



Pershing's Crusaders: The American Soldier in World War I
By Richard S. Faulkner
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As you might expect, the recent 100th anniversary of the start of World War I has spurred the release of many books tied to the war. Some of these are commemorative in nature while others strive to add to the body of knowledge. However, I believe none will be more important to our understanding of the U.S. Soldier during WWI than Richard Faulkner's *Pershing's Crusaders*. It is unquestionably a book which will be of huge benefit and appeal for years to come.

Within *Pershing's Crusaders'* pages, Faulkner focuses solely on the doughboy. The author addresses this focus in his initial chapter with readers. He states, "This book attempts to be a 'travel guide' to the Soldiers' experience as well as an 'anthropological' study of their world and their world views." They combine to produce a volume which clearly highlights what it meant to serve as a doughboy in the Great War. Let me address each of these below.

As a "travel guide," Faulkner takes readers through a doughboy's entire World War I experience. He systematically and seamlessly moves through a doughboy's induction into the Army through the end of the war and the demobilization process. In between, he discusses Soldiers' training in the United States and abroad, their deployment overseas, and obviously, their combat experience. There are very few aspects of a doughboy's day-to-day life that Faulkner does not explore.

As outstanding as the travel-guide treatment is, I found the author's anthropological study superior. Faulkner delves into the human dimension of the doughboy as well as any historian I have read. Within this discussion, he superbly analyzes many facets of this human dimension. These facets include a doughboy's motivations, his feelings toward the Army, his allies, the enemy he is fighting, and most importantly, his fellow doughboys. He also addresses a doughboy's thoughts and emotions on combat. Faulkner's ability to articulate this in written words is impressive since this is a significant challenge for any author.

I believe there are three key factors which make *Pershing's Crusaders* such a superb book. First is the exhaustive research Faulkner has conducted in the development of the volume. You just don't put together a book of this magnitude and subject matter without extensive research. For the author, that meant "...squirreling away soldier accounts, documents, and records" for more than 20 years. It is supplemented with unit histories and unpublished manuscripts. This research is clearly on full display within the pages of *Pershing's Crusaders*.

The second factor in the volume's success is the outstanding readability. At first glance, you could be deterred from reading this because of its sheer size (well over 700 pages); however, these pages turn very quickly. Faulkner writes in a very conversant style, and his words also exhibit the passion he has for his subject matter. This conversational writing style and passion combine to engage a reader from the book's beginning until its end.

Finally, Faulkner has inserted numerous photos throughout the volume. These pictures are from his own collection, which as mentioned earlier, he has collected over the course of two decades. What makes them even more beneficial is his decision to craft a detailed caption underneath each. Faulkner's photographs are very valuable in telling the story of the doughboy.

In summary, other wars each possess that seminal work which provides readers with a true understanding of the Soldier who fought in that particular conflict. However, WWI did not have that volume until now. Faulkner has filled that critical void with *Pershing's Crusaders*. It provides readers with an appreciation and knowledge of the doughboy unlike any other book published in the past. It is a special book which is a valuable addition to the scholarship of the Great War.