



## The Hogs of Cold Harbor: The Civil War Saga of Pvt. Johnny Hess, CSA: Based on the actual war diary of Confederate Private Soldier John H. Hess, CSA, ... Division, Longstreet's Corps, 1862-1864

By Richard Lee Fulgham

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Gory, terrifying, historically accurate, impeccably detailed, and absolutely true account of Rebel soldier's experience during America's Civil War. He survives thirteen battles in four major campaigns under Generals George Pickett and William Longstreet. Yet, our soldier's worst fear is not of being shot but of the smart, ruthless wild hogs stalking both armies. He can see them on the mountains, in the thickets, at the edge of the woods, waiting patiently to eat the faces of the dead and wounded after darkness has covered the battlefields. Hess' actual diary is included as an appendix, along with a complete bibliography. ENDORSED BY NORMAN MAILER (author of "The Naked and the Dead"): This book is a discovery. It gave me so close a sense of what it was like to be a Confederate soldier in the Civil War that I began to think of my own army experience. Old fears, old excitements, even memories of my old equipment, and with it all, vivid as the sound of gunfire, came the smell of battle in the air of the book. I loved reading "The Hogs of Cold Harbor". I was in the Civil War on the Southern side. That is no small education for a Northerner like me." -- Norman Mailer

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**By Richard Lee Fulgham Bibliography**

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## **Editorial Review**

Review

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From the Author

*By Richard Lee Fulgham*

*Format: Paperback/Amazon Verified Purchase*

*The Most Insightful Review Yet - A Serious Addition to American Literature, April 17, 2006*

*This review applies to: The Hogs of Cold Harbor: The Civil War Saga of Private Johnny Hess, CSA (Kindle Ebook version, Paperback, Hardback)*

[...]

This is an exceptional work of emotional catharsis.

Without a doubt, the Civil War has come to represent a deeply divisive aspect in American historical thinking, assuming collective proportions and seemingly symbolizing some sort of moral or ethical bifurcation in the national psyche. Over 600,000 American men died during the Civil War, a quarter of all white Southern men of military age had been killed or maimed and - in the pitiless words of the economist - "the state of Mississippi had to spend twenty per cent of its revenue on the purchase of artificial limbs for Confederate veterans."

Richard, in his transcription of a Confederate private's war diary, advances with a bucolic attention to detail and a spirit of pastoral scholarship rare in a writer of history. The Hogs of Cold Harbor is a model of exploratory and meticulous investigative procedure. It is vibrant with detail - be it domestic, culinary, sartorial, anatomical, agricultural, botanical, carnal or otherwise. The amount of minutiae, particulars, specifics and 'trivia' derived from the conventions of the age, is extraordinary and sometimes totally hilarious. And it all seems to spring naturally from the narrative rather than consisting of contrived or superimposed impedimenta. Indeed, his contemporary account of Russell County's Hog Killing Day adds a great deal of indigenous, local information to what may have seemed an elapsed folkloristic tradition, even if it is presented in his unrelenting, sometimes stomach-churning vivisection.

There is absolutely no attempt to sanitize indigenous tradition in order to make it more palatable to twenty-first-century sensibilities, and I defy anyone to experience Richard's indefatigable capacity for painstaking adherence to intense and sometimes gruesome detail without feeling queasy. Nor does he shy away from the South's political blindness about the Federal Union or its own unthinking endorsement of the sanguine nonsense of ultimate military victory. The reality of it was, in fact, that the Confederacy had only two million men of military age against the North's seven million, and that is not taking into account the hundreds of thousands of Negroes in the North who might well be allowed to serve. The other advantage the North

possessed was the extent of its industrial capacity. Private Johnny Hess makes no attempt to hide his distaste for the disingenuous "holier-than-thou" Unionists, or deprive his age of the testimony he gives of the "Godless Yankees".

It is acceptable, no doubt, to disagree with the Private, though I fully endorse the gist of Richard's Fulgham's own reservation about the North's excessive self-righteousness. Nor does he allow individual sentiments to obscure historical facts, but simply to illustrate the narrative. The South's uncomfortable legacy is a part of the general malaise of America's past, as were government policies against the Native Americans, who were placed on reservations and taught white ways, or the enduring extremes of racial segregation and subsequent international "imperialisation" of the Globe. Nevertheless, this long, bloody and intimately narrated chronicle does what one expects history to accomplish: tell a tale of long ago that throws a prickly and uncomfortable light on an immutable truism of history: That the struggle to survive creates monsters!

Frankly, if the educational authorities ever considered a cure for the fallacy that being Southern means being reactionary they could do a lot worse than go for the honest approach and make this book recommended reading in all American schools.

Richard Fulgham's homage to the hogs, however, comes in other ways: "The hogs were smart in an all-too-human way..." And there, in an unholy juxtaposition, lies the author's central challenge: how to convey the inherent swinishness of man? His solution, indeed, is imaginative and ingenious, even if it is exceedingly predatory. But then again, it is incontrovertibly inherent in the nature of the beast - indeed reverting to it. Man-eats-Hog! Hog-eats-Man! It sounds improbable but, trust me, it works. The overlapping destiny of these hordes of swine and men scavenging for victuals on battlefields inundated by the tidal wave of death, are eerily recorded. Given the entirely unreasonable circumstances, "Human warfare was just God's way of slopping the hogs."

Private John Henry Hess epitomizes America's bucolic youth, emphasizing rugged patriotism and pioneering self-reliance. Richard's touching vignettes about Johnny Hess' life with his young daughter and her blemished but loving mother suggests the unexplored tenderness of someone who can rewardingly illuminate the beauty of the human face with a redeeming love for its imperfections. The book might have profited had he kept some of its bathos off its pages but, on a much more elevated scale, there are moments of penetrating poetry. The liberating fluidity of the transformation of a "hand-sized, blood-red stain covering the left side of her face" into "a beauty made that much more awesome because it was so terribly flawed," leaves one with the certainty that the author's second vocation may well lie in writing about the more redemptive qualities of the human beast.

But this cathartic, educational and scrupulously researched "nonfiction novel" is, nevertheless, the result.

From the Back Cover  
Product DescriptionEdit

The wild hogs of Virginia are vicious. They attack, kill and devour. They show no mercy and eat their victims alive. The wild hogs are smart. They strategize with their enemies. They are worthy adversaries. But the wild hogs have honor. They will not hurt or destroy their own.

In the minds of some, this last, simple fact raises the wild hogs of Virginia to an ethical level far above that of Man. A hog will not kill its own. But Man will and has.

The Civil War brought man against man, family against family, and brother against brother. Some fought for their God, others for freedom and liberty, still others to protect their homes and loved ones. Young men

fought for the pride of their land and country and heritage.

But in the battlefields, looking upon the mountains of dead and wounded, seeing the enemy's face and recognizing it as your own, a man begins to question the true meaning of honor. As the wild pigs feast upon the slaughtered masses of men, yet show compassion and solitude with their own kind, field soldiers may begin to look deep into their souls at their own morality and purpose.

John Henry Hess joined the confederate army with his heart filled with pride. He would fight for his country, for his wife and unborn child, and for the right of the Lord to rule over His great land. There was not a Rebel more proud than Johnny Hess was.

But in those dark fields, young Johnny Hess came to realize that there were stunning similarities between Man and Animal. The body of a man, blown apart by gunfire, is almost identical to that of a hog. There was little difference between the yearly slaughter of the farm hogs and the slaughter of men on the battlefield. Except that a hog would not kill its own, as he had done.

The Hogs of Cold Harbor implores readers to question our history as well as themselves. Author and historian Richard Lee Fulgham, M.A. crafted this haunting tale of the good and evil that dwells within us all based on the diaries of Southwest Virginian John Henry Hess, Pvt., CSA (Company G, 29th Virginia Infantry Regiment, Pickett's Division, Longstreet's Corps, 1862-1864). Is Man truly no better than the animals he commands and destroys? The Hogs of Cold Harbor is a powerful, haunting story in which Richard Lee Fulgham delves deep into the timeless questions of our existence. Are we Man? Are we Animal? And what is the difference?

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Karole Standley:**

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