



The Last of the Doughboys: The Forgotten Generation and Their Forgotten World War

Richard Rubin

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In 2003, 85 years after the armistice, it took Richard Rubin months to find just one living American veteran of World War I. But then, he found another. And another. Eventually he managed to find dozens, aged 101 to 113, and interview them. All are gone now.

A decade-long odyssey to recover the story of a forgotten generation and their Great War led Rubin across the United States and France, through archives, private collections, and battlefields, literature, propaganda, and even music. But at the center of it all were the last of the last, the men and women he met: a new immigrant, drafted and sent to France, whose life was saved by a horse; a Connecticut Yankee who volunteered and fought in every major American battle; a Cajun artilleryman nearly killed by a German aeroplane; an 18-year-old Bronx girl “drafted” to work for the War Department; a machine-gunner from Montana; a Marine wounded at Belleau Wood; the 16-year-old who became America’s last WWI veteran; and many, many more.

They were the final survivors of the millions who made up the American Expeditionary Forces, nineteenth-century men and women living in the twenty-first century. Self-reliant, humble, and stoic, they kept their stories to themselves for a lifetime, then shared them at the last possible moment, so that they, and the World War they won – the trauma that created our modern world – might at last be remembered. You will never forget them. *The Last of the Doughboys* is more than simply a war story: It is a moving meditation on character, grace, aging, and memory.

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