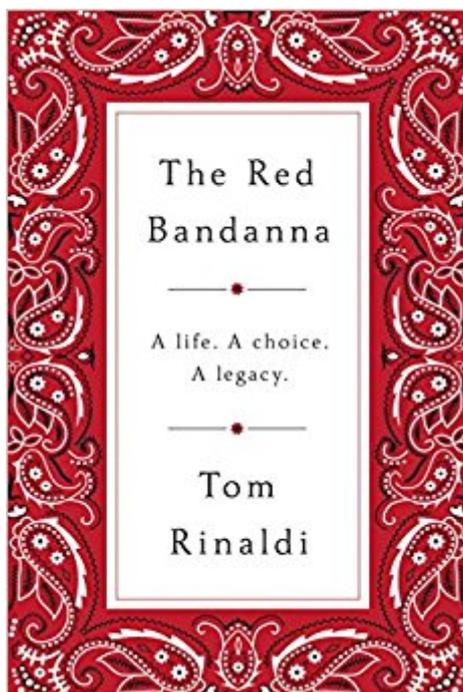


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The Red Bandanna: A Life, A Choice, A Legacy



Synopsis

What would you do in the last hour of your life? The story of Welles Crowther, whose actions on 9/11 offer a lasting lesson on character, calling and courage. One Sunday morning before church, when Welles Crowther was a young boy, his father gave him a red handkerchief for his back pocket. Welles kept it with him that day, and just about every day to come; it became a fixture and his signature. A standout athlete growing up in Upper Nyack, NY, Welles was also a volunteer at the local fire department, along with his father. He cherished the necessity and the camaraderie, the meaning of the role. Fresh from college, he took a Wall Street job on the 104th floor of the South Tower of the World Trade Center, but the dream of becoming a firefighter with the FDNY remained. When the Twin Towers fell, Welles's parents had no idea what happened to him. In the unbearable days that followed, they came to accept that he would never come home. But the mystery of his final hours persisted. Eight months after the attacks, however, Welles's mother read a news account from several survivors, badly hurt on the 78th floor of the South Tower, who said they and others had been led to safety by a stranger, carrying a woman on his back, down nearly twenty flights of stairs. After leading them down, the young man turned around. "I'm going back up," was all he said. The survivors didn't know his name, but despite the smoke and panic, one of them remembered a single detail clearly: the man was wearing a red bandanna. Tom Rinaldi's *The Red Bandanna* is about a fearless choice, about a crucible of terror and the indomitable spirit to answer it. Examining one decision in the gravest situation, it celebrates the difference one life can make.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Tom Rinaldi tells the story of Welles Crowther, a man who was in the Twin Towers when they were attacked. Because of a lifelong habit of carrying a red bandanna in his back pocket, several people came forward after 9/11 to talk about the hero with the red handkerchief, and how he led others to safety, losing his own life in doing so. Mr. Rinaldi tells the backstory of Welles' life, and how he had been in the process of applying to become a NYC firefighter and volunteered his time in that job in his own hometown. I was too close to the events of 9/11 to ever be able to read about it afterward. I saw the column of black smoke rising, I followed e-mails throughout the day from colleagues, friends and my church family, asking after the safety of those known to be in the Towers. In some cases, I didn't know for weeks the fate of colleagues I knew from my freelance work with several companies housed in the Towers. I just couldn't bear to read anything about the attacks, whether graphic accounts of the day or heartwarming stories such as the New York Times series on the individual victims. Lately, I've been trying to read accounts of the day, hoping that the distance of time and the support of context would get me through. This was a good book to start with. It is heartwarming, though heart-breaking, to hear of the actions of people like Welles Crowther. The author reports several times how Mr. Crowther carried a woman over his shoulders to a certain floor and then went back up the stairwell to help others. While his determination to help others is certainly admirable, I would have found him no less admirable if he were to have carried just that one woman to safety. (I assume she perished, as the author notes that she didn't have the strength to continue down the stairs.

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