental health services for our military, veterans and all Americans.

— John Madigan, Vice President of Public Policy, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

“A compelling story of devoted service to our country and the tragic revelation of military stigma regarding the modern-day suicide crisis. With twenty-two veterans dying by suicide every day, General Mark Graham refused to turn a blind eye and met this challenge head on. He and his wife Carol lost two sons within months of each other, one to suicide and one in combat. Military author Yochi Dreazen documents this family’s journey from tragedy to triumph, and the battle to get the military to address this crisis. A must-read for anyone ready to expose the issue of PTSD and mental illness in the military and throughout our nation told through the lives of 2013 Lifetime Achievement Winners, General Mark and Carol Graham.”

— Linda Rosenberg, MSW; President and CEO, National Council for Behavioral Health

“Major General Mark Graham took the oath of military service, to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, but what he and the Graham family did not know was that they would trudge headlong into battle against another enemy, that of interpersonal anguish—suicide. Turning family tragedy into assistance to countless others, Mark and Carol Graham’s story of anguish, doubt, anger, and perseverance reverberates amongst those who have encountered or struggled with mental anguish. Despite encountering war zones, leading recovery efforts in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in the unrecognizable U.S. city of New Orleans, or leading battalions of our nation’s military forces, the Grahams’ toughest battle is still being waged—changing the national dialogue about suicide. This mission, though daunting, is being fought by a true warrior and empathic family and it’s a call to arms for all of us.”

— Dr. William Schmitz, Jr., President of the American Association of Suicidology

“Powerful, moving and a life changer! The Invisible Front by Yochi Dreazen delivers the story of General Mark and Carol Graham who lost both of their sons while in the US Army. Dreazen documents the determination of the Grahams as they wage a personal war against suicide in the military. This is a tale of daily heroism as the Grahams fight to save the lives of the soldiers who have served us.”

— Kevin Hines, best-selling author of Cracked|Not Broken, International Speaker & Suicide Prevention Advocate, 2012 Lifetime Achievement Award Winner from the National Council for Behavioral Health

“We are all touched by mental illness, tragedy, or grief during our lives, either personally or through our family members or friends. Yet, the tendency is to bear these sorrows as if we are alone. By courageously

sharing their story, Major General (Ret) Mark, Carol, and Melanie Graham Quinn invite us to join together in removing pervasive barriers of stigma, guilt, and shame that lead to isolation at the very moments we most need each other's support. • Charles Hoge, M.D., Colonel (Ret), U.S. Army, author of *Once a Warrior* • *Always a Warrior: Navigating the Transition from Combat to Home* From the Hardcover edition.

Soldiers are people and some people unravel for a variety of reasons. This book chronicles the story of Major General Mark Graham's family that lost two sons, one in combat, the other a suicide. Rather than maintain a tough image as a hardened combat veteran, Graham looked inward. He inquired about various methods and treatments to reduce suicide among soldiers and implemented some unorthodox (and controversial) procedures to reverse a trend upsetting to both Army and civilian leadership. This book is both about his compassion and success as a reformer. My personal view, reinforced in the closing chapter, is that many young people carry within them a kind of virus that makes suicide and substance abuse more likely than others. It may seem uncaring, but if reliable tests could be developed to identify the vulnerable, it may be efficient to avoid recruiting them. Care for all should be available, but not necessarily in a military setting.

After reading *THE DARK SIDE OF GLORY* and then *FULL MEASURE*, I thought *THE INVISIBLE FRONT* would round out an in-depth view of war's deepest and eternal wounds. In fact, Dreazen covers several decades of challenges for one military family, but with reference to any number of other military and civilian people. I wish the material were in clear chronological order. I wish the statistics were cited for source and dates. Naming 100 people who were interviewed would be more clear if the length and date of the personal communications were cited. I am left with many issues to contemplate. I am reminded of Judith Viorst's early book *NECESSARY LOSSES*.

I couldn't put this book down until the end. The story is heartbreaking and the reader is drawn into the emotions of the Graham family. They are an inspiring family and the writer portrays their sad journey, and their heroic mission. beautifully.

Thank you for writing this book. I had the privilege of serving under MG Graham at Forces Command. He was unlike any general officer who preceded him or came after. He was humble (still drove the Honda Accord with the boys' names memorialized on the rear window) and caring. I felt so fortunate to have served under him and met them both. It is often said that such tragedies can

either tear marriages apart or strengthen them. Mark and Carol seem to be wholly united in their devotion to each other and to their work. As the mother of a Marine still suffering from PTSD and who's endured several of his suicide scares, their work is particularly close to my heart. I firmly believe it is the change in stigma they are working to abolish that has kept my son alive this long. I hope the Grahams continue their work and authors continue to write about this important topic.

As an Army wife with a husband who suffers with PTSD and TBI it was very difficult to read, the author captured the experience of the soldier in such a way, that reading it I heard and felt my husbands experience on the pages. The author did a brilliant job bringing to paper not only the story of this family, struggles with depression and suicide but the very real experience and challenges soldiers have after they leave the war zone. I had to put the book down after certain points and come back and read it at a later date because Yochi Dreazen was able to capture the story in such a raw and real way that it was painful at times to read.

A very well written book which honestly depicts the inner workings of the Military's mental health system. I found the book exceptionally insightful. The book illustrates the degree which we fail our men and women in the service. the second half of the book depicts the lengths that the General and his wife take change the stigma and short sightitness of a dysfunctional mental health system. The book was a very refreashing read on the culture of the military.

One of the best books I ever read.. I am in Law Enforcement so it was very educational. Puts a new prospective on the Mental Health stigma and what we as people can do to help out.

The author's straightforward style carries the reader through the tragic story like a companion to its leading figures. It's reality wrings tears with no sentimentality. We watch this couple in the rigid culture of the military face their own grief and let it change them and then heroically take on that culture. They work untiringly to save lives and share consolation. I don't know when I have read a more compelling book.

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