

ALL AMERICAN
ALL THE WAY



THE COMBAT HISTORY OF THE
82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION
IN WORLD WAR II
PHIL NORDYKE

All American All the Way: The Combat History of the 82nd Airborne Division in World War II.

By Phil Nordyke. St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2005. ISBN 0-7603-2201-5. Maps. Photographs. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xii, 868. \$35.00

Author Phil Nordyke has written a remarkable book about the 82d Airborne Division that captures the experience of the men who did the fighting. The author's desire is for this book to allow the reader to know their "incredible bravery under fire, an undying devotion to duty and comrades and some of the most incredible feats of arms ever achieved by any military unit." (xii) In this endeavor he succeeds admirably.

The 82d Airborne Division fought in some of the toughest battles of the European Theater in World War II. The book chronicles the history of the division and its attached units through the words and stories of its soldiers and leaders. The book begins with the initial members sharing the reasons why they volunteered for the paratroopers, as well as the experience of jump school. Nordyke contends that the soldiers possessed a rugged individualism that exhibited itself in a "refusal to quit despite physical exhaustion, stress and fear" (p. 11), traits that served the members well in combat. All the battles fought by the division are told by the soldiers and leaders who were there. Readers will find themselves engrossed in the pre-jump tension and vivid recollections of parachute drops and glider landings as well as the close combat on the battlefields in Sicily, Italy, Normandy, Holland, the Ardennes, and Germany. The stories of the participants provide the reader a front row seat to some of the harsh realities of combat

but also to some of the most courageous and selfless acts.

Throughout the book, the reader will be introduced to a host of men who tell compelling stories about their experiences, both good and bad. They share their feelings of pride but also their fears and sense of loss as many of their friends are killed or wounded during the many battles. These collective experiences provide an excellent description of combat at the small unit level. The author does an excellent job of piecing together the various personal accounts into a coherent, readable story.

There are several other aspects to the book which may appeal to readers. The problems and challenges the division overcame in the development of the tactics, techniques and procedures for airborne operations are discussed. In addition, soldiers provide their thoughts and feelings during the closing days of the war including the occupation of Germany and the garrisoning of Berlin. Another interesting area the book covers is the integration of new personnel in England following the fighting in Normandy. Furthermore, the book shares the emotions and thoughts of members whose units are either left out of battle, disbanded or transferred to other divisions. Some decisions such as the disbanding of the 551st Parachute Infantry Battalion after they incurred eighty-four percent

casualties are sure to generate some thoughts from readers. These areas are not always covered in all books and set this book apart from other accounts.

The author's research is well documented, with much of it from primary sources and includes research from the collections of Cornelius Ryan and Stephen Ambrose. Nordyke also makes use of many recent works and memoirs and includes many well detailed maps, which help the reader visualize the battles described by the participants.

Phil Nordyke's desire was to tell the story of the division, especially the experiences of the young men who did the fighting. This book is a fitting tribute. Some readers may be hesitant to read the book because of its length. However, because of the author's writing style, they will find the chapters read quickly. Historians will find *All American All the Way* a welcome addition to their libraries as it provides a single volume history of the 82d Airborne Division, as well as a good source on the experience of combat.

Robert Rielly
Leavenworth, KS

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