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The Confederacy's Greatest Cavalryman: Nathan Bedford Forrest (Modern War Studies) (Modern War Studies (Paperback))



Synopsis

This is the best biography of one of the most exciting, colorful, and controversial figures of the Civil War. A renowned cavalryman, Nathan Bedford Forrest perfected a ruthless hit-and-run guerrilla warfare that terrified Union soldiers and garnered the respect of warriors like William Sherman, who described his adversary as "that Devil, Forrest . . . the most remarkable man our Civil War produced on either side." Historian Bruce Catton rated Forrest "one of the authentic military geniuses of the whole war," but Brian Steel Wills covers much more than the cavalryman's incredible feats on the field of battle. He also provides the most thoughtful and complete analysis of Forrest's hardscrabble childhood in backwater Mississippi; his rise to wealth in the Memphis slave trade; his role in the infamous Fort Pillow massacre of black Union soldiers; his role as early leader and Grand Wizard of the first Ku Klux Klan; and his declining health and premature death in a reconstructing America.

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Customer Reviews

What I like about Wills book, besides the bio, is that it addresses why Forrest was often not in the main theater of operations during the crucial times of 1864. Forrest is well defined as a frontier planter whose strong belief in honor combined with an explosive action oriented temperament made him a ferocious opponent yet he was difficult as a subordinate except under the right conditions. In the case of the latter, Forrest literally offers to slap Braxton Bragg for his lack of action after Chickamauga and only fails to do so because in his estimation, Bragg was not a man thus not

worthy of the challenge. Wills does an excellent compact bio of Forrest capturing the early life and his rise to success as a slave trader and planter to a private in the Confederate service to the immediate promotion of Colonel and on. All the daring raids are captured, aided by maps but aside from Shiloh and Chickamauga, the only truly large operation Forrest was involved with was Hood's march to Nashville where the inexplicable Spring Hill disaster is laid at Forrest's feet unfairly when Hood had responsibility of creating a sufficient force to stop Schofield's escape. The tremendous work ethic combined with his fearlessness and temper is described throughout the book including Forrest's post war life and business. Forrest does amazingly well defending his Mississippi, Tennessee and Alabama sector with a relative small force culminating in his great victory at Brices Crossroads. Wills includes Forrest's post war career with an example of Forrest's feared temper by describing a railroad meeting where one of Forrest's engineers starts the discussion with a loaded pistol on the table in case the company President, Forrest, intended a violent interruption.

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