



Year of Glory: The Life and Battles of Jeb Stuart and His Cavalry, June 1862-June 1863

Monte Akers

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No commander during the Civil War is more closely identified with the “cavalier mystique” as Major General J.E.B. (Jeb) Stuart. And none played a more prominent role during the brief period when the hopes of the nascent Confederacy were at their apex, when it appeared as though the Army of Northern Virginia could not be restrained from establishing Southern nationhood.

Jeb Stuart was not only successful in leading Robert E. Lee’s cavalry in dozens of campaigns and raids, but for riding magnificent horses, dressing outlandishly, and participating in balls and parties that epitomized the “moonlight and magnolia” image of the Old South. Longstreet reported that at the height of the Battle of Second Manasses, Stuart rode off singing, “If you want to have good time, jine the cavalry . . .” Porter Alexander remembered him singing, in the midst of the miraculous victory at Chancellorsville, “Old Joe Hooker, won’t you come out of the Wilderness?”

Stuart was blessed with an unusually positive personality?always upbeat, charming, boisterous, and humorous, remembered as the only man who could make Stonewall Jackson laugh, reciting poetry when not engaged in battle, and yet never using alcohol or other stimulants. Year of Glory focuses on the twelve months in which Stuart’s reputation was made, following his career on an almost day-to-day basis from June 1862, when Lee took command of the army, to June 1863, when Stuart turned north to regain a glory slightly tarnished at Brandy Station, but found Gettysburg instead.

It is told through the eyes of the men who rode with him, as well as Jeb’s letters, reports, and anecdotes handed down over 150 years. It was a year like no other, filled with exhilaration at the imminent creation of a new country. This was a period when it could hardly be imagined that the cause, and Stuart himself, could dissolve into grief, Jeb ultimately separated from the people he cherished most.

REVIEWS

"Akers covers the period from the late spring of 1862 through the opening movements of the Gettysburg Campaign. . . . He covers, almost on a daily basis, Stuart’s movements, his battles, his relationships with his subordinates and men, his letters to his wife Flora, and his perception from his soldiers and the press. Akers' writing style is crisp and his narrative flows well."

?Scott Mingus, in "Cannonball"

“...a great addition to your Civil War library. This detailed and colorful study follows Stuart from June 1862 to June 1863 when his rising star paralleled that of the Confederacy....one of those rare books not only worth reading but rereading.”

North South Traders Civil War

“reads well, with a fast paced narrative of events....useful illustrations including a section of handsome color photographs.”

America’s Civil War

“...recounts the year from June 1862 to June 1863, during which Stuart reached his highest popularity. The story is told in sharp detail, and excellent anecdotes spice the already vigorous writing, which rushes forward with breakneck speed to the inevitable conclusion of hubris before the battle of Gettysburg. Even if you are not a history buff, this book will rivet your attention as it highlights this fascinating icon of the Civil War.”
City Book Review

Akers's animated writing style places the reader within Jeb Stuart's inner circle as they gather around the campfire singing a popular melody or conferring over future combat operations. For the student of Civil War history, this work provides a deeper understanding of one of the most intriguing leaders and characters of the war...a great addition to any Civil War Collection."

MILITARY REVIEW

Akers does have an exciting story to tell, and he tells it in a clear, colloquial style. The narrative begins with Stuart's famously risky 'ride around McClellan' just before the Seven Days' battles. The story moves quickly from one major battle to another: Second Manassas, Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville. At this last battle Stuart reached his apogee, as he was called on take over the Second Corps after the wounding of the renowned Thomas J. 'Stonewall' Jackson. . . . For those who wish to see the Confederacy as the 'land of Cavaliers,' Akers is your guide, with Jeb Stuart as his beau ideal." ?The Journal of Southern History

This is the year that JEB Stuart and his cavalry rode circles around the Army of the Potomac and basically made the Union commanders look like a bunch of dummies. They also made a lot of raids on Union supply trains and depots areas. The Confederate cavalry reined supreme that year.

Lone Star Book Review

A portrait of the changing mood in the Confederacy, from the overly optimist days of 1862, caused by Lee's victories and Union failings in Virginia (and a general belief that the South had the superior soldiers), to the increasingly grim days of 1863, where victories came at an increasing cost”
History of War

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Vivian Bennett:

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