

Commentary for soldier's heart

[Government](#), [Army](#)



Commentary for “ Soldier’s Heart” Author, Gary Paulsen The book Soldier’s Heart, is based on a true story about a fifteen-year-old boy in Minnesota named, Charley Goddard, who lies about his age to join the First Volunteers of Minnesota to fight in the Civil War. Some of the events and time sequences are not completely factual, but the essential elements of the books story are true. Charley Goddard is a fifteen-year-old boy growing up in the farming community of Winona, Minnesota, in 1861, just prior to what will become the Civil War. The whole are is talking about what they think will be a “ shooting war. The atmosphere at the town meetings discussing the possibility is festive, with flags, and drums, and patriotic speeches. As a volunteer army is beginning to form, Charley decides he wants to be a part of it. Everyone assumes that it will be an easy, victorious battle, most likely over in a month or two, if it happens at all. Charley lies about his age and joins the volunteers in what he thinks will be a fun experience that will make him a man. The pay is eleven dollars a month, much more than he makes working on the farm. Charley trains and learns to be a soldier.

Upon leaving the camp, the men are treated as heroes even before they leave town, accompanied by much cheering and flag waving. Charley feels great, and spirits are high. However, not long after, he finds himself in his first battle. The Union soldiers lose badly. He is caught in the middle of violent suffering and death, and he cannot believe what is happening so suddenly all around him. When the battle is over, hundreds of his comrades had been killed, and Charley and the other survivors are stunned. It is eventually named the Battle of Bull Run. A camp is created near Washington and eventually reaches ninety thousand men.

Charley becomes part of the day to day routine of the camp. He and others forage the farms in the area for food and eventually build log houses to live in during the approaching winter. However, many men get diseases such as dysentery and die in the camp. During the time here, Charley participates in one nearby battle against the Rebel Soldiers. The Union wins, but not without losing many men. One of them is a man whom Charley befriended only hours before. His name is Nelson, and he is shot in the stomach. Nelson knows the surgeons do not have the skills or time to mend his wound and that he will be left to die.

As a result, he kills himself on the battlefield as the other soldiers leave for the return march to the camp. Charley takes part in a battle near Richmond, Virginia where the Confederate Army uses its mounted cavalry to charge Charley and the Union soldiers. Nearly one hundred men on horseback charge six hundred foot soldiers. Charley and the others are told to shoot the horses in order to defeat the cavalry, and they do so, killing every horse and man. Next, Charley participates in the Battle of Gettysburg, the final battle of the war. Here he has the protection of rocks, and logs, and a large force of artillery behind him.

Most of the charging Rebel soldiers are killed in the lines as they attack, but some eventually get close. Charley participates in a hand to hand battle with bayonets. He is finally wounded, and after being patched up as well as possible, he is sent home to Minnesota. Charley is a broken man in Winona, Minnesota. He can barely walk with a cane. He constantly passes blood, and his mental health has been affected severely. He contemplates suicide but he

decides to hold on to his dreams of the war a while longer. He later dies of complications of the war wounds at the age of 21.