



# **A Foot Soldier for Patton: The Story of a "Red Diamond" Infantryman with the US Third Army**

*Michael C. Bilder, James G. Bilder*

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A brutally honest depiction of day-to-day combat in World War II . . .

A rarely frank account of the U.S. infantry experience in northern Europe, *A Foot Soldier for Patton* takes the reader from the beaches of Normandy through the giddy drive across France, to the brutal battles on the Westwall, in the Ardennes, and finally to the conquest of Germany itself.

Patton's army is best known for dashing armored attacks, its commander combining the firepower of tanks with their historic lineage as cavalry. But when the Germans stood firm the greatest fighting was done by Patton's long undersung infantry—the foot sloggers who were called upon to reduce enemy strong points, and who took the brunt of German counterattacks.

Michael Bilder, a member of the 5th Infantry ("Red Diamond" division), played a unique role in the Third Army's onslaught. A rifleman foremost, he was also a German-speaker, called upon for interrogations and special duties. Also a combat lifeguard, he played a key role in successive river crossings. An astute observer, he relates dozens of fascinating insights into the campaign, from dealing with German snipers to intoxicated Frenchwomen, as well as relaying the often morbid humor of combat. Laughter, for example, erupts among Bilder's unit when a hated Graves Registration officer, known for robbing the pockets of the dead, gets his hand blown off by a German booby trap.

When the 5th Infantry comes up against the fortress of Metz, the battle is detailed in all its horror, as is the sudden drive into the flank of the Bulge, where the Americans face their first winter battle against enemy veterans of Russia. Incidents common to the ordinary GI, but which seldom see the light of day in histories, are routinely related in this book, enriching the reader's sense of the true reality of World War II combat.

## REVIEWS

"...compelling reading about GI level combat in WWII Europe. I never expected it to be this good, but it is."  
Magweb, 12/2008

"...an excellent if often searing account of life as front line combat soldier in some of the worst actions of the ETO."  
Military Modeling, 01/2009

"...a brutally honest depiction of day-to-day combat in hedgerow country...relates dozens of fascinating insights into the drive to the Westwall...  
Incidents common to the ordinary GI during extreme combat conditions, but which seldom see the light of day in any histories are related... enhanced my understanding of the true reality of combat..."  
AMPS, 04/2009

"...tells a vivid story of his adventures from his enlistment to demob as a conscript in the US 5th Infantry

Division.”

HMVF, 06/2009

“...provides an important and worthwhile glimpse inside the Army that fought across Europe.”

Fredericksburg Free-Lance Star, 02/2010

a treasure that told of front line combat with honesty...enriched the study of history by providing the perspective of one man who had experienced the horror of war and the joy of homecoming. I had certainly enjoyed this book.

World War II Database

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