



Hope Dies Last: Keeping the Faith in Difficult Times

Studs Terkel

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Studs Terkel's legacy to the younger generation is a chronicle of optimism, determination and activism in 20th-century America, retelling history through the stories of those who stood up and fought for their beliefs in the face of justice or adversity.

Hope Dies Last: Keeping the Faith in Difficult Times Details

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From Reader Review Hope Dies Last: Keeping the Faith in Difficult Times for online ebook

Johnp says

Studs Terkel does it again – he has put together an amazing montage of interviews from all walks of life. This time, his focus is on ‘hope’ – what it means to have it, hold onto it and also have it dashed to bits.

Terkel’s style remains pure – he rarely interrupts his interviewee, yet always seems to get exactly what he is looking for. Whether you want to hear about labor relations, strike breakers, clergy, social workers, songwriters, politicians, or just plain folk who just have the hope to keep going, these interviews will give you something to think about.

I have had this book on my bedside table for almost a year. I loved to just pick it up and read one or two stories before I fell asleep. It was a great way to end the day – especially when the day could have been better.

cory says

studs terkel is fucking awesome.

Ted says

This book might be, unfortunately, something to read again in these dysfunctional times of 2017-18. Unfortunately, too, I no longer have it.

I remember it was very uplifting. Terkel does a great job.

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Previous review: Field Notes from a Catastrophe

Random review: Fellini's Satyricon

Next review: Italy in Mind

Previous library review: Probability, Confirmation, Simplicity *Readings in the philosophy of Inductive Logic*

Next library review: From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe

Ed says

I love this man. We're all standing on the shoulders of folks standing on the shoulders of folks...

Despite the title, this collection of interviews with activists/teachers/union organizers/students/workers/clergy etc is both inspiring and depressing. People fighting the good fight have been getting the piss beaten out of them forever. Two things are amazing: how much time and effort and blood and sweat--at least--from how many people (who you'll never hear of) it takes to achieve the tiniest (even temporary) gains; and how few of these people will ever give up.

Lanier says

10-6-10

Just started the Intro and a few other tid-bits, though I already know how awesome this anthology is going to be. Perfect for some slice-of-life memoirs and mini-essays for the chill'ens to mull over, testing to see if they can research some of the historical references and see similarities to Miller's classic play, "The Crucible" as well as W.E.B. Dubois' **The Soul of Black Folks** , just to name a few.

"La esperanza muere ultima," Jessie de la Cruz. These words were taken from Terkel's 1980 tome of interviews which asked high rollers and the girl next door: "What is your definition of the American Dream? Have you achieved it?" More than 20 years later, as the debris of The Twin Towers, the Pentagon and flights that never reached their destinations in the fields of Pennsylvania, Terkel searches far and wide for what it is that helps people to yearn to "go on" in spite of terror, fear, and loss.

A must read!

Steve says

Studs Terkel did unique, powerful and important work with his series of oral histories. I have particularly enjoyed his books focused on a single period, particularly his history of the Great Depression. It's rare to read these first-person stories of that difficult time. "Hope Dies Last" was instead loosely focused on the concept of hope, so it is less coherent and compelling than some of his other work. Some of the anecdotes are inspiring and interesting, but the book didn't really keep my interest as much as Terkel's other work.

W M says

This was my first time reading Studs other than Pekar's comic book adaptation of 'Working.' This was written at a unique time when few similar works were being published to my knowledge. It was after Seattle, which was seen as a very important event by the activist community. I am too young to remember this. But, most importantly it was also after 9/11, and several years before Occupy during a time of rising inequality among Americans. This allows for interviews with World War II veterans who to my surprised came across as pretty hawkish. The interviewees were admittedly pretty clustered in Chicago and Harvard. Studs interviewed those he called activists in this book. Among the most interesting interviewees were organizers and those with strong religious convictions. As evident with his interviews with more hawkish WWII vets, Studs does not discriminate the interviewees by their political leanings.

Here ends the summary of the book. The remaining portions of this review are personal musings on the implications to my own life.

As someone who has radical political leanings, I appreciated the many interviews with activists that spoke about their relationship with their parents that did not have similar views. I feel that more should be written on this topic.

I know that the intention of this book was not really to judge the merit of the philosophical implications of the interviewees, and this is perhaps the main reason why Studs is so successful at his craft in the first place. That being said, I do not know of other avenues that I can express some of the following thoughts, so I will continue. Here, I must admit two things. I am skeptical of activists and organizers. For my reservations on activists I encourage interested readers to check out PM Press's *Anarchist Pedagogies*. In regards to my skepticism on the career of organizers, I feel it is best articulated by Staughton Lynd, who himself is an interviewee in the book, but perhaps I may be putting words in his mouth. This was perhaps my first time hearing organizers speak about their job, and I admit that my thoughts have not changed, but as I said before, this was not the purpose of the book.

I think that my greatest realization from reading the book is how being Jewish has influenced my views on organizing and activism. There is no Jewish Vatican that can support Rabbis that organize or are committed activists. I did not realize this before, but I think this why I gravitate to Lynd's and in particular Paul Goodman's hopes for practical steps towards a more meaningful world that strives for truth.

Stop says

Read the STOP SMILING interview with Studs Terkel:

BEHIND THE BILLBOARDS

By Danny Postel and JC Gabel

(This interview originally appeared in the STOP SMILING *Chicago Issue*)

Studs Terkel is "as much a part of Chicago as the Sears Tower and Al Capone," a BBC journalist once remarked.

Indeed, just as tourists to the "city of the century" throng to the skyscraper's observation deck and make their way to one or another of the gangster's old haunts, many a writer has pilgrimaged to the Uptown home of Chicago's legendary oral historian, where the following interview took place.

Stop Smiling: One of Chicago's literary giants passed away earlier this year. How well did you know Saul Bellow?

Studs Terkel: I didn't know him too well. We disagreed on a number of things politically. In the protests in the beginning of Norman Mailer's *Armies of the Night*, when Mailer, Robert Lowell and Paul Goodman were marching to protest the Vietnam War, Bellow was invited to a sort of counter-gathering. He said, "Of course I'll attend." But he made a big thing of it. Instead of just saying OK, he was proud of it. So I wrote him a letter and he didn't like it. He wrote me a letter back. He called me a Stalinist. But otherwise, we were

friendly...

Read the STOP SMILING interview...

Jim says

I love the late Studs Terkel's writing/books. His use of the tape recorder to compile oral histories has informed my own writing, particularly my first book I wrote, on local town team baseball.

Some great profiles. I've especially liked reading the profiles on Dennis Kucinich (a personal hero), Arlo Guthrie (60's holdover and son of possibly America's greatest musical icon), and Dan Burton (a figure on the right that I knew little about, and came away impressed with his personal depth).

Reading a book infused with both hope, but also the realities of life is a good tonic for how I'm feeling about the world, right now. Terkel's books have a way of setting me "right."

Max Potthoff says

As a dyed-in-the-wool Midwesterner, I've known of Studs Terkel's work for a long time now. This was my first time reading him. So glad I did. A lovely, personal anthology, *Hope Dies Last* touches upon what it means to keep going, the stakes of retaining a sense of optimism, the consequences of giving up, indifference. There are no indifferent folks in this collection. Hope comes in all forms, from all kinds.

I particularly enjoyed the sections on labor activism and union organizing. It made me realize that it is one thing to wish the world to be the way you would like to see it. It's another thing to actively commit yourself to changing it. The wishers are everywhere. The doers are rare. We inherit the legacy of those who came before, and there is always work to be done. Always.

James says

Provides a welcome, and in my case much needed, injection of perspective on the often invisible struggles many, many people need to carry on every day in the pursuit of basic security and dignity. Terkel is clearly a skilled oral historian, though in some ways the relentless worthiness of his subjects weakened the power of each individual recollection, with one exception: Brigadier General Paul Tibbets, who piloted the Enola Gay mission over Hiroshima. His one-track gotta-do-what-takes attitude to war is the dialogue I remember most from the book, which I'm not sure is what Terkel's had in mind.

Patrick McCoy says

Studs Terkel's oral history book, *Hope Dies Last* is another interesting look at a topic dear to many people. The topic this time focuses on hope. He talks to his usual wide variety of people and there are a lot of compelling stories. He talks to politicians (Dennis Kucinich, Dan Burton, Jerry Brown, Tom Hayden), entertainers (Arlo Guthrie, Pete Seeger) activists, teachers, soldiers, immigrants, slackers, and priests. Some of the themes center on what has been accomplished by grass roots organizations, the "Higher Learning" section in particular shows how students got involved and helped Harvard staff employees get living wage raises from the university with the highest endowment of any academic institution in the world. Another fascinating story was about a man, Leroy Orange, who was unjustly convicted of a murder, after being tortured into a confession, in Illinois and finally got freed with the help of Northwestern law students via a pardon by then departing Governor George Ryan. The stories show that individuals can change things if they persist. It is an inspiring and uplifting book.

Kathleen says

I had high hopes for this collection of oral histories, but the theme seemed forced and coerced, and so many of the entries were rambling. I found myself saying "blah, blah, blah" aloud as I read. It's been a long time since I've found a book this dull.

Dean says

I'm reading this in conjunction with the NPR collection of "This I Believe". Both offer stories of people who have lived through many of life's trials. They provide guidance/solace as we face today's uncertainty.

Perhaps most telling is the section in *Hope Dies Last* about "Enronism". The last sentence of John Kenneth Galbraith's section included: "I entered the world of politics at a time when there were Fifth Amendment Communists, and I've reached the age of ninety-four, when there are Fifth Amendment capitalists."

Both books well worth the read.

Jonathan says

Studs Terkel interviewed numerous Americans whom had to overcome great adversity in their lives. They all spoke of the importance of never losing hope. The poor, African Americans, those deemed as communists in the Cold War, and immigrants were the four main groups of individuals that Studs Terkel interviewed. Usually, everything seemed to be stacked against them. However, through activism they weren't afraid to do their all to try and change things. This book shows that although we are all so different, we also have an incredible amount in common.
