

# H-Net Reviews

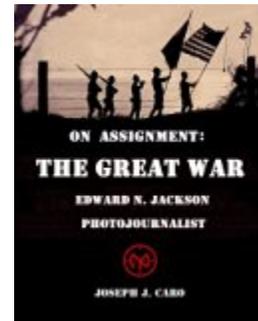
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Joseph J. Caro. *On Assignment: The Great War - Edward N. Jackson Photojournalist*. n.p.: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012. Illustrations. 238 pp. \$26.55 (paper), ISBN 978-1-4775-4829-5.

Reviewed by Mack Easter III

Published on H-War (October, 2013)

Commissioned by Margaret Sankey



Pictures often capture what words cannot. Today, it seems that all events are captured in some form of visual media. Obviously that was not always the case; before pictures and movies were so commonplace, a single photo of a distant event had a significant impact on the way people perceived the world around them. In *On Assignment*, a collection of photographs, Joseph J. Caro publishes pictures that photojournalist Edward N. Jackson took before, during, and after World War I, a time when few photographs were taken. Caro's stated intention is to write a book about Jackson's experience while covering the 27th Division during the war, and many of the pictures are indeed of that unit.

The book is roughly divided into four sections: Jackson's early years, his entry into the field of photojournalism, his selection and deployment as a war correspondent, and his postwar work with Gold Star Mothers. The book, however, lacks focus. Caro provides very little detail and almost no connection between the sections. He includes interesting snippets from Jackson's life prior to his experience in the war, but these anecdotes do not work together to bring his life into focus. As Caro follows Jackson into the war and his selection as a correspondent, he only hints at how Jackson's photojournalism shaped the reading public's perception of events. Unfortunately, the book never gains the clarity needed to tell the story of either Jackson or the 27th Division. Much of the story

in each section is provided in extended captions below a series of pictures with no clear structure. Most images have associated commentary, but some do not. The work suffers from punctuation errors, poor grammar, and an overall lack of effective organizational structure.

Jackson was certainly both prolific and effective as a photojournalist. His photographs have graced the covers of several historical works about the period. Some of his work deeply influenced how his contemporaries understood significant events. Caro does put some very interesting pictures of the war and its participants into print. The book contains some pictures that are being published for the first time. There are some exceptional photographs of pre-deployment ground training and air combat training. Although Caro includes some insightful pictures, the photographs are not well set, some are duplicated, and a couple are printed without maintaining their proper height and width ratios. The book is printed on regular stock paper, preventing the pictures from being presented in the quality that they deserve.

If you are looking for previously unpublished pictures of Army Air Corps training, pre-deployment ground training, or Gold Star Mothers, this book will fill a pragmatic place on your bookshelf. If you are looking for an effective history, this book will fall well short of your expectations.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

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**Citation:** Mack Easter III. Review of Caro, Joseph J., *On Assignment: The Great War - Edward N. Jackson Photojour-*

*nalist*. H-War, H-Net Reviews. October, 2013.

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