

# BAGHDADDY

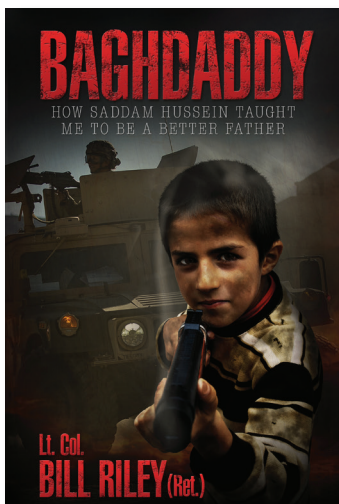
HOW SADDAM HUSSEIN TAUGHT ME TO BE A BETTER FATHER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Airman and Intelligence Analyst Provides Rare Account of the Rape of Kuwait in *Baghdaddy*

*Lt. Col. Bill Riley navigates a clash of cultures and the brutal realities of war across the Persian Gulf while fighting his way home*

**DALLAS, TEXAS** — *Only the strong can survive.* A lesson from his father that Lt. Col. Bill Riley would take with him from his troubled childhood to his career in the military — that ultimately would frame his experiences as an intelligence analyst at the close of the Cold War and throughout combat zones in the Middle East.



*Baghdaddy: How Saddam Hussein Taught Me to Be a Better Father* (Brown Books Publishing Group) shows an intimate look at the relationship between the U.S. military and the Middle East from the perspective of an American airman and intelligence analyst. Offering an honest and colorful depiction of his own childhood and how these experiences, along with his time in the Middle East, shaped his life, Lt. Col. Bill Riley's *Baghdaddy* offers a unique view of spies at rest and his journey home from a traumatizing war.

“I realized that there wasn't a lot of difference between the skills I needed to survive my childhood, to be a father, and go to war. I met some amazing people along the way, and connecting those dots brought me to *Baghdaddy*,” Riley shares.

After enlisting in the Air Force after high school, Lt. Col. Bill Riley braved the war-torn landscapes of Kuwait, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. He led the Air Force's largest Network Operations and Security Center and was handpicked to serve as the first U.S. electronic warfare officer for task force operations in Iraq. He was the first cyberspace operations officer awarded the Air Force Combat Action Medal.

*Baghdaddy*, approved by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), examines the rape of Kuwait under Iraqi president Saddam Hussein, provides a firsthand look at what came after, and shines a bright light on the unique challenges of trying to rebuild a foreign country while its people are trying to kill you.

Lt. Gen. Chris Miller, former Air Force deputy chief of staff, Strategic Plans & Programs, commented on the book, “In the Air Force, it's often said that ‘every airman has a story.’ Bill Riley's story is extraordinary: raw, candid, searing, insightful, and inspirational. Riley has painted a compelling picture of what it means to lead — in combat and in fatherhood — and to love.”

Imbued with humanity, *Baghdaddy* provides staggering and rarely seen insight into the U.S.'s stationing in the Middle East during the reign of Saddam Hussein and delivers the message that no matter how different we seem, we are all trying to make the best of life and learn how to be the best versions of ourselves.

###

The Agency at Brown Books  
Media Contact: Cathy Williams | 972-248-9500  
Cathy.Williams@TheAgencyAtBB.com  
www.TheAgencyAtBB.com



*Baghdaddy*  
Bill Riley | 978-1-61254-292-8 | \$26.95  
POLITICAL SCIENCE / Intelligence & Analysis  
www.BillRileyAuthor.com

# BAGHDADDY

HOW SADDAM HUSSEIN TAUGHT ME TO BE A BETTER FATHER

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Lt. Col. Bill Riley (ret.)**

**Bill Riley** is a writer and retired US Air Force lieutenant colonel with interests in space exploration, coffee roasting, global communication, intelligence activities, and ancient ruins. Bill was an intelligence analyst during the Cold War. Later, he specialized in strategy and communications. During his career, he's worked with intelligence and special operations professionals from every service, virtually every intelligence agency, and several friendly foreign governments.

Bill's deployments took him through combat zones across the Middle East where he played significant roles in Kuwait and Iraq, supported joint coalition operations, and helped nations rebuild after wars. He was the first US electronic warfare officer in Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom, he led the air force's largest network operations and security center, and he was the first cyberspace operations officer to receive the Air Force Combat Action Medal.

He holds degrees in literature, public administration, and strategic leadership, and he is a graduate of Air Command and Staff College and the Air Force Space Command VIGILANT LOOK program.

Bill lives in Idaho, just outside Boise, with his wife and two sons.

# BAGHDADDY

HOW SADDAM HUSSEIN TAUGHT ME TO BE A BETTER FATHER

## Q AND A WITH THE AUTHOR

***Baghdaddy* is an intensely personal sharing of your life's journey. At what point and how did you decide it needed to be written?**

I witnessed the effects of Saddam's rape of Kuwait and his failure to honor the terms of his surrender. Later, I was stationed in Iraq and experienced the unique challenges of trying to rebuild that country while some of its people were trying to kill me.

My father tried to prepare me for the worst that life could throw at me. He taught me hard lessons that often hurt, and I resented them. After he passed away, I tried to put things in perspective. I realized that there wasn't a lot of difference between the skills I needed to survive my childhood, be a father, and go to war. I met some amazing people along the way, and connecting those dots brought me to *Baghdaddy*.

**The book's cover art elicits strong reactions. What were your thoughts behind it?**

The *Baghdaddy* cover is polarizing, and I love it. I wanted this cover to cut to the heart of my story, and with one glance it does. I wish we lived in a world where there weren't child soldiers, but we do, and they're a part of this story. The art also captures the warlike aspects of my upbringing, and it feels personal. The cover artist requested my childhood photos, and the cover image bears a strong resemblance to me. My father once said, "One definition of adult is surviving your childhood," and I never forgot it. Each story element meets on this cover. You know the moment you pick it up.

**After enlisting in the US Air Force, what attracted you to intelligence and national security?**

I wish I could say I had a noble purpose or a higher calling, but I didn't. I was the stereotypical enlistee, in a bad situation without other good options, and the air force offered me a way out, an opportunity to prove myself, and a fresh start. Funny story: I entered the air force without a guaranteed job. I was an "open general" recruit, which is another name for "whatever the air force needs most." A.k.a my recruiter Jedi mind tricked me into meeting his quota.

Halfway through basic, our military training instructor lined us up and said, "I have to send five volunteers to the new special ops prequalification course. Who thinks they have what it takes?" You'd think everyone would want in, but no. He got four volunteers, and I was "voluntold" to be the fifth. I was annoyed. It was just one more thing I had to do. But I said, "YES, SERGEANT," on cue. I figured it would be obvious I wasn't into it, nature would take its course, and I'd be out. The thing was, it wasn't bad. Yeah, it was chaotic and exhausting, but there was no yelling, I ran and swam, and I avoided the most tedious aspects of basic training. We were assigned tasks to test our ability to observe and improvise, and

we wrote short essays to answer unanswerable morality questions. We fell into an interesting rhythm, and our group got smaller and smaller.

When there were five of us left, we were given our final task. Dive in the water, reach the other side of the pool, pick up a mask from the bottom of the deep end, clear it, put it on, and swim back to where we started. All underwater, all in one breath. Problem was, when I'd almost gotten to my mask, some asshole with a padded stick hit me and knocked the mask away. I grabbed it, but another stick knocked me in the head, and I let go. I was running out of air, but surface and you lose, and I was pissed. I swam to the wall just above the mask, and the sticks came at me again. This time I grabbed both and kicked off the wall as hard as I could. One stick came free in my hand, and there was a big splash. I grabbed my mask, cleared and donned it, and swam to the finish line. When I broke the surface to gasp for air, a hand the size of a ham grabbed my head and hauled me out of the pool. It was a huge, unhappy sergeant in soaking wet fatigues. I figured I'd screwed up. I just hoped they'd let me finish basic.

I declined the Pararescue slot I was offered, I wasn't the right man for it, and I accepted an intelligence job that just felt right. There's a sense of community in the military that for me was like family.

### ***Baghdaddy* provides a firsthand view of war; what are the most common misconceptions held by Americans?**

We see war mostly in snapshots, and not everything gets the coverage or the attention or focus it deserves. There's been a terrible war in Yemen for years, but the media barely covers it. The same was true of the atrocities of Saddam's occupation of Kuwait and the campaign of rape and terror employed by Slobodan Milošević during the Bosnian War. Few were interested in investigating and reporting until the world couldn't look away anymore.

The first time I was in Iraq was just after President Bush declared victory. We absolutely met and exceeded the first phase objectives of the war, but even at the highest levels of power, there were misconceptions over what "victory" meant.

I was with an army signals unit on the outskirts of Karbala, about fifty-five miles southwest of Baghdad. There was a friendly village just off the major supply route, and we encountered a news crew at the burnt and twisted remains of a blown-up semi-tractor-trailer. People from the village were rummaging through the blast field looking for salvageable spoils. We waved, the Iraqis waved back, and the reporters were busy setting up their shot.

We pulled over, and I went out to touch base with the news crew just as they were assembling a group of men and boys with slung Kalashnikov rifles in front of the still-smoking vehicle for a picture. Back then, if a supply truck fell out of a convoy along the route, the driver detonated the vehicle and cargo so it wouldn't fall into enemy hands, and then the driver



and shotgun would ride back with the rest of the convoy to camp. The vehicle in front of me was one of those. The title that ran on the picture the reporters took was, *Insurgents Destroy Military Supplies*. It was a good picture, and insurgents did destroy military supplies, just not that time. If you look closely at the picture, you can see all the boys smiling for the camera.

I'm sure there are other misconceptions.

**Spies and covert operations are the focus of many movies and television shows. What does Hollywood get right? What are some of the most glaring errors?**

What I can say is that *Argo* was a great example of a classic case study in covert operations. CIA declassified extensive details about the operation, and the film was true to the story. All intelligence agencies conduct regular declassification reviews, and they publicly share both success stories and failures. Check out their websites: CIA.gov/library does a great job.

I can also talk about dating.

Professional spies are exceptional people. They are handpicked, cultivated, forged, used, and, if they survive ops and politics, curated until either they've got nothing left to give or they become the next generation of curators. Some come from military backgrounds, others academia; a few still come straight off the street, but one hallmark they all have in common is they're manipulative.

Despite being exceptional, dating is hard. You have a job you can't talk about without more lies you have to keep straight. The closer you get to clandestine services, the more limited the relationship pool. You go when you're called, it's stressful, they're human, and there aren't many people you can talk to off the job. When you're in clandestine service, you are irrevocably a spy. Manipulation is like breathing, and everyone mind-fucks everyone else.

It's not personal, it's just how it is. Divorce is rampant, and you have the highest highs and most vindictive lows you can imagine. Relationships rarely last, and everyone either dates or is married to everyone else in that one pool of most trusted Americans.

Also, if you took the hard classes at an elite school, work advanced IT at a top company, work at the decision level of government or defense research, or are successful in biotech, genetics, or any other highly profitable, proprietary field, you've probably already met a spy, and they weren't pitching for our team. Don't believe me? Then they did their job.

**Given your experience in intelligence and national security, do you think anyone knows the "real" you? Why or why not?**

I'm what happens when the world takes an introvert, kicking and screaming, turns him into a type-A extrovert, and then teaches him to dance. For a long time, the real me was whomever I needed to be, whenever I needed to be him. But then again, I never expected to live to see thirty. I spent most of my life carrying around secrets that weren't mine to tell, so now that I don't have to anymore, the real me is a little too honest and, because of how I grew up, introspective. I love my life, and I'm grateful I'm alive.

Another thing my father said: "On your deathbed, when you look back, if you had one real friend, you probably had a good life." I've had five. Two of them are no longer in this world, and I miss them, but I was beyond fortunate. At every phase of my life, I've had someone I could confide in, who knew and accepted the real me with all my backstory, flaws, and scars. So yes, my dearest friends know the real me, and that has made all the difference in the world.

**Television commercials feature veterans saying they “sacrificed for their country and would do it again.” If you could do it over again, would you? What would you do differently?**

Absolutely, and not a thing. I lived to tell the tale. A lot of guys covered the same ground and weren't so lucky. They sacrificed everything, and I came home to my family. My wife wasn't a widow, my boys had a father, my life goes on. All I can do is my best: honor their memories, tell the stories I can, and sing their songs.

I saw and did terrible things; now that's a part of who I am. But if I looked away, or didn't see, or didn't do the things I did, what would have happened? There were times when I'd stepped just to the left or right, I'd be dead. Or if our Humvee had stopped in a different place, an improvised explosive device would have killed me, my driver, and a whole lot of kids. I don't know if it was the choices I made, dumb luck, or divine intervention, but I wouldn't change a single thing. I've had a few truly good accomplishments, and I helped make the world a little safer for a while. I'm proud of most of what I've done. That's more than good enough for me.

**What ignited your passion for writing as a second career?**

I was dyslexic. Learning to read was hard and embarrassing. My friend Sarah would sit and read with me until I got it right, and I loved her for that. After I could finally read on my own, I had a vivid dream. Maybe it was my overworked brain getting back at me, but as I wrote, the words came alive. They transformed into the actual living, breathing things I'd written. They were as surprised as I was. They told crazy stories. I wrote down what I could, and if you read what I wrote, the words would come alive in your dreams too. I'd never had a dream like that, and I told Sarah about it as a joke. I expected laughter. Her response caught me off guard. “What are you, stupid?” she said. “It means you're gonna be a writer when you grow up.”

Some years later, I had retired from the air force and wrapped up my last projects as a strategy consultant, and we were leaving DC and moving to Idaho. We'd built a house and my wife, Jo, was slated to finish her last military assignment in Boise and retire. However, as we were getting in the car to go, Jo was reassigned to take command of a squadron at Vance Air Force Base, Oklahoma. We had already promised our son that, after a lot of moves, he could complete high school all in one place. So I took the boys to Idaho, and Jo visited from Oklahoma when she could. I would be a single dad for a couple of years, and I decided that when the boys were in school, I'd finally finish writing the memoir that became *Baghdaddy*. In the end Sarah was right. It took a while to grow up and longer still to become a writer, but it's what I am.

**You are currently writing a YA series. What can you share about the series, and does it have a connection at all to *Baghdaddy*?**

Absolutely it does. I draw on my background in the military, in secret organizations, and in raising boys when I was often away doing things I couldn't always talk about. I'll take readers to places they haven't seen before in YA, and it will be a wild and surprisingly moving ride.

The first book of the Cypher series is called *Ashur's Tears*. In it, near-future technology collides with magic in a rich world where the government has a lot to hide. An apocalypse-class artifact has been stolen, powerful factions have emerged, and demons are poised to invade the world if a disgraced temple guardian and the three Cypher children can't find their father and stop it.

# BAGHDADDY

HOW SADDAM HUSSEIN TAUGHT ME TO BE A BETTER FATHER

## PRAISE FOR THE BOOK

“In the air force, it’s often said that ‘every airman has a story.’ Bill Riley’s story is extraordinary: raw, candid, searing, insightful, and inspirational. Flashing from a tough childhood to challenging service in our nation’s defense, Bill’s narrative demands close attention but rewards it with nuggets of great value. Riley has painted a compelling picture of what it means to lead-in combat and in fatherhood-and to love.”

—**Lt. Gen. Chris Miller (ret.)**

USAF, Former Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Plans & Programs

“Lt. Col. Bill Riley’s nightmarish childhood would have destroyed most people. It is said that sometimes the finest steel is forged in the hottest fire. This memoir of Riley’s military career is interwoven with thirty years of the most violent clashes our world has ever seen. From firsthand involvement with the brutality of cultures that use their own children as weapons, his writing moves effortlessly to descriptions of overwhelming tenderness and the nobility of the human spirit. Riley gives us a glimpse of the brilliant intelligence warriors who orchestrate our military. I didn’t know they existed, but I am glad to know they are on our side.”

—**Jim Nicholson**

MD, USMC (ret., Korean War), Silver Star and Purple Heart Recipient,  
Author of *George 3-7th Marines*

“*Baghdaddy* is raw, insightful, and a powerful read. The book is vivid in its storytelling — I could almost feel the shrapnel, rocks, stones, and bricks hit my skin as the author detailed accounts of multiple attacks by enemy forces. *Baghdaddy* is a story about love, loss, friendship, invisible enemies, and, at its core, a man who found solace through sharing his story.”

—**Hope Manna**

Writer/Producer

“This was more than a read; it was an experience. Although I did not serve with Lt. Col. Riley, ironically, I did deploy to the places he takes us in this book. Not only are his descriptions of the areas dead on, but I also appreciated his explanations of the cultural challenges, his interpretations of Middle Eastern attitudes, and the ‘rest of the story’-often untold-regarding the history of the goings-on as well as the US military’s involvement.”

—**Tammy Seley Elliott**

Command Chief Master Sergeant, US Air Force (ret.)

The Agency at Brown Books  
Media Contact: Cathy Williams | 972-248-9500  
Cathy.Williams@TheAgencyAtBB.com  
www.TheAgencyAtBB.com



*Baghdaddy*  
Bill Riley | 978-1-61254-292-8 | \$26.95  
POLITICAL SCIENCE / Intelligence & Analysis  
www.BillRileyAuthor.com

# BAGHDADDY

HOW SADDAM HUSSEIN TAUGHT ME TO BE A BETTER FATHER

## EXCERPTS FROM *BAGHDADDY*

### PART I: GROWING PAINS (page 7)

Sometime later, I asked our general why we were going to Iraq. I had firsthand experience with the game Saddam Hussein played with the US and international weapons of mass destruction (WMD) inspectors, and I understood how ruthless he was from my time in Kuwait. I was there when we unleashed an all-out assault on his chemical, biological, and nuclear research, production, and storage facilities. I remember like it was yesterday, preparing for those attacks and working with the Kuwaitis in the aftermath of Saddam's rape of Kuwait during the Gulf War. But there was still a lot about going to Iraq that didn't make sense. Our general was patient with his young captain. We reviewed what facts we knew, and he let me vent for a while before he reminded me of three important things: I was only a small, squeaky wheel in the great machine; our leaders assured us that, despite evidence to the contrary, Riyadh was our friend; and the military existed to uphold democracy, not to practice it.

I understood it to be a serenity prayer.

### PART II: COMING OF AGE (page 106)

While we made stone soup for the additional mouths we had to feed, the Kuwaitis brought in tanks and forward-deployed forces from across Kuwait to defend the base. Before the Gulf War, the Rock was overrun by Saddam's forces. It left a mark on Kuwait's culture, and they moved with a sense of purpose at odds with the glacial speed at which business usually occurred in the Arab world. Notwithstanding the underlying tension, we got a tremendous amount of work done and cleared an eight-month backlog of command and control improvements for the base in just three weeks. Despite the visible pain it caused our Kuwaiti hosts, some meetings were short, and one was even held without tea. It was the only time I can recall hearing a Kuwaiti apologize.

After getting to know each other, I had a great working relationship with most of my Kuwaiti counterparts on base and in Kuwait City. Mostly, they were my friends...We had cultural differences, and not everyone was who, or what, they initially appeared to be. The American drive to "get it done now" in the more leisurely *Insha'Allah* (if God wills it) world of Kuwait caused most of our tension, but with humor and friendship, we were able to overcome more obstacles, one cup of tea at a time.





## PART III: TO BE A MAN (page 213)

I remember every detail of the day he was born.

I raced back from Kuwait to Norman, Oklahoma. If it weren't for the efforts of the leaders at the Rock and the kindness of Major Andy and Mustafa Bin, I would have never made it in time.

Flying halfway around the world gave me time to think, and I was nervous. I didn't know if I could love this long-awaited stranger. I just didn't know.

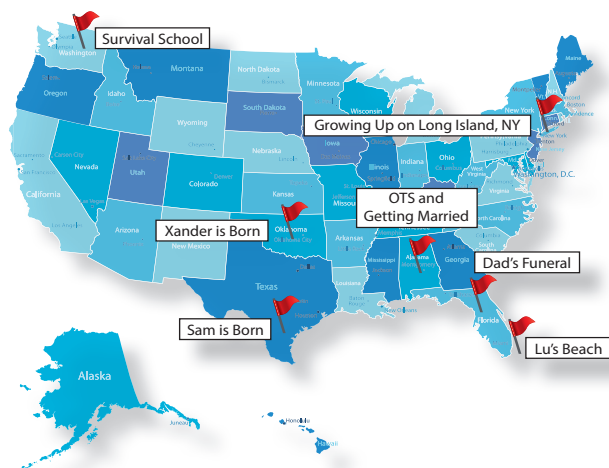
I didn't want to hurt him. I didn't think I would, but I really didn't know. I'd read a lot of books about raising kids and about being a father. What I got out of it was kids are resilient, but there were a few fundamental things I'd have to get right.

I didn't want to be my father.

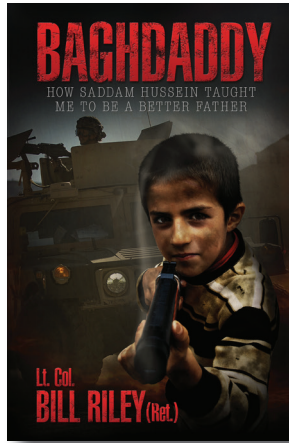
I wanted to be what my father wanted to be but couldn't be when I was a boy.

I wanted to help my son grow up to be smart, with the right tools for a good life. I knew wanting it wasn't enough. But I sincerely wanted it. I thought that might mean something. I could feel that want twist in my stomach and beat in my heart. That had to at least be a good start. I didn't have great examples to draw from, and I knew making it work would be hard.

I didn't see a best-dad-ever mug/T-shirt combo in my future. I'd be happy someday sitting down to dinner with my son and his family and enjoy a pleasant meal. If he were happy and confident and could look me in the eye and say that even the bad parts of growing up really didn't suck that much, I'd take that win. For me, that would be enough. The anxiety reminded me of pole vaulting in school, when I wasn't ever sure of the right height to set the bar, and I had almost no chance to make it over. Where I missed and fell bad for months, all for the one time I got it right, made it over, and the bar stayed up. It was a weird thing to think about.



I'd have to unpack a lot of baggage to be a decent dad.



Title..... *Baghdaddy: How Saddam Hussein Taught Me to Be a Better Father*  
 Author..... Bill Riley  
 ISBN ..... 978-1-61254-292-8  
 Format..... Hardcover  
 Retail Price..... \$26.95  
 Size..... 6 x 9  
 Pages ..... 456  
 Carton Quantity..... 12  
 LCCN..... 2018960370  
 BISAC..... POLITICAL SCIENCE / Intelligence & Analysis; POLITICAL SCIENCE / World / Middle Eastern;  
 BIOGRAPHY & AUTOBIOGRAPHY / General  
 Publication Date..... 05/07/2019  
 Distribution..... Ingram, Baker & Taylor  
 Publisher..... Brown Books Publishing Group  
 Publisher Website..... [www.BrownBooks.com](http://www.BrownBooks.com)  
 Author Website..... [www.BillRileyAuthor.com](http://www.BillRileyAuthor.com)

**SYNOPSIS**

As a child, he was raised in an unstable and violent home by a mother struggling with mental illness. An absent father with a firm belief in tough love left him with only his sister to understand or comfort him as they faced a home full of harshness, resentment, and physical abuse.

As a man, he braved the war-torn landscapes of Kuwait, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. Having learned early from his father that only the strong survive, he enlisted in the Air Force after high school and began an impressive military career in intelligence analysis, communications, and supporting special operations, meeting incredible individuals along the way.

*Baghdaddy* is Bill Riley’s memoir: an honest and colorful depiction of his journey through a turbulent youth and into a challenging adulthood. This very human account of living in some of the least humane environments delivers the message that no matter how different we seem, we are all trying to make the best of life and learn how to be the best versions of ourselves.