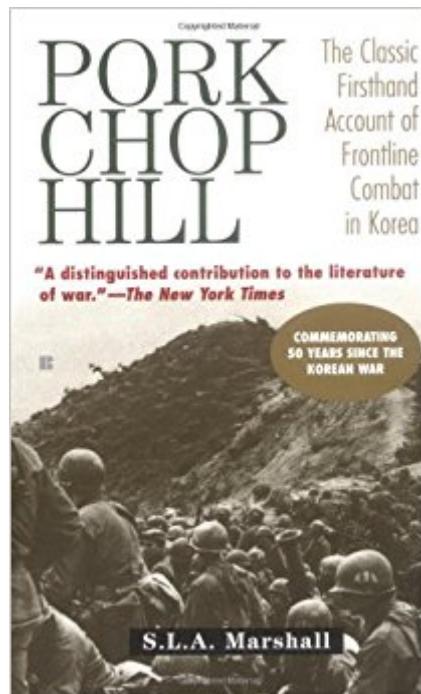


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Pork Chop Hill



Synopsis

A first-hand account of the battle which became legendary in the annals of combat--a dramatic true story of war at its most brutal...and of military valor at its best."A distinguished contribution to the literature of war."--The New York Times

Book Information

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Military > Korean War > Campaigns

Customer Reviews

An original perspective written by a participant who fought on Pork Chop Hill during the Korean War. This book is a blow-by-blow, minute-by-minute account of the battle. Book is a hard to find because it was published in 1956.

This is a wonderful account of the events that occurred at Pork Chop Hill in April 1953 in Korea. The historian Marshall has chronicled the actions of many officers and men who were involved in that battle, that for all its significance, went virtually unreported by the UN press who were covering prisoner exchange in Panmunjom.

I am a Vietnam War Veteran and I enjoy reading about the battles from other wars. It is a good book and the service to acquire it was also helpful.

What meat grinder Korea was.

Pork Chop Hill is the epic story of a small unit battle during the Korean War. Much more than a "war story" it provided a blue print for Communist tactics that would

be seen again in Vietnam. Lesson learned there included: The Communists were masters of building field fortifications that were camouflaged so well they could not be seen. They were often dug into hillsides making them impervious to Allied air and artillery. The Communists were not hesitant to sacrifice large numbers of troops to attain their objective. The Communists were masters of the night attack by infiltration. Often the first sign of the enemy was when grenades came over the wall. Inexperienced troops were often led by inexperienced leaders thanks to the rotation system that destroyed unit cohesion. Conversely, the "red" had no rotation system and learned how to fight through experience. These lessons were largely ignored in Vietnam leading to the horrendous casualty figures seen there. Add the effects of rugged terrain, bad weather, miscommunications, fear, fatigue etc. collectively called, "the fog of war," you had a recipe for disaster. Only the courage and initiative of individual soldiers and leaders saved the day in many instances. The same would occur in Vietnam! Some call Pork Chop Hill a forgotten battle in a forgotten war. It should not be. The lessons learned there are timeless. They are as applicable today as they were then. Pork Chop Hill should be read and reread by anyone leading troops into combat because reinventing the wheel is not only inefficient, in war, it is deadly. A great read! Five stars!!

I'm giving three stars because I'm a stingy bastard who wanted to like this true account of god-awful combat in Korea more than I did. Partly I'm influenced by Marshall's diminished reputation as a first-hand investigator. For details, read some of the reviews of the book that made him famous, "Men Against Fire." In short, Col. David Hackworth and others have cast serious doubt on how much "interviewing" of GIs he really did in World War II. But there's no doubt that "Pork Chop Hill" is the real deal. Of course, nobody can reconstruct, with near-perfect accuracy and in exactly the right order, even the most important things that 145 American riflemen did and said in a battle that left the 12 survivors exhausted and barely able to walk (I'm thinking of the chapter "All of King's Men," which provided the framework for the excellent 1959 movie). Marshall, however, gives an absolutely believable account of U.N. operations on and near the hill in April, 1953. Nobody has ever impugned the validity of this book. A bigger reason for only three stars is that by today's standards, "Pork Chop Hill" is a little dry and in places a little hard to follow. The maps are not quite as helpful as they should be. And the people are mainly names. Marshall doesn't glorify battle, but he doesn't make it come fully alive either. I'm also disappointed that he barely mentions the irony of two sides fighting almost to the last man for a position everybody agrees has no military value whatsoever. If you want to see how combat writing has changed in the past half century, compare "Pork Chop Hill" with

Sebastian Junger's recent, dumbly-titled "War," about an Army unit in Afghanistan. Now that's a five-star book! And the biggest difference is the immediacy and style. Three stars isn't bad, by the way.

This is a really good book because it not only contains lots of great action with blood, guts and gore but the author also gives analyses of why things went right and why things went wrong. Its kind of confusing to track the topology from the sketches (there are no maps or diagrams) but if the reader puts that aside and follows the individual vignettes of the failures and successes of the soldiers and officers it is a very enjoyable read. This reader is in awe of the bravery and toughness of the heroes depicted in this book.

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