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True heroism is forged in the crucible of calamity, and few non-fiction stories prove that point more conclusively than that of Welles Remy Crowther, a young man from Nyack, N.Y., who perished in the 9/11 World Trade Center attacks after shepherding numerous others to safety. His inspiring tale is recounted by Matthew J. Weiss' documentary "Man in Red Bandana," which despite its frustratingly crude formal construction proves an equally sorrowful and stirring portrait of selflessness in the face of tragedy. Narrated by Gwyneth Paltrow, the film's lack of polish will make it a tough theatrical sell, but its home-video shelf life should be considerably longer. On the morning of Sept. 11, Crowther was working on the 104th floor of the World Trade Center's South Tower as an equities trader at Sandler O'Neill & Partners. Having grown up idolizing his father Jefferson, a career firefighter, he wasted no time springing into action when catastrophe struck. Covering his face with the red bandana he always carried with him (his dad kept an identical blue one), Crowther descended to the 78th floor's Sky Lobby, where United Airlines Flight 175 had hit the building, and where many were now trapped. Although everyone facing similar circumstances in the North Tower would perish, Crowther found the sole stairwell that allowed for safe passage down to the levels below, and he eventually aided the successful escape of 10 people located at or above the South Tower's blast line. Crowther returned to the Sky Lobby at least three times to save strangers — a masked figure emerging from the dust and debris like some sort of guardian angel. In the aftermath of the attacks, his identity remained a mystery until his parents read reports about a "man in the red bandana" in the New York Times and immediately knew it to be Crowther. His legend quickly grew, replete with honors in numerous domestic memorials, as well as mentions by President Obama at the 2014 dedication ceremony for the National Sept. 11 Memorial & Museum, where Crowther's mother spoke alongside one of those he rescued (Ling Young). His bandana would soon come to symbolize altruistic bravery, and for his fearless work assisting his fellow firefighters — to the point that he ultimately perished in the South Tower lobby while preparing to go back upstairs with them — he became the first posthumously inducted member of the New York City Fire Dept. "Man in Red Bandana" is invaluable as a tribute to an everyday American man who, at the age of 24, indisputably earned the moniker "hero" — which is why its generally lackluster quality proves so frustrating. Weiss' substantial archival footage and chats, as well as new interviews, provides a comprehensive overview of his subject's life, and his animated sequences clearly lay out the logistical circumstances confronted by Crowther on 9/11. Still, so much of the material on hand is of a shoddy analog quality, and so much of it is crudely edited together, that the documentary often feels VHS-grade second-rate. For a saga about composure and decisiveness under pressure, such aesthetic roughness seems thoroughly inapt. Crowther's courage and sacrifice deserves glorification, and comes shining through in "Man with Red Bandana," but there's no shaking the feeling that he also merits a more elegant cinematic celebration. September 11, 2001, began like any other Tuesday for Welles Crowther, but it would soon transform into a day of profound heroism and unspeakable tragedy. Welles, a 24-year-old equities trader working for Sandler O'Neill and Partners, located on the 104th floor of the South Tower of the World Trade Center, found himself in the midst of the deadliest terrorist attack in history. As the first plane struck the North Tower at 8:46 AM, chaos ensued throughout the complex. Welles, like many others, may have initially been confused about what exactly was happening. However, he did not allow panic to take over. While many were trying to comprehend the disastrous situation, Welles' training and innate bravery began to manifest. From a young age, he had carried with him a red bandana, a symbol of his father's legacy and a reminder of his own values. This bandanna was about to become a beacon of hope amidst the terror. At 9:03 AM, United Airlines Flight 175 crashed into the South Tower between the 77th and 85th floors, unleashing a fireball that wreaked havoc. Despite the dire situation and the imminent threat to his own life, Welles donned his red bandanna, covering his nose and mouth to protect himself from smoke and debris. He quickly transitioned from a trader to a lifesaver. Eyewitness accounts paint a vivid picture of Welles' actions that day. He made his way down to the 78th-floor Sky Lobby, a critical junction where several people were trapped and gravely injured. With a clear, calm demeanor, he took charge amidst the chaos. Surviving witnesses recall how he directed people to the stairwell and physically assisted those who were too injured to move on their own. One survivor, Ling Young, recalls Welles' voice piercing through the turmoil, urging her and others to keep moving. His actions didn't stop there; after guiding one group to safety, he returned to help more people, repeating this selfless act multiple times. Additional accounts describe how he carried a woman on his back and led a group of firefighters down 17 flights of stairs, ensuring their escape before heading back up to rescue others. Ultimately, Welles' Crowther's actions on that fateful day emerged as a testament to his character. He ignored his own safety to save lives, epitomizing selflessness and bravery in the face of unimaginable danger. Though the tower eventually collapsed, taking Welles' life alongside thousands of others, the legacy of the man in the red bandanna endured, remembered by those he saved, family members, and the world at large. Through these eyewitness testimonies and the chilling yet heroic deeds performed by Welles, "The Red Bandanna" documents a narrative of extraordinary bravery. Welles Crowther's heroism on September 11th, 2001, turned a symbol of personal significance—the red bandanna—into a powerful emblem of hope, sacrifice, and the human spirit's capacity for boundless courage. Jump to ratings and reviews!The inspirational story of Welles Crowther, whose decision, determination and sacrifice in the terror of 9/11 have inspired millions, and whose short life offers a lasting lesson on character, calling, and courage—in how we live, and in the legacy we choose to leave behind. When Welles Crowther was a young boy in Nyack, NY, his father gave him a red handkerchief to keep in his back pocket, in case he ever needed it. He kept it with him on the way to church that day and nearly every day after. It was a fixture as he grew up, tucked in jeans or wrapped around his head as he played lacrosse for Boston College. The bandanna was a signature, long before it became a symbol. Welles was like a lot of us, if just a bit better - an honors student, but not the valetudinarian; a Division I athlete, but not a star; kindhearted but not saintly. He wanted the stuff of a good life and was willing to work for it. Fresh from college, he came to New York City for a job on Wall Street. His office was on the 104th floor of the World Trade Center. But Welles wasn't entirely fulfilled by his desk job. He'd grown up volunteering at the local fire department in Nyack and loved the necessity and camaraderie, the meaning of the role. And so, shortly before 9/11, he called his father to say he was thinking of quitting finance and applying to be a firefighter with the FDNY. RINALDI2014 star reviews prior to September 15, 2016This is not an easy read. It is, however, one of the most inspiring books I have ever read. I bought the book in early September, but purposely didn't begin reading it until Friday, September 9, because I wanted it fresh in my mind on the anniversary of 9/11. It will be fresh in my mind for a long, long time.From the time he was in preschool, Welles Remy Crowther wanted to be a fireman. He was four years old when he received a blazing red ride-on fire truck from his grandparents for Christmas. When he was old enough, he realized that dream by becoming a volunteer in his village's fire department.He played sports, and his interest in business took him off to Boston College and, after graduation, to a job on the 104th floor of the South Tower of the World Trade Center.The red bandanna was a gift from his father when Welles was seven, during a father/son discussion about the difference between fashion and function. Wearing his Sunday best, Welles noticed his father's white pocket square and asked if he could have one. His father gave him two: one white and one red. He explained that the white one was for show. And then he explained that the red bandanna was "for blow." Of course, the young boy soon found other uses for it.The red bandanna travelled in the right back pocket of every pair of pants he wore for the rest of his life, even when he donned a suit and tie for his job in Manhattan. He sometimes took it out and set it on his desk. Some of his coworkers teased him about it, and he laughed at their good-natured ribbing. But he never stopped carrying it.The details about what people experienced on 9/11 are difficult to read, but they need to be told - so that no one ever forgets the horror of that day, and what innocent people who had merely gone off to work that morning endured. And we need to learn of the heroic deeds "normal" people rose to on that unspeakable day.I cannot imagine the anguish of his parents and loved ones as hours turned into days which turned into weeks. When stories began to be told about the mysterious man wearing a red bandanna over his nose and mouth to protect him from smoke and debris, who led numerous people out of an inferno and down to safety, his parents finally had answers to their questions about what happened to him.He was only twenty-four years old, with a bright and promising career ahead of him. But on that day, he chose another route. I wept so often while reading this book that I was wishing I had my own red bandanna. I will never forget his story, his bravery, and his sacrifice. Read this book.November 18, 2017Most reviews for this book will say it is inspirational, and I certainly agree. Being a parent, it was difficult to read at times. Losing a child - I can't even imagine. Welles made the ultimate sacrifice to help others and his story, as well as the other victims', was tragic but needs to be heard. I listened to the book which was narrated by the author. I thought he did a great job bestseller-list nonfiction xx-bookclub-fbc February 5, 2019his story was really inspiring and emotional, but the writing style just wasn't my jam2.5/5 July 17, 2017This book tells the story of Welles Crowther, a 24-year-old man who, on September 11, 2001, began his day as an equities trader at the World Trade Center and ended it as part of the FDNY rescue team. Unfortunately his life also ended that day, but not before he led several other people out of the towers to safety. In The Red Bandanna, Tom Rinaldi recounts Crowther's childhood and adolescence, reading the past through the lens of the present, trying to find hints and clues in Crowther's youth of the heroism he would display as a young man. Rinaldi's work reads as an extended eulogy, and he treats the line between pathos and sentimentality, memoir and hagiography, with varying degrees of success. Crowther is not portrayed as "perfect," but one does get the sense that his life has been a little whitewashed in light of his tragic death. Rinaldi's attempts at philosophizing can be a little jarring, such as when he asks the reader when she "gave up" on her dreams, leading up to the story of how Welles, though he worked in the lucrative field of finance, never fully gave up on his desire to become a firefighter. I'm not quite clear what Rinaldi hoped to achieve in such passages. Evoke a loss sense of inspired idealism in his reader? Place Welles on a pedestal above the reader as one who didn't give up his dreams? Either way, a lot of questionable assumptions about the reader are being made. I think the book wants to portray Welles as both unique in his willingness to sacrifice himself for others, yet as also sharing in the heroism displayed by so many on September 11, including the many who perhaps were not recognized or honored. Rinaldi's writing is not entirely up to the task. He's at his best when he sticks to journalistic-style narrative, describing anecdotes and events and quoting witnesses and acquaintances. His recreated account of the day itself is haunting and horrifying, and when the survivors' voices got a chance to shine through, the tale became unforgettably gripping. In the end, Welles' family's determination that their son should not have died in vain - that their son's death must have some sort of meaning and purpose - their efforts to ensure that his sacrifice will not be forgotten - becomes just as important a piece of the story as Welles' actions. The implied philosophical questions raised by the book - and the ones that interest me the most - are what makes a good death, how our lives prepare us for it, and how our loved ones help establish our deaths as meaningful. The story of Welles Crowther provides one family's attempts to answer those questions in the wake of unimaginable loss.October 10, 2020Reading this book reminded me of attending the symphony. Like the symphony you surround yourself with the sounds and emotions. You are a spectator, surrendering and observing. A piece of music or sometimes even a single note can leave you breathless, soaring so high with tears brimming your eyes while the very next note drops you into your envisioned hell. This book is like that. It's about 9/11, hell. It's about a family's love, soaring. It's about unspeakable loss for so many, hell. It's about a grown man's decision to be indescribably brave and selfless and the ripples his decision made for countless others he saved that morning, soaring. As a mom to two sons, I have one who would have run the 75 feet to safety and into the rest of his life and another that would have stayed and helped. Honestly, I pray just a little bit harder at night for my "brave" son because I always hope he makes the "selfish" decision when he comes to difficult crossroads in his life. Godspeed Welles and God Bless Jeff and Alison January 12, 2021All of us, young and old, need to hear about selfless heroes like Welles Crowther. His life attitude and heroism on 9/11 were such outstanding examples of the way we should all approach our lives. He looked for no accolades or recognition. He just wanted to serve others and do what he knew was right, even though he knew very well that it may cost him his life. His life was cut short way too soon. Few of us would contribute as much as he did, even if we lived a thousand years. I highly recommend this book.September 14, 2024In memoriam of 9/11. I try to read a book about that day to honor those who lost their lives, the survivors, and the many who were forever changed by the devastation. This book is a story of a young man who had the opportunity to save himself or save others. In the face of possible death, what would you choose? Yourself or others? This young man made the selfless decision to save as many as he could during that horrific day. His story is one to know, remember, honor, and live by. 5 BIG stars and many tears for this one.August 26, 2022Ahhhh I finished!!! Ok so this was a summer reading book so obviously I didn't enjoy it that much. But it was such a powerful story! Very sad though @December 14, 2016This book tells the story of Welles Crowther, a young man working on the 104th floor of the South Tower of the World Trade Center on 9/11. The horror of that day's events is shared through the grief of his parents. Anyone old enough to remember that day can get a whole new perspective from this book. The pain of those parents is unimaginable. Initially they, along with many other families with loved ones in the towers, have no idea if he survived. After several weeks, they come to the conclusion that he will not be found alive but struggle to deal with the anguish of not knowing what his last moments were like. Eight long months later, his mother read a news report of several survivors rescued from the 78th floor who mentioned being saved by a man "with a red bandanna." When Welles was young, his father had given him a red bandanna before church one morning and ever since he had carried one in his back pocket. She feels strongly that these survivors had to have been saved by Welles.Rinaldi does an outstanding job in relating the anguish and uncertainty Welles' parents deal with while unraveling the events occurring during the last moments of their son's life. This really is a tribute to a brave young man who literally gave his life to help others. It's heart-rending and inspirational at the same time. I'm a fan of the collection-memoir staff-favs-bonnieJuly 16, 2017I listened to the audio version of this book read by the author. I liked the book and the writing, but I did wish that some of these had been read. The book definitely took me back to 9/11 and all that followed. At the same time, it helped me to understand more fully what it was like for those who were there, whether they were victims or responders or family members. I often had tears in my eyes. The first third of the book was a bit boring for me but I knew it was useful for setting up the background of the man in the red bandanna. This true story illustrates how ordinary people can do extraordinary things when they selflessly give of themselves for the benefit of others.December 29, 2016As some of you may know I have been touched, deeply, by the story of this brave man, the Man in the red Bandanna, since my youngest graduated from Boston College in 2010. I have never been able to relate the story of the courage of this young man without breaking down to some degree. I received this book for Christmas and I urge all my friends to read it, to Google "The Man in the red Bandanna" ESPN short (14 min) film and to learn what Welles Remy Crowther did on that fateful Tuesday morningMay 20, 2018It is a great story of a great man. The problem is the writing made it very boring and took 2 pages to introduce characters that didn't add to the story. I may not have liked this book, but I love Welles Crowther's story.September 25, 2024There's a bit of fluff, but the real meat of it is absolutely stellar. The type of book that really can bring you to tears. It's written in a really beautiful, powerful way. Man, what a story this guy had. And the reaction his story has gotten is America at its best. If you know nothing about this book, give it a read. It's quick, and absolutely worthwhile. 2024-september audiobooksAugust 4, 2019It's taken me 18 years to be able to want to read any books about 9/11. It took me a long time to read this as I could only handle it in short doses. But it was so worth it. Well written and gave me a little more understanding.October 22, 2020Recently, I watched the 9/11 dedication of the beautiful tribute to those who perished in the terroristic bombing of the twin towers in New York City. At the dedication former President Barack Obama spoke of Welles Crowther, a young man who made the choice to help others, and lost his own life in return. The mother of Welles Crowther spoke of her son, as companions on the stage by a woman whose love for her son saved. She was there to thank Welles because she could not thank Welles. Intrigued, I immediately bought this book. As many of you know, Welles was a young man working on the 104th floor of the South Tower of the World Trade Center. When the towers were hit by planes filled with fuel which exploded when the terrorists flew planes into the high structures, Welles called his mother to say he was ok. Then, he made an incredible choice which saved many lives, but took his life in the process. As a little boy, Welles was drawn to fire trucks. His family had a long tradition of being fireman. One day, he noted his father's crisp white bandana displayed in his suit pocket. His father gave him two, a white one and then a red one.Wells frequently carried the red bandanna. On the fatal day of September 11, 2001, Wells could have merely saved his own life by walking down the area he worked that led to the outside of the building. Instead, Wells fearlessly acted as the rescue workers did, he stayed in the building and led many to the way out.Carrying a fearful woman seventeen floors to safety, he went back in the building to help others. Many lives were saved by him, but sadly his young life did not make it out as the tower imploded and rapidly fell dramatically to the ground.Many knew it was the young man who carried the red bandanna that saved their lives. Reading of the stories, his mother knew that this was her son Wells! Word quickly spread, and nationwide, people wore red bandannas to honor this brave soul.I recently watched another youtube story of a man who gave a presentation of his day at the tower and how he survived. There was no mention of helping others, only a self serving speech of his experience. I couldn't continue to watch it, as I remembered Welles Crowther who made a choice that many did not!However, in my judgement, I wondered if I would have been brave as Wells.November 24, 2019Apparently I haven't cried enough recently, so I read another book about 9/11 and the heroic actions of courageous people. This book is about Welles Crowther the man who became famous for repeatedly going back up those stairs of the South Tower of the WTC to try and save people. Even though in the chaos the people he saved did not know his name, they did remember that he wore a red bandana over his face to protect himself from the smoke. This was a bandanna that his father gave him as a young boy and that he always carried with him, even as a trader for the investment banking firm Sandler O'Neill on the 104th floor of the World Trade Center. And it was this red bandanna that identified to the world that Welles Crowther gave his life to save others. This is a well-written and researched book which although sad, ends up being a moving and unforgettable story of how one courageous person can make a difference and become an inspiration to people the world over. 11-nonfiction biography nonfiction-history/June 9, 2019A lyrically beautiful read about a brutally devastating subject, this book is the summer reading choice for Austn Prep in both this edition as well as the YA version for the middle schoolers. It shines a light on the journey of Welles Crowther, who, at 24, made a choice to help others rather than running to his own safety during the horror of the South Tower falling on 9/11. With information compiled from many sources, including his family and friends, this book gives an unforgettable perspective on a person who was both ordinary and extraordinary, and reminds us to be the same.January 6, 2021It is difficult to give stars to a book about a hero. I have only read one other book about 9/11 and would love to read more to hear about the men and women who saved, survived, and/or sacrificed their lives for others so we never forget their honor and memory. I will never look at a red bandanna and not think of Welles and his selflessness to save strangers. Now I also know there is a CrossFit hero wud in his honor, The Man in the Red Bandanna, which I will have to do next 9/11. September 30, 2021A beautiful rendering of a life—a short life—well and meaningfully lived that leaves a lasting legacy in its wake. Welles Crowther is an enduring example of the best of humanity as well as the best of American citizenry. A must-read for all.April 6, 2017Listened via audible - read by Tom Rinaldi - I just love his voice.Soo, I learned about this story years and years ago from a friend who knew Welles at BC. When this friend and I traveled together to NYC, we found his name on the wall at the Trade Center Memorial and I learned a little bit more about Welles. When Tom Rinaldi came to speak at an event I was going to - I felt like I should read the book even though I thought I pretty much knew the story already. This was a book club selection and so I didn't want to discuss it here, but I will say I had a hard time reading the book. It's easy to get caught up watching the ESPN segment or learn about the story from a friend. I immediately bought this book. As many of you know, Welles was a young man working on the 104th floor of the South Tower of the World Trade Center. When the towers were hit by planes filled with fuel which exploded when the terrorists flew planes into the high structures, Welles called his mother to say he was ok. Then, he made an incredible choice which saved many lives, but took his life in the process. As a little boy, Welles was drawn to fire trucks. 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