

# SEMPER FI

**'Call Sign Chaos' is a reflection on a lifetime of military service**

**E**astern Washington native Jim Mattis, with assistance from colleague Bing West, has written this forthright account of his career. The story follows him from Marine recruit to four-star general to Secretary of Defense and recounts the battle-tested lessons gained along the way.

Mattis makes clear, however, that as much as he values learning by doing, he also has great respect for the lessons that history provides. A keen student of military history, he closely read the strategies of warriors across the millennia.

In 2003, in advance of his deployment to

Iraq, Mattis' penchant for books was made clear when a colleague noted that other officers were "too busy to read."

In a response that went viral, Mattis rejoined, "By reading, you learn through others' experiences, generally a better way to do business, especially in our line of work where the consequences of incompetence are so final for young men."

Reading, he continued, "doesn't give me all the answers, but it lights what is often a dark path ahead."

And now with this book, Mattis meticulously shares his own experiences so future

warriors may learn from him.

While attending Central Washington State College, Mattis spent summers in officer candidate training. After graduating with a degree in history in 1971, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Marines. In his first 12 years he was deployed to 13 different countries, where he learned "the irreplaceable benefit" of allies.

In those early years, Mattis honed the fundamentals of good leadership, which he sums up as "the three Cs": competence ("be brilliant in the basics"), caring and conviction.

He was a colonel when he acquired his call sign, "CHAOS." His management objective was to keep his battalions nimble by decentralizing authority and encouraging initiative on the battlefield. Despite the proven effectiveness of this approach, it didn't keep his irreverent operations officer from asking, "Does the Colonel Have Another Outstanding Solution?"

In 1990, when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, Mattis and his battalion were sent to the Middle East. Their first mission, defend Saudi Arabia, was later revised to forcing Hussein out of Kuwait.

In response to the deadly attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001, Mattis was instrumental in the design and execution of

This Week's Book:

"Call Sign Chaos" – By Jim Mattis and Bing West

Random House – 320 pp — \$28

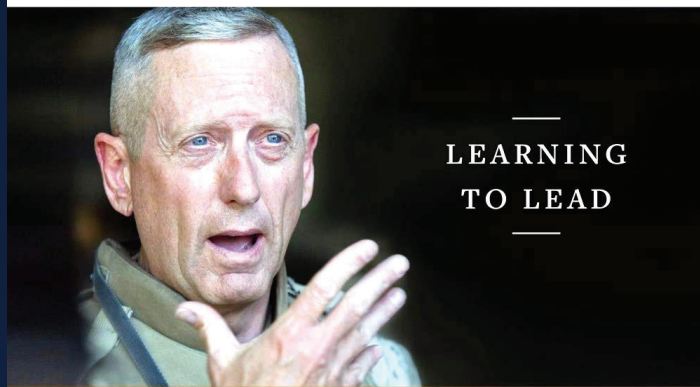
an audacious amphibious invasion of Marines into Afghanistan to go after Osama bin Laden and the Taliban.

During his career, Mattis served loyally under both Democratic and Republican presidents. But in this book, with specificity, he reveals frustration with policymakers who had unclear objectives or waffled in the middle of a military campaign.

Mattis refrains from criticizing President Trump ("I don't write about sitting Presidents"), but does share his letter of resignation as Trump's Secretary of Defense, in which he writes, "While the US remains the indispensable nation in the free world, we cannot protect our interests or serve that role effectively without maintaining strong alliances and showing respect to those allies."

*The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at [bkmonger@nwlink.com](mailto:bkmonger@nwlink.com)*

## CALL SIGN CHAOS



**JIM MATTIS**  
AND  
**BING WEST**

'Call Sign Chaos'  
by Jim Mattis and  
Bing West

## FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

CEREMONY • MUSIC

DANCING • REFRESHMENTS

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

\$1 PER PERSON • \$5 PER FAMILY

SPONSORED BY SCANDINAVIAN MIDSUMMER FESTIVAL ASSOCIATION

# SANKTA LUCIA FESTIVAL

FRI. NOVEMBER 29, 2019 7pm ASTORIA HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

