



If You Survive: From Normandy to the Battle of the Bulge to the End of World War II, One American Officer's Riveting True Story

George Wilson

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"If you survive your first day, I'll promote you."

So promised George Wilson's World War II commanding officer in the hedgerows of Normandy -- and it was to be a promise dramatically fulfilled. From July, 1944, to the closing days of the war, from the first penetration of the Siegfried Line to the Nazis' last desperate charge in the Battle of the Bulge, Wilson fought in the thickest of the action, helping take the small towns of northern France and Belgium building by building.

Of all the men and officers who started out in Company F of the 4th Infantry Division with him, Wilson was the only one who finished. In the end, he felt not like a conqueror or a victor, but an exhausted survivor, left with nothing but his life -- and his emotions.

If You Survive

One of the great first-person accounts of the making of a combat veteran, in the last, most violent months of World War II.

If You Survive: From Normandy to the Battle of the Bulge to the End of World War II, One American Officer's Riveting True Story Details

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Ido says

A good book overall in that he describes his experiences from Normandy through the Battle of the Bulge in great detail. He definitely brings his story to life and provides a glimpse of the infantry soldier in the American army in World War II that you don't normally see. Typically, the general perspective I've heard is that the average U.S. infantryman was not as effective a fighter as the German infantryman but that was made up through the use of technology and air power (of which the U.S. had plenty). He definitely dispels that myth and shows the U.S. infantryman to be as good a fighter as any in World War II even though the bulk of the army was not made up of professionals as the German army was.

I highly recommend this book.

Mike Harbert says

George Wilson's book is one of the best first person accounts of the war in Northwest Europe that I have ever read. As a young infantry lieutenant in the US Army, Wilson is sent to war as a replacement officer only a few days after the Normandy landings. His regimental commander tells the group of replacement lieutenants that if they survive their first battle he will promote them. Thus begins Wilson's combat journey, which is too intense and diverse to summarize here. Wilson's account is gripping, gritty, and disturbing - and is so good (and important) that it is one of the accounts of combat that historian and author Stephen Ambrose (Band of Brothers) was accused of plagiarizing in his works.

I think that George Wilson's book should be required reading for all NCOs and company grade officers in every service - or required reading at the service academies. It deserves to be on the shelf beside E.B. Sledge's "With the Old Breed" and Charles MacDonald's "Company Commander".

Ryan says

If I could rate this book 6 stars I would. It was one of if not the best book I have ever read. I am obsessed with history and war. The most interesting aspect of war to me is how a normal person could witness so much horror and danger and still be able to execute their mission. This book is a perfect example of how many people simply couldn't handle that and also how the author Lt George Wilson could. This book is written by a true leader who never sent men to do what he wouldn't but instead stood with them and led them into some of the most intense fighting in the European theater of WWII. Pick this book up today!

happy says

good look at what a jr officer's experiences during WWII

Jennifer says

3.5*

This was a difficult book for me to rate. On one hand I would give it 5 stars because of the glimpse you get into what it's like to be a soldier on the western front in WWII. The horrible atrocities these men endure is one not always told because it's difficult for them to relive the trauma. So, for that I'm grateful to George Wilson for sharing his story.

On the other hand the arrogance and lack of feeling toward his comrades made it difficult for me to read, which made me want to give it two stars. In the end I gave it 3.5 stars because arrogance and lack of feeling may have been Mr. Wilson's way of dealing with the horrors he endured.

If you like WWII or war books in general this is a must read.

Karen says

This book is a gripping account of a Lieutenant infantryman in Europe during World War II. He relates his experiences of fighting and leading men to war through several major European campaigns including the Battle of the Bulge. This one will make you feel war in the pit of your stomach

Jerry says

Wilson served with F Company of the 22nd Infantry Regiment of the 4th Infantry Division, joining about a month after D-Day. His book is an excellent depiction of the Americans at war in the ETO. Wilson was present for the liberation of Paris. He was also on the front lines as a platoon commander for many historic encounters: St. Lo, the Siegfried Line, Hurtgen Forest, and the Battle of the Bulge.

Wilson's account doesn't sugar-coat anything. As you can expect from this sort of memoir, there's heroics in spades. But there's also cowardice, stupidity, greed, and rebelliousness. Common wisdom holds those characteristics better described the US Army of the Vietnam era. But no, it's all there on the page. Not everyone was a hero, and Wilson doesn't hide it. He recounts his own actions as matter-of-fact, and as nothing that others didn't or wouldn't do in the same situations. But I think he was a brave man.

So you might have read enough WW2 memoirs to think you can skip this one. But you really should read this book, for its honesty and its perspective on the battles of the times.

I have one niggling complaint about the book: the cover. The typewriter print looks cheap, and the two figures look like they're fleeing. If you take anything from this book, it will be that Wilson and his platoon were always advancing! A book that deals largely in bravery should have a more heroic cover. It's a small point, but it has bothered me.

Adrian says

A superb read!

I just could not put this book down, it grabbed hold of me from the very first page and never let me go (hence, it only took me a few days to read it).

A riveting and totally engrossing read that will stay in your thoughts for a very long time.

I am going to read it again straight away. That's how good this book is. Will write a proper review after I have read it for a second time.

Dubysa says

Geras kovinukas - asmeniniai kariniai amerikiečių leitenanto, vadovavusio 4 pėst. divizijos kuopai, atsiminimai. Iš savo kuopos, kuri 1944 liepę išsilaipino Normandijoje iki 1945 m. vasario, kai ir jė "susirado" skeveldra, buvo likęs paskutiniu.

Daugybė kurioziškų situacijų, kaip pvz., leitenanto kelionė į bataliono štabą, kai "Prieš vieną iš pastatų stoviniavo keli vyrai. Jie nepasivargino paklausti slaptažodžio. Toks apsileidimas mane suerzino. Prisiartinau pasirošęs juos aprėkti ir staiga supratau, jog tai - vokiečiai. Staigi nukreipiau šautuvą į juos ir sušukau pakelti rankas. Jie nedelsdami pakluso, taip pat nustebę, kaip ir aš. Vėliau sužinojau, kad jie patruliavo, pasiklydo tamsoje ir buvo per daug užsimė, kad mus atpažintų. paime juos nelaisvė.

Tada nuotakė dar labiau sugadino sargybinis prie bataliono štabo vos už penkiasdešimties metrų. Jis irgi nepareikalavo slaptažodžio. Paniurnėjau apie tai pulkininkui Kenanui. Jė tai stipriai paveikė, nes beveik bet kas galėjo paimti jo štabą nelaisvė.

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Kruvinų mėsų epizodų

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Viena patranka šaudė į mus tiesioginiu taikymu. Sviediniai buvo tokie dideli ir skrido taip žemai, kad kai kuriuos net skrendančius galėjau matyti. Tai daugeliui suteikė sekundės dalį sureaguoti ir nerti į šoną. Deja, vienam iš vyrų sviedinys pataikė tiesiai į krūtinę. Visa viršutinė jo kūno dalis pranyko, tačiau kažkokio keisto refleksinio variklio varomos kojos dar pabėgo kelis žingsnius. Pasidarė baisiai bloga. Mačiau tų skriejančių sviedinių, sušukau vaikui, tačiau per triukšmą jis manęs neišgirdo.

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Vertimas, panašu, toks gan vidutiniškas.

P.S. Yra ir lietuvių (-io) paminėjimas - jau pokariu, kai kuopa buvo dislokuota Vokietijoje. Savotiškas toks paminėjimas:

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Palaiykite ryšius su civiliais mums neleista. Kariuomenė griežtai draudė broliautis ir tai pabrėžė komendanto valanda, prasidedanti devintą vakaro. Tai atrodė saugiausia, galvojant apie nesuvaldomus ramybės drumstėjus mūsų gretose ir dar tik vos prasidėjusi taika.

Vienas iš mano vyrų netrukus parodė šios taisyklės vertę. Po komendanto valandos išviliojo iš motorizuotosios technikos parko visureigę su vairuotoju ir, dosniai padedamas pabėglio iš Lietuvos, surado svetingą vietelę, kur galima nusipirkti vietinio kontrabandinio spirito. Netrukus gerokai pasilinksminęs, nuėmė vairuotoją iš keleivio sėdynės ir pats sėdėjo už vairo. Greitai įkdamas žvyrkeliu, neįveikė posūkio, visiškai sumaišė visureigę, o taip pat pasiuntė vairuotoją į ligoninę su nugaros sužeidimais ir užmušė pabėgėlį. Visiškai atsipalaidavęs, pats įvykio kaltininkas išsisuko vos su keliomis mūsų mis ir sumušimais.

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Lietuviai, kontrabanda, spiritas - raktiniai poros šimtmečių žodžiai.

Rick Lee says

Excellent read from a front line infantry officer

A no hold honest story of an infantry officer who experienced an all expenses paid trip through hell. From Normandy through France and the Hurtgen Forrest it was a good read and hard to put down. If you like first hand accounts from soldiers who were there and saw the "elephant" then this book is for you. Being an infantry platoon leader is one of the biggest responsibility and it is given to the greenest and no amount of training can prepare someone for this.

Jill Ortner says

Right to the point

This book reads almost like a field report. There is no unnecessary embellishment, just dramatic reporting of the battle action, tactics and movement of the military units. The unmatched determination of the soldiers in some of the most dramatic battles of the last year of combat in the European theater speaks for itself. The author keeps the reader completely captivated with a deft touch.

Danielle says

I'm giving this five stars for the impact it had on me personally. Even without that, it's a solid four-star book. The writing was matter-of-fact; interesting and conversational without wasting my time. The inevitable death, both the senseless and heroic casualties, was handled with due emotion. Unlike Catch 22 and Slaughter-house Five which handled the topic with a kind of numb cynicism, the attitude in this book toward the atrocities of war was 100% real. That being said, the gore-factor was kept to a minimum, and it was a genuinely inspiring read.

This was by far the most powerful, informative, and moving book I've ever read about WWII.

Margaret Elder says

This was a great, quick read. I was drawn to it because my father fought in the 22nd Infantry Regiment of the Fourth Infantry Division from D Day through V-E Day, and so the author's accounts of the battles had to be like those that my father endured. What brave men! My Dad once told me that his group had 350% casualties, and I certainly can understand how that happened now. I now know so much better what fighting was like in the Hurtgen Forest and the Battle of the Bulge for these men. The author's personal account made it so meaningful, and some of his insights, particularly about infantry soldiers, were exactly what my father used to say. As I was reading, I thought that this would make a great account for CEO's to read also. I know that sounds odd, but the author's emphasis on the knowledge and common sense of the first line battle veterans could be applied to any large group. The author was very straightforward as well -- not sugarcoating anything, including the bad behavior of some GIs or the less than courageous behavior of some either. The writing style was as straightforward as the author's opinions. For me, anyway, the style suited the work.

Nooilforpacifists says

Innocents abroad; get drafted, take France via Saint-Lo, Hurtgen and Bulge, but never make Captain. Good detail.

Beatriz says

This book is a good read because it gives a first hand account from a soldier's point of view. It gives glimpse of combat conditions and what life was like. the problem i had with this book was that it had little in-depth discussion of who the people were, with little description was going on around his a well. This book lacks the detail needed to really understand and get emotionally involved with the characters who are in the story.
