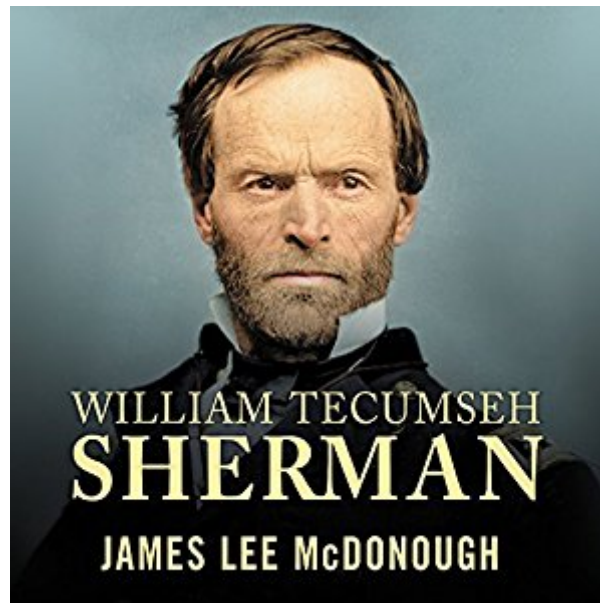




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William Tecumseh Sherman: In The Service Of My Country: A Life



Synopsis

General Sherman's 1864 burning of Atlanta solidified his legacy as a ruthless leader. Yet Sherman proved far more complex than his legendary military tactics reveal. James Lee McDonough offers fresh insight into a man tormented by the fear that history would pass him by, who was plagued by personal debts, and who lived much of his life separated from his family. As a soldier, Sherman evolved from a spirited student at West Point into a general who steered the Civil War's most decisive campaigns, rendered here in graphic detail. Lamenting casualties, Sherman sought the war's swift end by devastating Southern resources in the Carolinas and on his famous March to the Sea. This meticulously researched biography explores Sherman's warm friendship with Ulysses S. Grant, his strained relationship with his wife, Ellen, and his unassuageable grief over the death of his young son, Willy. The result is a remarkable, comprehensive life of an American icon whose legacy resonates to this day.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A very easy to read, well researched, from mostly primary sources, biography of arguably the best union general in the civil war. The sources the author uses are mostly letters (Sherman wrote an a large number of letters). While this biography does not really break new ground, it is so easy to read (the author writes as if he were writing a novel) that I had trouble putting the book down and found myself getting out of bed at night to finish "just one more chapter". I suppose the Sherman biography I like the most (maybe because I read it in school) is the biography by BH Liddell Hart, this work holds up well to that work. I highly recommend this biography and especially if you dont

want to get bogged down in small unit moves during battles, this biography is for you. The author does a good job of cutting down on battle details and he tends to give good short summaries. If I could make one negative comment it is that I wish the author had spent more time (this would have made the book longer obviously) on Sherman after the Civil War

This is really an outstanding book, a great biography of one of the most important people in American history. I didn't start reading the book with that mindset, but I think McDonough makes a pretty effective case for it being true, given his contributions in several stages of the Civil War. McDonough weaves an enjoyable narrative, doesn't go off on tangents, provides important details but doesn't get bogged down in minutiae. I was looking for a book to read over a one-week vacation and this turned out to be it, and a good choice it was. Some features of Sherman's life that stand out, from McDonough's telling: Sherman's often troubled marriage life. He and his wife were often in conflict about Sherman's occupation, where the family would live, and religion. His wife was a devout Roman Catholic while Sherman was hostile to religion. His wife and her family wished for Sherman to live in Ohio to be near them and to choose an occupation outside of the military. Sherman's career arc before the Civil War reminded me a lot of U.S. Grant's, to whom Sherman would become close during the Civil War while serving under Grant. Sherman's pre-war years were more successful in California and Louisiana where he pursued banking and educational leadership roles. But the country's economic woes and the strife that would lead to the Civil War interrupted these pursuits. But Sherman much preferred military life to any occupation outside of it, so the coming of the war would suit Sherman just fine, at least eventually. As might be expected, McDonough's telling of Sherman's march to the sea, his capture of Atlanta, and his sweep through the Carolinas make for the book's most riveting section, and reinforce the conclusion that Sherman played a critical role in the war and ultimately in the country's destiny. Interestingly, Sherman was not initially impressed with Abraham Lincoln and throughout the war found many occasions to criticize, even if in private, the Commander in Chief's actions. Nor was Sherman enthused of using the former slaves in combat roles, although he did employ African Americans in supporting roles. In this way, he differed from Grant, who used African Americans as soldiers. Sherman was partially sympathetic to the South, as he spent time in Alabama, South Carolina, and Louisiana before the war. So one paradox of his life is the ruthlessness with which Sherman conducted the war throughout the South, and for the harsh "hard war" methods he was criticized for employing. But after the war, Sherman again supported the South and was not enthused about Reconstruction, or the Radical Republicans behind Grant who wanted to ensure greater protections for African

Americans in the former Confederacy. Sherman lived for more than 20 years after the Civil War's end, ultimately retiring to New York City, although he loved California and preferred St. Louis where he lived for some time. His greatest disappointment was seeing his eldest remaining son choose the Roman Catholic priesthood. Sherman was active on the speaking circuit after the war in which his oral abilities were much remarked upon. Not surprisingly, Sherman was also much sought after to run for public office, particularly the Presidency, of which Sherman himself had no use or much interest. Although he formed a great partnership with Grant during the war, they did not have much interaction or much of a relationship in the years after the war, beyond Sherman's responsibilities as General in Chief. Sherman did not care for Washington, D.C. or politicians generally. I have other books about Sherman but this the only one I've read all the way through, and if you're interested in Sherman's life, it's the only one you'll need. At the least, "In the Service of My Country" should be considered the starting point for assessing William Tecumseh Sherman's life and military career.

I am a devotee of historical biographies. I have read many more that I can count. The better ones I reread, some more than once. This is a biography that I will definitely reread. William Tecumseh Sherman is a bigger than life character. He was extremely accomplished, more so than even most of our Presidents. His steadfast refusal to even consider a presidential run says a lot about him. Unfortunately, as a believing person I was greatly saddened by his lack of spirituality, this seems to be a common among many great Americans. I am a Catholic and have many fallen away relatives, who I pray for constantly, and so I greatly identify with his long suffering wife. I am currently reading American Ulysses: A Life of Ulysses S. Grant, the third biography of Grant that I have read. It was a truly wonderful that these two men were united, along with Abraham Lincoln, at one of the most perilous moments in this country's history. We live in another perilous time without the benefit of men like these.

A very well written book! The reader may experience the feeling of exhaustion that this difficult war caused on the average enlisted man; the deprivations civil war troops faced, in addition to death from battle; disease along with some terribly poor political generals (non-West Point). A very interesting telling of the cooperation between the Army and Navy in working together to win the war in the West. A tough bunch led by a extremely competent General Sherman. If you have never visited Vicksburg, do so, seeing its location, topography and the Father of Rivers is stunning! Anyone interested in the Civil War should own this book.

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