



Major Conflict: One Gay Man's Life in the Don't-Ask-Don't-Tell Military

Jeffrey McGowan Maj USA (Ret)

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A book that will move hearts and open minds, Jeffrey McGowan's memoir is the first personal account of a gay man's silent struggle in the don't-ask-don't-tell military, from a cadet who rose to the rank of major, left as a decorated Persian Gulf hero, and whose same-sex marriage was the first on the East Coast.

Love of country and personal love combine in this groundbreaking memoir of one gay man's life in the military—and beyond. In *Major Conflict*, Queens-born Jeffrey McGowan tells how he enlisted in the army in the late 1980s and served with distinction for ten years. But McGowan had a secret: he was gay. In the don't-ask-don't-tell world of the Clinton-era army, being gay meant automatic expulsion. So, at the expense of his personal life and dignity, he hid his sexual identity and continued to serve the army well.

Major Conflict is a moving account of his years in the military, the homophobia he encountered there, and his life afterward. McGowan presents a vivid portrait of his experience as a soldier in the Persian Gulf, where he commanded U.S. troops in Operation Desert Storm, eventually rising to the rank of major.

Ultimately, however, he realized that the army held no future for gay men—even closeted ones. Desiring more of a personal life and tired of hiding his true identity, McGowan resigned from the Army he loved in 1998. In February 2004, he married his partner of six years in New Paltz, New York, making front-page news in the *New York Times*.

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