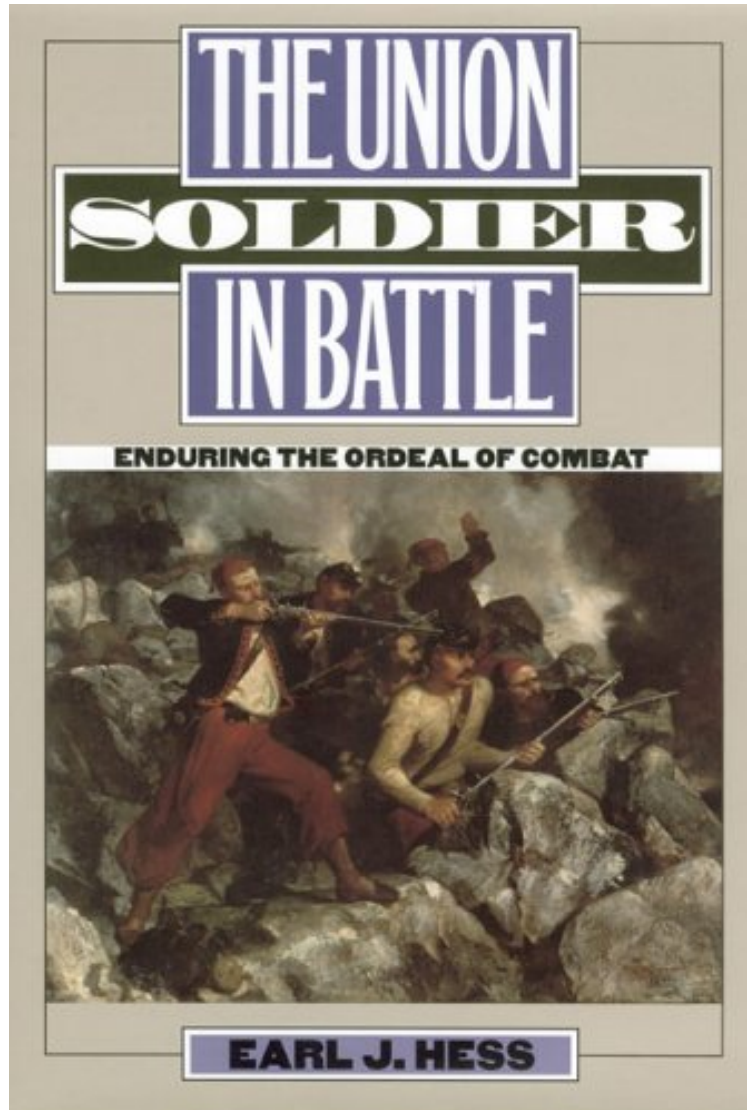


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The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat

Earl J. Hess

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#1063633 in Books University Press of Kansas 1997-04-02 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.08 x .58 x 6.101, .83 #File Name: 0700614214244 pages | File size: 19.Mb

Earl J. Hess : The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. "the horrors of war more than counterbalance the glory" By Kerry Walters So writes Pennsylvanian Jacob Heffelfinger after his first battle in the Civil War. Heffelfinger is one of the dozens of veterans whose letters and memoirs Hess examined to write this study of the Union soldier under fire. His chapters examine the visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile experience of battle; strategies for coping with battle-fear

before, during, and after the shooting; and the ways in which combat veterans in the Civil War remembered their experiences (this, in the final chapter, may be the book's single most important contribution). Unhappily, the book is fundamentally flawed by Hess' strange claim that the Civil War veteran was a victor over his dreadful experiences rather than a victim, and so he seems to appreciate neither the poignancy of the firsthand accounts he cites or the horrific post-war psychological and physical damage endured by the veterans. A book published the same year Hess's appeared, Eric T. Dean's *Shook Over Hell: Post-Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War*, is a more sensitive study, as is Gerald Linderman's *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (1987), a deservedly classic treatment with which Hess explicitly disagrees. In short, Hess deserves our gratitude for the wealth of firsthand testimony he cites. But his analysis of its significance falls short.

0 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Three Stars
By Walter W. Teske
Not quite what I expected
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An excellent account of the how the Union soldier viewed the ...
By michael N.
An excellent account of the how the Union soldier viewed the war as it was happening. Hess's writing is clear, concise and very informative. An excellent companion to the book *Marching Home* by Brian Jordan. Read this one first.

I saw enough to sicken the heart. . . . The scenes which I witnessed were enough to overthrow all imaginations concerning the glory of war; but, dreadful as they were, I hope and believe that I would be willing to suffer the worst, . . . rather than prove a traitor to the trust which our country reposes in all her sons.
J. Spangler Kieffer, Pennsylvania Militia
With its relentless bloodshed, devastating firepower, and large-scale battles often fought on impossible terrain, the Civil War was a terrifying experience for a volunteer army. Yet, as Earl Hess shows, Union soldiers found the wherewithal to endure such terrors for four long years and emerge victorious. A vivid reminder that the business of war is killing, Hess's study plunges us into the hellish realms of Civil War combat—a horrific experience crowded with brutalizing sights, sounds, smells, and textures. We share the terror of being shot at for the first time and hear the "grating sound a minie ball makes when it hits a bone instead of the heavy thud when it strikes flesh." We are assaulted by choruses of groans from the wounded and dying and come to understand why some soldiers returned to battle with great dread. Drawing extensively upon the letters, diaries, and memoirs of Northern soldiers, Hess reveals their deepest fears and shocks, and also their sources of inner strength. By identifying recurrent themes found in these accounts, Hess constructs a multilayered view of the many ways in which these men coped with the challenges of battle. He shows how they were bolstered by belief in God and country, or simply by their sense of duty; how they came to rely on the support of their comrades; and how they learned to muster self-control in order to persevere from one battle to the next. Although our ability to appreciate war as it was conducted in the previous century has been clouded by our familiarity with modern conflicts, Hess's study conveys that reality with an immediacy rarely matched by other books. Even more, it urges us to reconsider these soldiers not as victims of the battlefield but rather as victors over the worst that war can inflict.

From *Library Journal*
The fall of Fort Sumter caught the Union Army unaware. It was a small army whose officers, even the West Pointers, were ill prepared to mold a huge fighting force from a volunteer civilian population. Often, the soldiers didn't even see the rebel force they were fighting, firing into a bank of black smoke in the direction of the firing against them. Hess (history, Lincoln Memorial Univ.) paints a vivid picture here of a Union soldier's life before, during, and after the Civil War, detailing how soldiers coped with war, dealt with the losses of friends and family, and remembered the war in their memoirs. Though blessed with modern weapons such as the rifled musket, they were cursed with tactics and strategies better suited to the American Revolution. Also enduring medieval notions of medicine, Union soldiers suffered huge casualties. A riveting, well-documented history; recommended for academic libraries and most public libraries with Civil War collections.
?Grant A. Fredericksen, Illinois Prairie Dist. P.L., Metamora
Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. "The most telling examination of the experience of battle we have. It must be taken into account by all who would write or understand Civil War military history."
William C. Davis, author of *The Cause Lost: Myths and Realities of the Confederacy* and former editor of *Civil War Times Illustrated* "This book stands out as the best yet written within the genre. While it is a truism often repeated by the veterans that no one could grasp the shock and horror of battle unless he had been there, Hess takes us as close as we're likely to get without actually experiencing that dangerous event."
Steven E. Woodworth, author of *Davis and Lee at War* "An important contribution to our understanding of the Union soldier's experiences on the battlefield. Hess describes the horrors of combat graphically and demonstrates clearly how the common soldier learned to cope, both during the war and afterwards. His analysis is on target, and so is his prose. This is a book that deserves a wide reading."
John F. Marszalek, author of *Sherman: A Soldier's Passion for Order* "This is a fine book. Particularly valid is Hess's analysis of the nature of battle, with a graphic and very convincing presentation of the chaos occasioned by thick vegetation, blinding gunsmoke, and linear tactical formations."
Wiley Sword, author of *The Confederacy's Last Hurrah* "A strong contribution to current debates about the place of ideology in the range of motivating factors. Anyone interested in why and how Northern men fought will want to read this book."
Gary W. Gallagher, editor of *The Third Day at Gettysburg* and *Beyond*
From the Back Cover
With its relentless bloodshed, devastating firepower, and

large-scale battles often fought on impossible terrain, the Civil War was a terrifying experience for a volunteer army. Yet, as Earl Hess shows, Union soldiers found the wherewithal to endure such terrors for four long years and emerge victorious. A vivid reminder that the business of war is killing, Hess's study plunges us into the hellish realms of Civil War combat - a horrific experience crowded with brutalizing sights, sounds, smells, and textures. Drawing extensively upon the letters, diaries, and memoirs of Northern soldiers, Hess reveals their deepest fears and shocks, and also their sources of inner strength. By identifying recurrent themes found in these accounts, Hess constructs a multilayered view of the many ways in which these men coped with the challenges of battle. He shows how they were bolstered by belief in God and country, or simply by their sense of duty; and how they came to rely on the support of their comrades; and how they learned to muster self-control in order to persevere from one battle to the next.