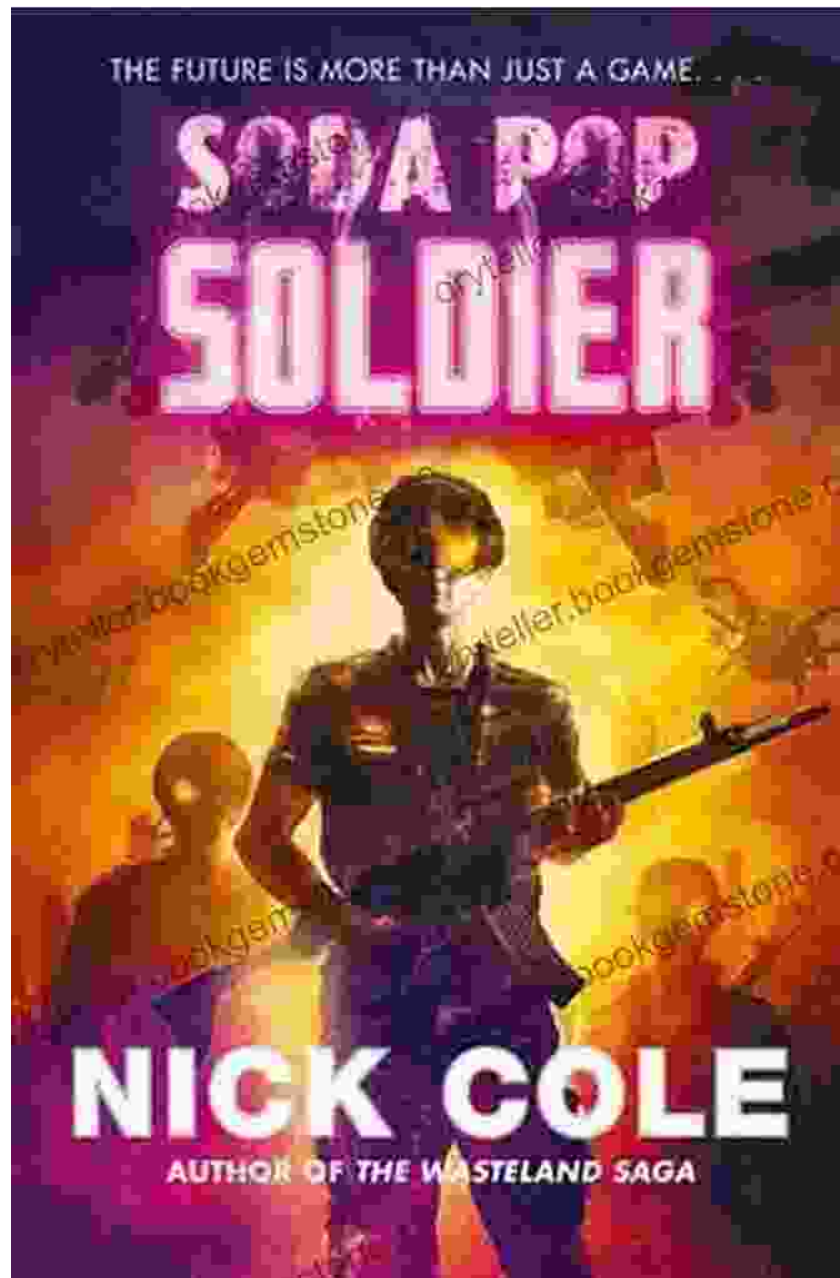


# Soda Pop Soldier: The Extraordinary Tale of Nick Cole and His Unlikely Mission



During the height of World War II, amidst the horrors and sacrifices that defined that tumultuous era, an extraordinary story unfolded that would forever be etched into the annals of military history. The tale of Nick Cole,

the "Soda Pop Soldier," is a testament to the indomitable spirit of a young man who found himself in the unlikeliest of circumstances yet emerged as a symbol of courage, determination, and the unexpected ways in which fate can intervene during times of war.



### **Soda Pop Soldier** by Nick Cole

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

- Language : English
- File size : 4038 KB
- Text-to-Speech : Enabled
- Screen Reader : Supported
- Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
- Word Wise : Enabled
- Print length : 367 pages
- Lending : Enabled



### **Nick Cole's Early Life**

Nicholas James Theodore Cole was born on September 6, 1922, in San Francisco, California. Growing up during the Great Depression, his childhood was marked by both hardship and a deep-seated patriotism that would later shape his destiny. After graduating from high school, Nick enlisted in the United States Army Air Forces in 1942, eager to serve his country like countless others of his generation.

### **Assignment to the South Pacific**

Following basic training, Nick Cole was assigned to the 323rd Fighter Squadron of the 308th Bombardment Group, and in early 1943, his unit was deployed to the South Pacific. As part of the Allied forces fighting against the Japanese in the brutal Guadalcanal campaign, Nick's squadron

flew P-40 Warhawks and P-38 Lightnings, providing air support for ground troops and engaging in aerial combat with enemy aircraft.

## **The Crash and the Discovery**

On August 18, 1943, while on a bombing mission over the island of Bougainville, Nick's P-38 was hit by Japanese anti-aircraft fire and crashed into the dense jungle terrain. Miraculously, Nick survived the impact but found himself stranded, alone, and with limited supplies. Desperation began to set in as he realized the daunting task of finding his way to safety in an unfamiliar and hostile environment.

Days turned into weeks as Nick wandered through the unforgiving jungle, foraging for food and water and desperately searching for signs of civilization. Just when his hope began to dwindle, a glimmer of fortune intervened. One day, while exploring a clearing, Nick stumbled upon a small village inhabited by native tribesmen.

## **Nick's Adoption by the Tribesmen**

To Nick's surprise, the tribesmen welcomed him with open arms, seeing him as a messenger from the gods. They cared for his wounds, provided him with food and shelter, and taught him their language and customs. Nick quickly adapted to his new surroundings, learning to hunt, fish, and perform various tasks that were essential to the survival of the tribe.

Over time, Nick formed deep bonds with the tribesmen, and they in turn grew fond of him. He shared his knowledge of Western culture and technology with them, while they taught him the intricacies of jungle life and the ancient traditions of their people. It was during this time that Nick discovered the tribe's secret stash of soda pop, which had been left behind

by American troops during an earlier mission. The sweet, bubbly beverage became a cherished commodity for Nick, reminding him of home and providing a much-needed morale boost.

## **The Rescue and Return to Civilization**

News of Nick's survival eventually reached the American forces, and in November 1943, a rescue mission was launched to retrieve him. Upon his return, Nick was greeted as a hero and was awarded the Purple Heart and the Air Medal for his bravery and service.

Nick's story inspired the nation during wartime and beyond. He became known as the "Soda Pop Soldier," a symbol of the adaptability, resilience, and camaraderie that prevailed among the troops fighting overseas. After the war, Nick continued to serve his country, working in civil defense and later as a postal worker. He remained active in veterans' organizations and often spoke about his experiences during the war and the importance of peace.

## **Legacy of the Soda Pop Soldier**

Nick Cole passed away on December 30, 2015, at the age of 93. His legacy lives on as a reminder of the extraordinary spirit that can emerge from adversity and the unexpected ways in which fate can shape the course of human events. The story of the Soda Pop Soldier continues to inspire generations, teaching us the value of perseverance, the power of human connection, and the indomitable spirit that resides within us all.

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