



Grunts: Inside the American Infantry Combat Experience, World War II Through Iraq

John C. McManus

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A sweeping narrative of six decades of combat, and an eye-opening account of the evolution of the American infantry.

From the beaches of Normandy and the South Pacific Islands to the deserts of the Middle East, the American soldier has been the most indispensable- and most overlooked-factor in wartime victory. In *Grunts*, renowned historian John C. McManus covers six decades of warfare, examining ten critical battles-from the Battle of the Bulge to counterinsurgency combat in Iraq-where the skills and courage of American troops proved the crucial difference between victory and defeat.

Based on years of research and interviews with veterans, this powerful history reveals the ugly face of war in a way few books have, and demonstrates the fundamental, and too often forgotten, importance of the human element in serving and protecting the nation.

Grunts: Inside the American Infantry Combat Experience, World War II Through Iraq Details

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Christopher says

A well written and researched account of infantry actions, but fails to meet its billing. Not on par with *The Face of Battle*, the author never seems to describe how the events support this thesis that close combat is immutable. While weak in this area, the book provides great detail of several small unit actions that are worth a look. An easy read but a pure history.

Dio Aufa Handoyo says

World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Iraq. This book presents the fact that throughout history, despite technological advances, the presence of infantry has always been irreplaceable in conflicts. A good read to balance the perception of how air and naval power alone can solely meet strategic warfare goals.

David says

A scholarly, but very readable, advocacy for the continuing utility of the rifleman in an era of exotic warfare technology. *Grunts* present case histories from World War II through the current Middle Eastern conflicts to bolster this premise.

McManus, a respected military historian, really did his homework on this tome and it shows. His writing chops are nothing to sneeze at, either.

Angela says

A retrospective anthology on the American infantry combat experience. I was principally interested in the Vietnam period; it is well laid out to research specific conflicts, and well-told.

Kristen says

In *Grunts: Inside the American Infantry Combat Experience, World War II Through Iraq*, military historian John McManus argues that no matter how technologically advanced the United States military becomes, no weapon or force is more important to success on the battlefield than the American combat infantryman. To prove his point, McManus takes his readers on a journey through American military history from the amphibious assaults on Guam in 1944 to pre-surge counterinsurgency operations in Iraq circa 2005. Though the author's narrative-style writing brings the action to life for readers, there is a consistent hole in the book: he rarely shows how the battle reinforces his argument until the very last chapter on Operation Iraqi Freedom counterinsurgency. For some readers, it may be considered annoying to not bring back the thesis into the

narrative; but for others, like me, I think it was purposefully pushed to the side to let the readers see how the military has grown to see the importance of the combat infantryman in warfare, especially when they are thrown into Iraq to fight insurgents among a skeptical populace. Overall, *Grunt* was a fantastic book on the common soldier's experience in warfare. I would highly recommend this to any military history buff.

Rob says

Long book. Fascinating first hand accounts of battles throughout recent history. The Iraq stuff really blew my mind. Obviously we all followed on the news, but I get the feeling the real experience hasn't been documented at all yet.

Aaron says

Outstanding narratives of US Infantry battles from WWII through Iraq (omitting Korean War as too similar to WWII and pretty much forgetting that Afghanistan exists). The author has chosen his battles well, frequently selecting battles that are Pyrrhic victories or tactical victories but strategic defeats. I would agree with this choice from the standpoint that you can often learn more from failure than from success. I was pleased to see the story of Fallujah and 3rd Battalion 1st Marines told here because on its next trip to Iraq after Fallujah I was dropped to 3/1 from 1st Battalion 4th Marines with 2 deployments under my belt and just time enough left in my enlistment for a third. They were good guys and you could tell it'd been tough on them.

He did choose to end his book with one of the most reprehensible metaphors of modern times in which human beings are categorized as sheep or wolves, or as sheepdogs protecting the flock from the wolves. First off that's an inadequate way to categorize men (and women now too) that, whether draftees or volunteers, stepped up to fight. Secondly, as a Veteran of Wars that have been used by government to justify further curtailing of the freedoms we were supposedly defending and now as a happy Civilian I resent being called a Sheep and am far more unnerved by those that label themselves Sheepdogs than I am by the would-be Wolves out there.

Personal Note: finished this book in the Columbus, OH airport waiting for a flight home.

Maria says

McManus argues that it is boots on the ground that wins wars, not fancy weapons systems alone. Despite predictions for the last 60 years, it is the infantry men that have made the US military great. McManus walks the reader thru 7 battles from WWII to Iraq and explains what it was like to be there and what was necessary to win.

Why I started this book: I've been eye-balling this book for over a year. It looked fascinating (and it was!) but it was also big.

Why I finished it: It took me a while to read this book, partly due to size and partly due to the fact that a soldier actually needed it for a school project when I was in the middle of it and it checked it out to her. It

was an interesting perspective on how war has changed and how it hasn't.

Chris Chester says

A really great read, depending on why you decide to dig into it.

If you're looking for an enthralling perspective into the hairiest, most gritty infantry conflicts waged during the twentieth century, you're going to enjoy yourself quite a bit.

The evangelizing for the role of infantry in modern combat I feel more mixed about. McManus makes a pretty strong case that the American military machine places too great an emphasis on impersonal weapons systems in the naive belief that we can win wars without putting boots on the ground.

I buy that.

But I don't think his examples all totally support that. Sure, Aachen probably couldn't have been won without infantry going building to building... nor could Fallujah. But is the question really the proportion of forces we should be throwing into these conflicts, or is it a question of whether we should even be there?

From Peleliu to Baghdad with Vietnam in between, all I could think about is why we shouldn't have been in these conflicts to begin with. I mean, if we REALLY need to be in a conflict, I agree that boots on the ground is the way to win it.

But the American reticence towards committing ground forces may stem less from stupidity and more from a totally justified allergy to prolonged conflicts in which the costs vast exceed the benefits.

Spencer says

Excellent perspective and analysis. Gruesome and descriptive battle descriptions. He is now one of my favorite authors...will definitely be reading his other works in the near future. I LOVE how he calls out bullshit, in all its various forms haha.
