



Tough as Nails: One Woman's Journey Through West Point

Gail O'Sullivan Dwyer

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Tough as Nails is one woman's account of her personal experiences and the lessons learned from them; it is how West Point engraved Duty, Honor, and Country onto her soul. Tough as Nails gives you the West Point experience. You'll see it, feel it and learn something from it. You'll smile and you'll laugh. This is the story that Erma Bombeck would have written had she been a member of the Class of 1981, the second class with women at WestPoint. Tough as Nails is more than a coming-of-age memoir. Originally written to assist her in her role as a West Point admissions liaison officer, the author shares knowledge gained in her 15 years working with admissions.

Tough as Nails: One Woman's Journey Through West Point Details

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From Reader Review Tough as Nails: One Woman's Journey Through West Point for online ebook

Amie Schumacher says

I've always been fascinated by military life...to hear it from a female who was in the 2nd class of co-eds was a treat. I found Gail's writing to be witty and insightful - a true pleasure to read!

Ruth Pohl says

The book was interesting. The author got through West Point with no self-confidence or athletic skills or conditioning. I think you'd have to be mentally very tough to endure that experience. She didn't seem to have any idea what she was doing there, or how to prepare for it [such as getting in good shape]. I'd like to have read even more details of the tough aspects of the experience - physical conditioning, plebe experience, etc. Also more about her military experience.

Lani says

Pretty quick read written from the perspective of one of the first women at West Point. Dwyer makes every effort to make it clear that this is HER story and it is not necessarily indicative of anyone else's experiences. She had a generally positive experience in the military despite a variety of health concerns that she seems to shrug off as she goes.

Writing is alright, and it's worth the read as a window into a time and place that very few could give an accurate picture of. But it's nothing mind-blowing, nothing scandalous (if that's what you're looking for), nor does it try to be.

Tracy says

I'm always impressed when people remember things that happened at West Point. I have blocked out most of those four years for some reason. It was interesting to read about training for the class of 1981 and contrast it with the bits that I remember from 1985. We did not get to experience Recondo at Buckner, so the description of it was of great interest.

This is a book any future cadet should read, male or female. Some things have changed (technology is a big difference), but West Point is the institution we love to say has been around for over two hundred years with no changes, so the fundamentals are the same.

Liralen says

Oh, man. Such an opportunity wasted! There's a fascinating story to be told here, but the book is so short that much of the story slips through the cracks. The author's voice, while unique enough, is undeveloped; with a stronger editor she might have had a more compelling story. I very much wish that she'd gone deeper into the story and offered a better understanding of what it was like to be in the second class of women at West Point - as it is, the bones are there, but the flesh is lacking.

Emilie says

The author, a member of the second West Point class to admit women, doesn't claim that this work is a study in military sociology, feminist politics, or even history, which is good, because it is not. A quick read that was okay, neither terrible nor a must read, about one woman's experience in the days when West Point was just beginning to admit women cadets.

Michelle says

I've been fascinated by The West Point U.S. Military Academy ever since I visited for work last September, and this book gave me an interesting perspective of it from a woman who was in the 2nd graduating class to allow women at West Point. I thought the book was a quick, interesting read, but the author was all over the place with the story line and some of the military lingo was over my head. I'd still recommend it for anyone interested in West Point, women's equality, or both.

Kartika says

Smooth read....not hugely in-depth, but enjoyable nonetheless...

Mo says

As a grad of the same fine institution, I was there when the Senior class was still all male. I have read several books about West Point and I have always tried to temper the reading with the person's personal reasons for writing the book. For example Lucian Trescott was left the military as a 2nd Lieutenant and his books reflect a pattern of hatred against the military and the academy. I remember Gail O'Sullivan. She was and probably still is a person of outstanding character. I was so impressed with the book and the accuracy of its portrayal that I wrote her a letter just to tell her that. The bottom line is that this is a great and accurate portrayal of life at West Point that is written by a woman of character with little or no apparent axes to grind: She just wants to tell the story the best way she can. Thank You.

Bob Mayer says

Just finished reading this and it brought back a lot of memories as I am a classmate of Gail's. We also ran on the marathon team together.

Taking that aside, I felt this was an accurate and objective assessment of the early years when women came into West Point. In my company, G-1, we had women from the class of 80 as yearlings and then class of 82. I always believed a woman had to work twice as hard at the Academy to get through, especially plebe year. The key was to be 'invisible' but that was impossible for a female cadet. The antics of some misanthropes should be an embarrassment to all West Pointers.

I always found it amusing that many of the men who were so against women ended up in combat support branches. Having served in the Infantry and Special Forces, I have a different perspective. I think a woman could do it, but it would be extremely hard. In Special Forces we were essentially beasts of burden at times, carrying 150 pound rucks on top of other gear.

I remembered that Gail seemed more accepted than other women and I do think it had something to do with her slight stature, but more importantly, a ready smile and a positive attitude.

I'd recommend this book to anyone interested in the early days of women at West Point.

Amy Sjoquist says

Read up to 68. Not what I was looking for in a book. The woman went through West Point starting the second year women were allowed to enter. But she went without any real knowledge of what it was all about. Her brother went before her so that is why she wanted to go. She had no real sense of patriotism or any desire to be in the military. I couldn't get past her first year. Disappointed.

Kimberley Shaw says

O'Sullivan truly did "have a bit to learn" when she began her West Point career! Not a long book, but a highly-enjoyable one. I have long wondered what it was like to be one of that first generation of female West Pointers, and I recommend this book for those who'd like to find out.

Stephen D. Faoro says

Got a daughter looking at the Long Gray Line? Must Read

Well written, funny, emotional & honest. As a father with a daughter headed this direction, much appreciated!
! Thank You

Marty says

This is fine but not particularly insightful or interesting.

