

An Interruption That Lasted a Lifetime: My First Eighty Years

E. Bruce Heilman

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Dr. Heilman opens his memoirs with a quote from Benjamin Franklin: "If you would not be forgotten as soon as you are dead and rotten either write things worth the reading or do things worth the writing." These words are tough to live up to but Dr. E. Bruce Heilman does his best to relate his life and times with passion and vigor and the result is a truly memorable biography of a man worth remembering.

Although Heilman is a decorated former Marine who served in World War II he claims that more people know him from his dedicated service and commitment to higher education. As a college president at the University of Richmond Heilman was a champion of several foundations and associations aimed at protecting the honor and passion of the Marine Corps and higher education in the United States. It is this work according to Heilman that has etched his legacy and forms the body of his memoirs.

The author began his life as the son of a tenant farmer in rural Kentucky. In 1926 only six percent of children graduated from high school and Heilman didn't receive an early education. Perhaps this is the reason behind his devotion to education in later life. With the onset of World War II Heilman enlisted in the Marine Corps and subsequently discovered his life's calling.

Heilman writes of his experiences during the war with tremendous passion and intensity never failing to properly capture the memory in a way that allows readers to firmly understand what it was like to be on the battleground. Complete with vivid photographs that add to the atmosphere and bleak reality presented in the book Heilman displays his knack for learning by gathering information that adds to the reading experience. In one of the more charming aspects of the book Heilman includes excerpts from love letters and Dear John letters he received while serving overseas.

Ultimately Heilman writes with earnestness and offers a few laughs along the way. His life and times are a testament to what hard work can accomplish. Though he is a largely unknown figure in contemporary American society Heilman is a hero whose story deserves to be heard. His biography is a romantic and uplifting tale of survival and commitment.

LIAM BRENNAN (January 22, 2009)

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