

FIRST BATTLE OF BULL RUN: PREVIEW OF WARS TO COME

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In addition to Independence Day, on the 4th, July month recalls another anniversary. It was a time of brother taking up arms against brother. It was a result of men placing their loyalty to their states above their loyalty to their nation. It was a homeland drenched in the blood of its sons most of whom never really understood what they were fighting for or against.

The First Battle of Bull Run, also called the First Battle of Manassas, took place on July 21, 1861, and was the first major land battle of the “American Civil War” or the “War Between the States”.

Federal troops led by General McDowell advanced towards Manassas Junction, where Confederate troops were dug in, blocking the road to Richmond. The Union Army had 34,000 troops ready to attack 25,000 Confederate forces spread out over eight miles on the other side of Bull Run Creek.

Both Confederate and Union troops were not ready for battle. Union troops advanced on Confederate troops, almost breaking through, but at the last moment, Confederate reinforcements arrived on the battlefield and, led by warriors like General “Stonewall” Jackson, carried the day.

Almost immediately, the retreat of the union army turned into a complete rout. It was impossible to stop the retreating soldiers from heading all the way back to the Potomac River. In the midst of the flight were hundreds of sightseers from Wash-



**“Youth is the first victim of war;
the first fruit of peace.
It takes 20 years to make a man
and only 20 seconds of war
to destroy him.”**

ington, including six senators and 10 Congressmen.

As Congressman Albert G. Riddle stated: "We called to them, tried to tell them there was no danger, called them to stop, implored them to stand. We called them cowards, denounced them in the most offensive term, put out our heavy revolvers, and threatened to shoot them, but all in vain; a cruel crazy, mad, hopeless panic possessed them, and communicated to everybody about in front and rear. The heat was awful, although now about six; the men were exhausted their mouths' gaped, their lips cracked and blackened with the powder of the cartridges they had bitten off in the battle, their eyes starting in frenzy; no mortal ever saw such a mass of ghastly wretches."

The equally tired and inexperienced Confederates however, were in no shape to conduct an effective pursuit, so the battle ended.

The U.S. Army lost about 3,000 casualties (killed, wounded, and captured or missing), and the Confederates suffered about 2,000.

Our nation, for the first time, saw modern warfare for what it was and is: a killing zone. It would be the last war fought with bands playing and tourists gawking. War creates victims and little else. The winner writes the history; but, both sides, suffer the pain, loss and death.

There are many Websites that retell this tragic tale and part of the American Legend. I encourage you to visit them. You will learn that the war mongers, politicians and entrepreneurs call for paying "any price" but the soldiers pay that price.

The lost lives, severed limbs and forever-crippled minds are seldom recalled in stories about the "glory" of war.

The Battle of Bull Run revealed it all too clearly to the civilians who began their day with picnic baskets and visions of the glory and ended their day in the gory that is war.