

Robert D. Hubble

Farmer, soldier, firefighter, author :- grunt



Ambrose Bierce

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Somewhere along the way, between two miserable stomach surgeries and a successful spinal fusion, I decided to write not one, but three books, thinking anyone can write just one – and discovered anyone can also write three. Then I rekindled my intense interest in the American West, where for many years I was very fortunate to have worked, and began writing about those hardy characters and the tough land on which they lived, struggled, thrived and died. And writing such as:

"May be told by a soldier who is no writer to a reader who is no soldier." –

Robert D. Hubble grew up to be a farmer, leaving his London school at the first opportunity to do so. Immediately after college, however, life forced a change and Robert served as a Sapper in Britain's Corps of Royal Engineers. Then, still with a desire to farm, he left England to help run a Midwest dairy farm among the frozen lakes of northern Minnesota. Another life changing experience led Robert to the rugged wilds of central Idaho where he immediately fell in love with the magnificent mountains and the gritty physical work of fighting wildfires. A job that eventually enabled him to experience many years as a U.S. Smokejumper in the Rocky Mountains of Montana. Where he now lives with his wife Christina, who has twice nursed Robert back from the edge and given him time to write these six books.

[The original R. Demis Hubble](#)

Limey Smokejumper

Fighting Wildfire in the Rockies



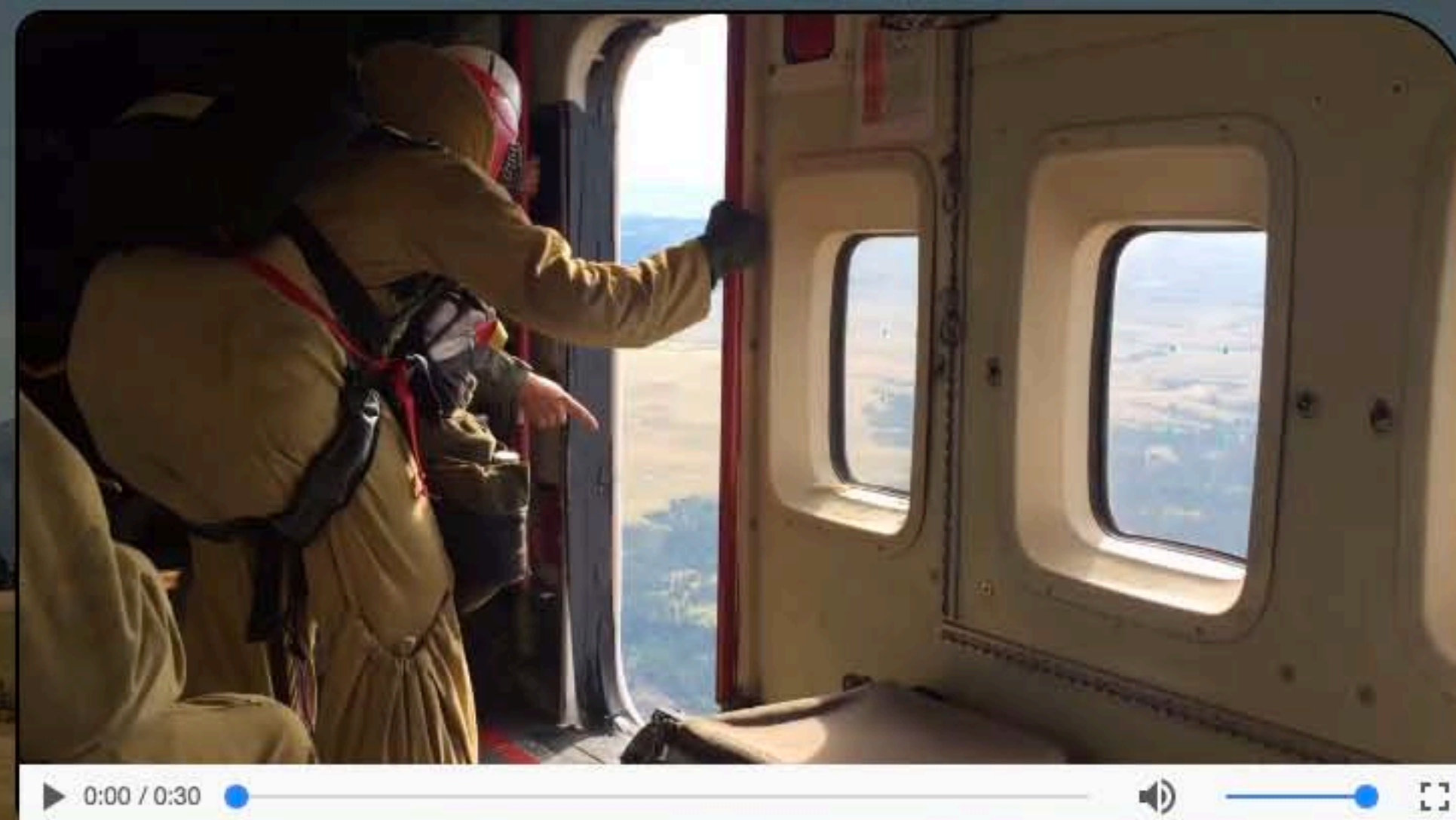
Smokejumpers have over the years been the subject of much media attention, from National Geographic to Playboy to some ridiculous movies. The results in each only portray one side; fire. There is much more to becoming a smokejumper, however, and a lot more effort required in remaining one. Not only physically, financially – from getting laid-off every year – but also from withstanding the constant barrage of a burdensome bureaucracy. This is not a sensationalized account, this is real, warts and all. Because of that, you may well not like it. The

primary star in this world, though, is not the jumper or the fire, but the land on which both live, work and thrive; the wonderful Rocky Mountains.

It is inherently human that those stalwarts of yesteryear brag about their work being harder and they being tougher than anything comparable today. In the case of early smokejumping, at least, this statement appears to be more true than most. Early smokejumper equipment demanded uncommon rigors in the face of an uncertainty that today's jumpers are thankfully unaccustomed. However, all jumpers still maintain an athletic level of fitness to do any job assigned, at anytime – and do so with unselfish vigor not because of the government, but in spite of it.

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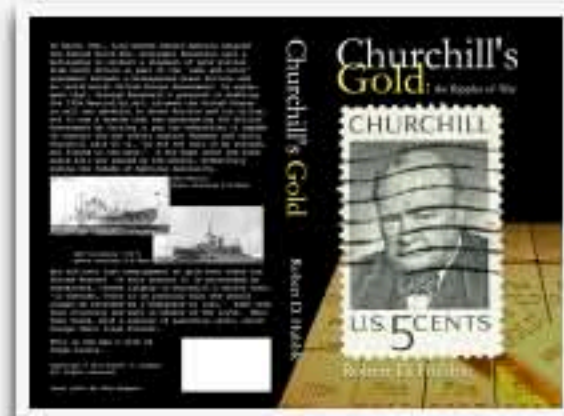


Limey Smokejumper is a raw account, and is written in the same raw style. It has not been professionally proofed, tweaked or cleaned, except for some minor edits, suggestions from another old smokejumper friend - you know who you are. It is, at times, as raw as a firefighter's bare fingers digging in the dirt to find that last elusive hotspot. It is as many of us saw it, as we lived it. Others sometimes saw something different; in the same battle but with a different perspective and appreciation of events – a perspective often born from the security of retirement that some never get to see, and for having done nothing less. Life is fortune and fate, and we live the cards we are dealt. Meanwhile enjoying the simple glory of having that first cup of coffee and watching the sun rise, once again, over the mountains in the distance, before we do it all over again.

Thanks to Chelsea for the video!

Churchill's Gold

The Ripples of War



In March 1941, nine months before America entered the Second World War, President Roosevelt sent a battleship to collect a shipment of gold bullion from South Africa as part of the 'cash & carry' agreement between a beleaguered Great Britain and an isolationist United States Government. An agreement that, through Roosevelt's pressure in enabling the 1939 Neutrality Act, allowed the United States to sell war matériel to Great Britain and its allies. But the system was bankrupting the British Government by having to pay for everything it was using to sustain the war. Churchill said, "We are not only to be skinned, but flayed to the bone." A few

days later the Lend-Lease Bill was passed by the Senate, which effectively ended America's neutrality. Did this gold ever reach the United States? It is surrounded by conspiracy, largely thanks to Churchill's notion that: "In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies." Some took this literally and went in search of the truth. What they found, after half a century of searching, would change their lives forever. This is one man's tale of those events.

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SECRETS OF THE CONQUEROR

THE UNTOLD STORY OF BRITAIN'S

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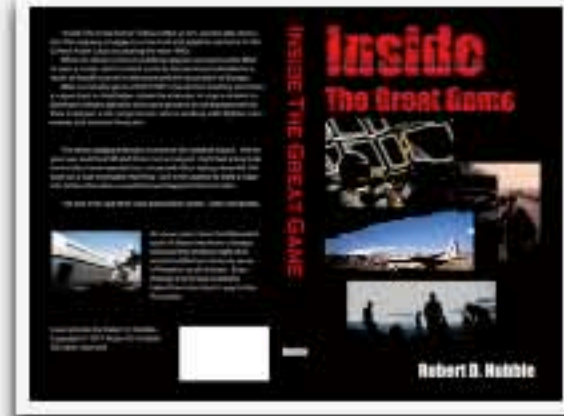


Churchill's Gold briefly touches the subject of *Operation Barmaid*. It is a remarkable Cold War story of audacious espionage that deserves wider recognition for what governments demand of their servicemen – even in times of so-called 'peace'. HMS Conqueror is better known for sinking the Argentine cruiser General Belgrano during the Falklands War, yet it is this Cold War event that harbored the secret as to why this famous submarine's logbooks went awry.

[HMS Conqueror's biggest secret: a raid on Russia](#)

Inside the Great Game

The fight for Oil and Pipelines in Cenral Asia



The Great Game continues. In its long and bloody history there have been periods of relative peace and tremendous violence. Through all, the subtle intrigue remained, only coming to the fore when national interests are at stake, as is the case now; with one major superpower vying for influence against many smaller nations, rich and poor, for the only truly valuable commodity currently left in the world. Oil. For this, countries still send their soldiers. But now under the guise of consultants and advisors instead of travelers and tradesmen. The present struggle is no longer strictly limited to the mountains of Central Asia, but is fought

worldwide. Neither is it fought solely by nations, but by powerful transnational conglomerates. Religious ideologies also play a greater and more dangerous role than before; with Islamic fundamentalism clashing violently against western religions, values and naive interventionism. Yet no matter how often the "whom" and the "where" may change, the "what for" never does. It remains forever: Influence, supremacy, and, ultimately, domination. Individuals drawn into this fight are still abandoned by fickle national and corporate policies and few are remembered for their efforts. When the instigators give up and wash their hands soldiers die. All so their masters can have a continued role in the Great Game.

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The Great Game is a term made famous by Rudyard Kipling, a journalist of fact and writer of stories and verse. One of my favorite Kipling poems, from having lost an uncle in Burma, is the Road to Mandalay. And who better to recite this wonderful piece than Charles Dance, on the 70th VJ Day Commemoration in London, 2015 – lest we forget. To my wife's chagrin, I also recite Mandaly. Give me a whiskey, a cheap cigar and ask me nicely, and I might not bore you with it. Charles Dance does a far better job anyhow – though he might cost you more.

1862-63

1863-64

1864-65

A Western: 1862-63

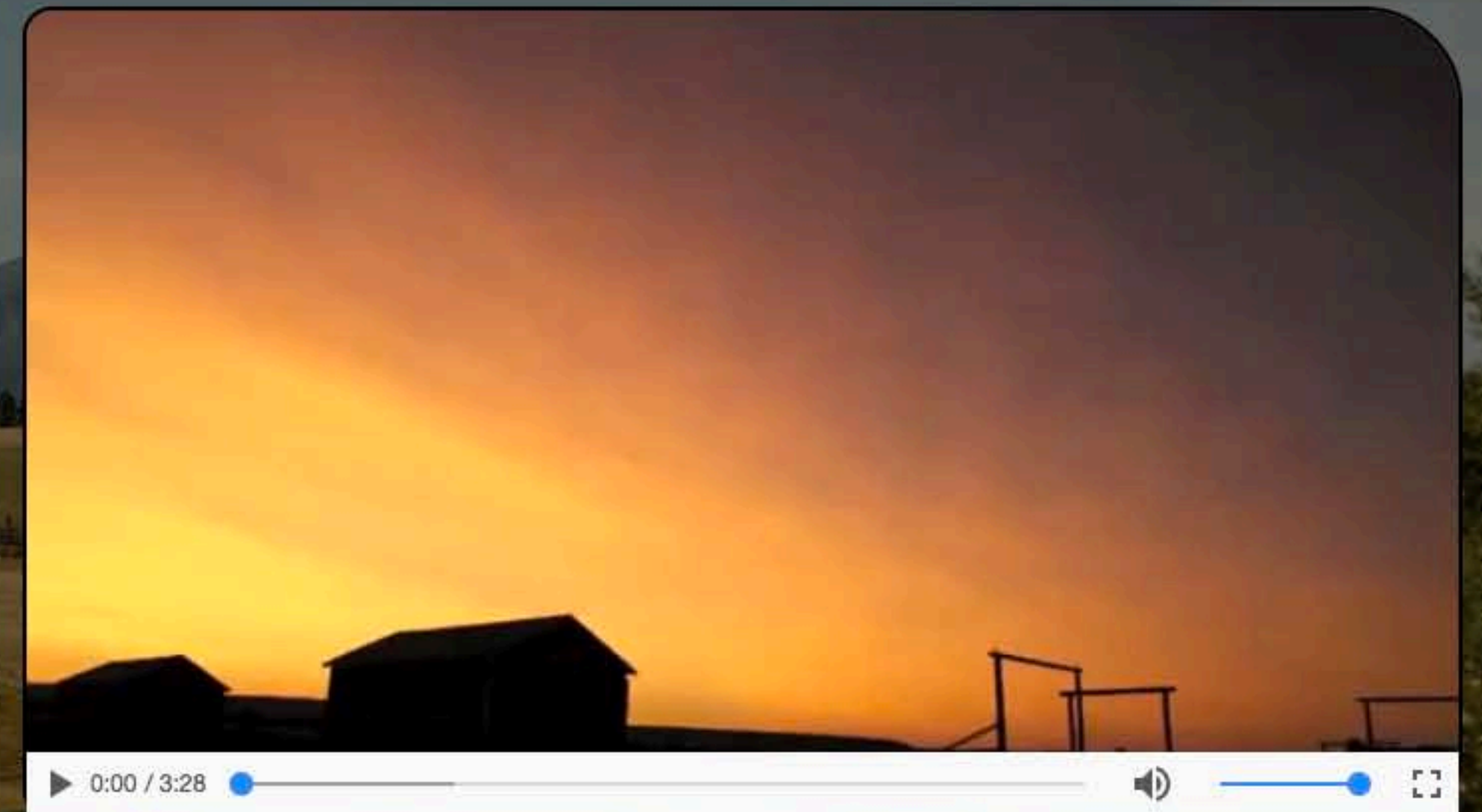


Displaced persons from both sides of the Civil War were arriving to the West in droves, as were deserters, the walking wounded and the downcast limbless. With them, mostly came hope, but also, with some, came the cheapness of life. Two years of bloody strife had whittled away the inherent kindness of many ordinary folk, who remained generally good in heart but had developed an untrusting character as a safeguard. But to others the unbridled, unashamed butchery of this caustic war between cousins just compounded their already miserable existence.

So while some rode west in rickety covered wagons in search of hope to escape the horrors of war, others arrived to reap more horror from those desperate masses of hope. In 1862, many of these hopefuls came also for gold. And as these wretched white hordes emerged onto the Great Plains, inevitably shoving away the longstanding native tribes further and further in front of them, so too came the trials of the Indian Wars. The West was destined to change forever. Geography often confused people as to where exactly the Civil War was being fought. While place names such as Vicksburg, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg gave pitiable prominence to the east, lesser known and more clandestine battles were fought elsewhere, with less bloodshed but with more guile, and not always south of the Mason-Dixon line. Without access to gold, not only was the South unable to finance its war, but its Confederate paper currency would be rendered worthless. Despite early victories at Manassas some in the South had lost morale. Confidence in the army and politicians was fading as the appalling casualty lists were made public and their wounded walked home and the dead lay rotting in the fields. Farms had been left untilled and cattle barren as men were drafted into the fight. There was no foreign aid since the South had little worth to call upon apart from its people. The only thing that could save the South, except for a catastrophic military failure in the North, was gold. So along the overland trails went men seeking ways to fetch that gold South, hidden in open sight amongst the throngs crossing the Great Plains, or clandestinely riding along with Minnesotans crossing the Dakotas. A few even went north from Texas.

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The Grant-Kohrs Ranch was once the headquarters of a 10 million acre cattle empire, established by a Canadian Métis fur trader, John Francis Grant, in 1862 along the banks of the Clark Fork river, at what was then near the eastern boundary of Washington Territory. Grant had already been using the valley to graze his cattle since 1857, making money trading cattle with emigrants arriving along the Oregon Trail, getting two poor, footsore cows in exchange for one good one and then fattening up the poorer cows on the lush grasses along the Clark Fork, before shipping 400 head to Sacramento, California in 1859.

Grant's life, and his legacy to Montana, is worthy of further recognition, and certainly of further reading. Two books I found invaluable, dictated by Grant to his wife, Clotilde Bruneau Grant:

[Very Close to Trouble: The Johnny Grant Memoir](#), Edited by Lyndel Meikle

[Son of the Fur Trade: The Memoirs of Johnny Grant](#), Edited by Gerhard J. Ens



1862-63

1863-64

1864-65

A Western: 1863-64



Bitterness had seeped to the depths of the nation, both North and South, cleaving apart those who had participated in the great struggle from those who had not. The early vigor that had captivated much of the people, on either side, had since worn thin. The continent's youth, the Union's future, initially clamoring to the clever speeches of politicians, eager for duty, and in search of glory, found nothing to substantiate that beguiling political rhetoric once on the battlefield. There, many knew they had been duped as they watched row upon row of their friends and comrades scythed down like summer corn. Such brutal lessons were severe; and one never adequately appreciated from one generation to the next as youthful vigor the world over seeks to emulate the glory of ancestors. Urged on by a host of spineless politicians talking a glittering tale but never witness to the savage task or terrible result. Nor understanding that war is a mystery, stiffened with speculations, misplaced boasts, and endured at length with ardent young fear all along the line. A young encouraged individually and collectively by jokes and rousing songs designed to rally them to action before the spits of frowning cannon blasts every last semblance of youth from their souls. Leaving them afterwards staring in wooden bewilderment at the last atrocity just occurred. The dead having no chance for the heroic deeds they had dreamed, no chance other than tedious marching to the gory field, whence to be fodder to a screaming bullet and to be dead among a throng of bloody dead. Thenceforth and forever to be named Our Honored Dead.

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EmperorTigerstar creates map animations of historical events, providing a quick visual time-lapse showing the futility of war in a geographical perspective. This one is of the American Civil War, or the War Between the States. Bearing in mind that most of the land in the west (west of the Minnesota frontier line and south) had not yet gained statehood. These western territories were set to undergo their own war, however, as the Indian Wars gripped much of the land from Minnesota to eastern slope of the Rockies.

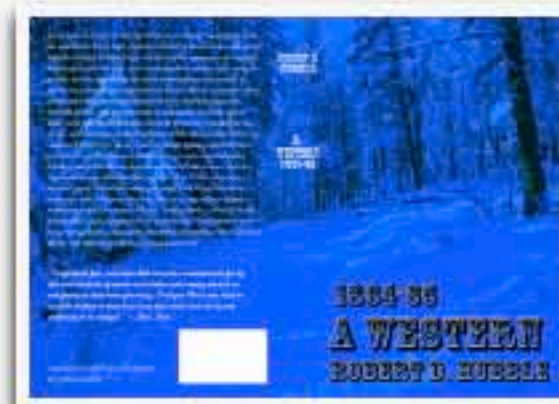
[See other animations here.](#)

1862-63

1863-64

1864-65

A Western: 1864-65



Outside, the world was stirring. Through misty windows a new sun was widening the sky from the dark purple of twilight and turning the base of long fingers of rippled clouds to a deep red.

Forty miles to the north the ripples of red were from rivers of blood. In the middle of a frosty field pleasantly tinted by wood smoke, and rising high above Black Kettle's lodge on a tall angular tepee pole, an impotent American flag hung limp at dawn. Its presence was meant to afford protection to those camped near it; a suggestion holding a promise of Fort Lyon's commandant. But instead, it advertised a tragedy so barbaric that two officers refused to have any part, while watching others unleash industrial thunder onto an unsuspecting people. Artillery wagons spat fire and terror as Indians tried to escape into a draw, while close rifle fire cut them down by the score, regardless of sex, age or children raw, women and babes and tired old men alike. Some of Fort Lyon's soldiers had spent the night inside the camp, having been peaceably trading with the Indians, as was often permitted, and were almost killed by the indifferent spit of their own guns. When the cannons fell silent the cavalry charged; sabers high, flashing, slashing, sabering every piece of flesh bare, flaying to the bone, pistols belching smoke and lead as the frenzy of drunken cowards hollered craven obscenities to offset the horror of their actions. Children were shot in frightened groups huddling together. Shot in the comfort of their mothers' arms. Shot as they stumbled along, numb, stunned and frantic. Shot in the back while running scared. Even shot point blank sitting in bewilderment to cry and stare. Shot without quarter while eyes pleaded not to be. All shot. Black Kettle's wife was holed nine times, but miraculously survived to tell the ghastly tale of humanity's hypocrisy. Then both the dead and wounded endured scalping and butchery to a degree of bestial brutality that cast a stain on all mankind. This barbarous depravity, so well performed beneath a limp banner of liberty, was then lauded by the territorial governor.

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By the time Bill Durban reached Deer Lodge, now in Montana Territory, more than half a million men had perished on the eastern battlefields – twice as many dying from disease as in the fighting. None of those souls would ever see the spacious lands in the west. If they had, like Samuel Clemens, they might have gone west instead of fighting and made a life for themselves. But glory rested in the deed, and the deed perished in the crimson fields and was soon forgot, but for the Glorious Dead resting row upon row in cemeteries up and down the eastern states. Meanwhile, the western territories would be jerked out from the Stone Age to become an industrial powerhouse such as the world had never seen. That industry, built on western lumber, eastern steel and powered by Rocky Mountain snow, would then win a mighty global war not a hundred years hence – ushering in yet another Age: the Atomic Age.

Robert Denis Hubble

Son, brother, soldier



I grew up with a sepia photograph on the sideboard next to a large dining table. The image of that happy, proud face remains with me. I can see it as clear as day even now, 55 years later; Robert Denis Hubble.

I was named after another; my father's brother, an uncle I never had, Robert Denis Hubble. He was one of the 28,878, mostly young lads, quickly turned to men, who died fighting with the Fourteenth (Forgotten) Army in Burma and Northeast India. On June 14, 1944, at only 20 years old to the month, he lost his tomorrows so we could have our todays. My task, then, is to live a good life to the best of my ability, to earn the namesake, to live the life for which Denis was unable. But also, my task in life is to try and not put up with the things he died fighting against; cruelty, inhumanity, misbehaviour, and general bullshit. It makes for an interesting life sometimes, but at least it's a life, and one I've already lived three times the length that which was afforded to Denis.



Denis was originally in the Royal Norfolk Regiment, but after recovering from dysentery was placed into the 1st Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment; desperate for replacements during the fighting around Imphal and Kohima to deliver the biggest loss to the Japanese in their history. Where he died with men he barely knew, his body never recovered, with only an engraving on the Rangoon Memorial, Taukkyan War Cemetery, Myanmar. And also a mark in his home town at Walpole Park, Ealing, London, which I used to pass each day on my way to and from school. Such are the rewards for a soldier's duty to King, country, family, and us. Twenty he was.

In this earlier photograph, shirtsleeves rolled, Denis looks like the only one who did any work this day; building the Anderson Shelter in Grange Road, Ealing, prior to the Blitz. Fifteen in this photograph, with his sister, Anne's, hand resting on his younger brother, Ron, lower right.



His father, Samuel, was fighting in Italy when he heard the news of his son. Having already fought with the Eight Army across North Africa and Sicily under Montgomery.

Here dead we lie
Because we did not choose
To live and shame the land
From which we sprung.

Life, to be sure,
Is nothing much to lose,
But young men think it is,
And we were young.
— A E Housman