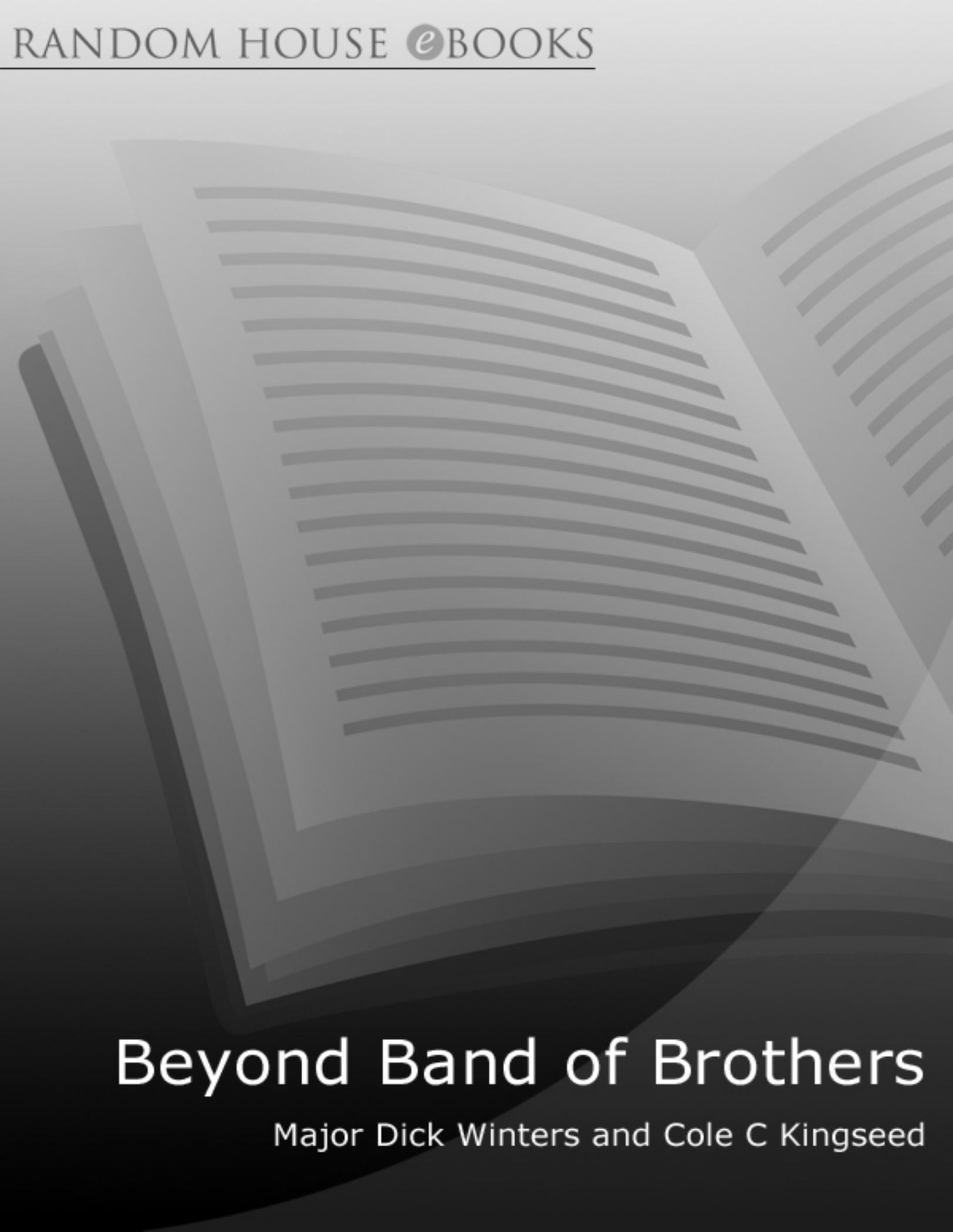


RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS

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# Beyond Band of Brothers

Major Dick Winters and Cole C Kingseed

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# About the Book

**A first-hand account of the true events that inspired the epic *Band of Brothers* series, told by the man who led Easy Company into battle and onto victory.**

Major Dick Winters' exhilarating depiction of the grueling training and horrific fighting endured by the men of Easy Company takes you into the minds of this legendary commander and the men he fought alongside.

Jumping from his aircraft on D-Day while under fire, Winters landed behind enemy lines with nothing but a knife for protection after losing all his weapons during the drop. From this chaotic first battle, through to returning home changed forever by the experience of war, *Beyond Band of Brothers* is the real story of how men become brothers and heroes are made.

## About the Authors

**Major Dick Winters** was born near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in 1918. He was one of the initial officers assigned to Easy Company of the 101st Airborne. Winters parachuted into France on D-Day and commanded the unit now known as the Band of Brothers. Promoted to captain and then battalion commander, he led his men through the Battle of the Bulge and captured Berchtesgaden, Hitler's Bavarian retreat. After the war, he was a highly successful businessman. Major Winters died on 2 January 2011, aged 92.

**Cole C. Kingseed** is a thirty-year army veteran who served in a variety of command and staff positions. He earned his M.A. in national security and strategic studies from the U.S. Naval War College and his Ph.D in history from Ohio State University. He taught at West Point and is the author of forty-seven articles on corporate and military leadership and such books as *Eisenhower and the Suez Crisis of 1956*. He is now president of his own leadership consulting firm, the Breccourt Leadership Experience, Inc., and is co-founder of Battle Leadership, LLC.

PRAISE FOR  
*Beyond Band of Brothers*

“Stephen Ambrose’s *Band of Brothers* and the HBO miniseries based on it made Easy Company ... well-known to more than military-history buffs.... Feeling that much of the material Ambrose didn’t use deserved an audience, [Winters] chose to air it and satisfy all those requests in [this] excellent narrative.... Praised as an exemplar of leadership, he shows here what he did to earn that praise and how he did it. Very well done, book as well as war service.”

—***Booklist***

“Winters tells the tales left untold by Stephen Ambrose, whose *Band of Brothers* was the inspiration for the HBO miniseries. It is in the battles and tactical maneuvers of Easy Company that Winters is most at home.... He carefully explicates the reasoning behind his strategy, leading the reader along as the company attacks German machine gun and mortar outposts. The narrative is laced with Winters’s soldierly exaltations of pride in his comrades’ bravery [and] the intrepidity of this group.”

—***Publishers Weekly***

“There is a saying that ‘Great leaders are born, not made.’ Such a man is Dick Winters.... A beautifully written book about a truly giant leader. This riveting read clearly reflects Dick Winters’s solid character, great integrity, and unerring judgment in critical background situations.”

**—Lieutenant General Harold G. Moore,  
coauthor of *We Were Soldiers Once ... and  
Young***

“Its modesty, its candor, and its insights into the nature of frontline leadership and the fears and behaviors of men in combat make this memoir a classic, ranking with Charles MacDonald’s *Company Commander*.”

**—Dennis Showalter, author of *Patton and  
Rommel: Men of War in the Twentieth  
Century***

“Winters’s leadership inspired his soldiers to fight courageously under the most difficult and challenging conditions of battle. [An] extraordinary memoir.”

**—H. R. McMaster, author of *Dereliction of  
Duty***

“Dick Winters epitomizes the finest attributes of American citizen-soldiers.... A poignant, riveting story with timeless application to the study of leadership in war...”

**—Colonel Lance Betros, Chairman,  
Department of History, U.S. Military  
Academy, and Editor of *West Point: Two  
Centuries and Beyond***

# BEYOND **BAND** OF **BROTHERS**

**MAJOR DICK WINTERS**



EBURY  
PRESS

*For Ethel*

## Author's Preface

First, this is not a work of fiction. These are true stories that happened in World War II to real people, men I led, and soldiers I fought beside. Even now, I stay in touch with many who are still living these sixty years later.

Stephen Ambrose, in his book, called us a “band of brothers.” Yet in the way we took care of each other, protected each other, and laughed and cried together, we really were even closer than blood brothers. We were like twins—what happened to one of us, happened to us all, and we all shared the consequences and the feelings.

After Ambrose finished the book, he wanted to clear his desk, and his floor, for the next book, the big one, *D-Day: The Climactic Battle of World War II*. His way of clearing was to send me a huge box containing all the memories of the men who had contributed for the writing of *Band of Brothers*. My home den thus became the repository for all these memories. It took me a whole winter to sort all the papers and add them to the records that I already had for the men. Ambrose had roughly put them in piles representing the chapters in which he used them, so I had a lot of sorting and reading to do to gather together the memories of each man.

As I read them, I came across so many good stories that for want of space had not been included in the book. I thought then, as I think now, that it was a shame that so many of them had remained “untold.” Since the book publication and especially after the HBO miniseries *Band of Brothers*, produced by Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg, I have been deluged with letters from people with questions, people begging for more stories—both more from me and from the men.

This book is the only way I know to reach all those many people, from all over the world, who have such a thirst to know more. Whether I read people’s letters or go out to speak, the cry is always, “Tell us more! Tell us more!” I cannot possibly write or speak to all these people, but one letter writer succinctly summarized the wide appeal of the men with whom I served and the message I wish to convey: “Generals Eisenhower, Patton, and Montgomery, President Roosevelt, and Prime Minister Churchill were giants on a world stage. You and your men were different to me, though. You came from the cities, backgrounds, and places that I came from. You had some of the same problems and situations. Your triumph was one of character more than ability and talent. I do not mean to imply that you or your men lacked talent and ability, but I could identify with your talents and abilities. I will never be able to speak like Churchill or have the ambition of Patton, but I can have the quiet determination of Easy Company. I can be a leader; I can be loyal; I can be a good comrade. These are qualities that you and your men demonstrated under the harshest of conditions. Surely I can do the same in my normal life.”

Another young man wrote from England and mentioned that he had no special links to World War II, “no interesting family war stories, no relatives killed in heroic actions.” Indeed his attachment to the conflict, however, was strong enough that one night he sat in tears watching the “Band of Brothers” documentary *We Stand Alone Together*.

Attempting to express his gratitude to the men of Easy Company, he pondered, "What is my attachment to men such as yourself, whom I have never met? Is it respect because you put your own life on the line to ensure younger people like me have the world we live in today? Is it awe that you could live from day to day watching friends being gunned down or blown apart and still get up the next day prepared to face the same horrors? Or perhaps, fascination at how you and your comrades were able to return to relative normality after the war, with the ghosts of the dead watching what you made of the life they were denied?"

Age is creeping up and taking its toll, and as what war correspondent Ernie Pyle called "the old fraternity of war" enmeshes me one final time, I want to honor the men I served with by telling as best I can the "untold stories." Many of these stories are from men who are no longer with us, and I can think of no better legacy for them and their families. Most important, I want to share my personal memories in the hope that my experience will serve as an example for present leaders and those of future generations who must make difficult decisions and put their lives on the line in the preservation of liberty.

Memoirs, by their very nature, are intensely personal. In combat, a soldier can only relate his memories of his field of fire. Consequently, accounts by the enlisted men and noncommissioned officers in general completely ignore the fact that the army does have a chain of command and that the chain of command usually works. Noncommissioned officers usually ignore the fact that the army has lieutenants. On occasion a company commander might be mentioned; on rare occasions, a battalion commander. But most memoirs never mention the existence of a battalion, regimental, or divisional staff. Usually the men seem to communicate only with the regimental commander.

While assembling my thoughts, I have, at all times, tried to avoid being guilty of the above tendencies. My

reminiscences are based on a combat diary I maintained and the letters I sent over the course of the war. I have crosschecked the factual records with contemporary operational reports. Although I shared many of these recollections with Stephen Ambrose, these memoirs contain many unpublished sources. It is my earnest hope that these memoirs will assist each of you to find your personal peace and solitude in a turbulent world.

## Foreword to the Paperback Edition

Fifty years after World War II, historian Stephen E. Ambrose told the story of Easy Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, in *Band of Brothers*. A decade later Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks produced the HBO Emmy Award-winning miniseries of the same name. *Beyond Band of Brothers* serves as the final chapter on Easy Company and their fellow paratroopers. That war continues to cast its long shadow over the men and women who served so that other men and women could live free.

When my memoirs were finally released, I hoped that they would find a receptive audience, but the public response exceeded my wildest expectations. One of the year's pleasant surprises was the success of the book. That it made the *New York Time's* bestseller list was something I had never expected. I understand that it is being translated into many languages. That so many readers have welcomed a simple soldier's insights into combat is a direct reflection of the sacrifices of the men of Easy Company, men who were so brave that I still search my soul to find the proper words to describe their heroism and their willingness to sacrifice everything for each other.

In addition to thousands of letters and best wishes from around the world, the city council of Eindhoven, Holland,

conferred the Medal of the City of Eindhoven on me and all Allied troops who risked their lives to liberate their homeland. This unique award is testament to the courage and the sacrifice of the men whom I was honored to command. One of my favorite stories was a phone call from a doctor friend who reported that as he was going through customs in Brussels, the customs official noticed he was from Pennsylvania and asked if he knew how he could get in touch with Dick Winters!

It is within this context that I offer *Beyond Band of Brothers* in its paperback edition. The shadows are lengthening for our band of brothers whose deeds are recorded in these pages. Many have since joined their comrades-in-arms who lie under white crosses on both sides of the Atlantic. I am honored to be a small part of their legacy.

In the twilight of my own memory, my thoughts always return to Easy Company, to happier times when a group of young men joined together to fight for freedom and to liberate a world from tyranny. Especially treasured are memories of experiences we shared with family, friends, and the men of Easy Company. None will ever be forgotten. This is our story.

Hang Tough!  
Dick Winters

# Prologue

The takeoff occurred on schedule, nice and smooth. Usually on these flights, everybody went to sleep, but tonight I forced myself to stay awake so I'd be able to think and react quickly, but those airsick pills seemed to slow down my emotions. Private Hogan tried to get a song going after a while. A few of us joined in, but our singing was soon lost in the roar of the motors. I fell to saying a last prayer. It was a long, hard, sincere prayer that never really ended, for I continued to think and pray the rest of the ride. When we hit the English Channel, it was really a beautiful sight, but I just couldn't appreciate its full beauty at this time.

"Twenty minutes out," came back from the pilot, and our crew chief took off the door. As jumpmaster for my plane, I stood up and hooked up my static line, went to the door, and had a look. I could see the planes in front and behind us in V of V formation, nine abreast. They seemed to fill the air; their power filled the sky. Then I looked at the English Channel and I could see this vast magnitude of ships of all sizes, steaming in the same direction that we were going—the Normandy peninsula. The ships were filled with men counting on us to pave the way for them. My mind filled with the realization that we were a vital part of the biggest

invasion in history, that I was leading men in actual combat for the first time. I prayed that I was up to the challenge.

We passed those two islands offshore (Channel Islands of Guernsey and Jersey); all water, nice formation, no fire yet. Then we were over land. Standing in the door, I could see the antiaircraft fire, and as we approached what turned out to be Ste. Mere-Eglise, I observed a big barn burning, as well as the landing lights that had been set up by the pathfinders. As the Germans illuminated the night with searchlights and antiaircraft fire, the pilots naturally began taking evasive action. We came in too fast and too low. I did not realize it at the time, but the plane carrying Lieutenant Meehan was hit and plunged toward the earth, killing Easy Company's entire headquarters section save myself.

"OK, boys! Stand up and hook up. Best to be ready to jump at any time now, and if we do get hit, we won't be taking it sitting down."

It was 0110 when the red light went on, ten minutes out, and all was quiet. I saw some antiaircraft fire—blue, green, and red tracers coming up to meet us. My emotions were now accelerating at a rapid rate. Gee, the firing seemed to come slowly, they were pretty wild with it. *Look out, they're after us now. Due to the speed of the aircraft, it is no good shooting straight at us, so the Germans start out right for you, but the antiaircraft fire seems to make a curve and falls to the rear. Now they're leading us, coming so close you can hear them crack as they go by. There, they hit our tail. Straight ahead, I can see the lights set up on the jump field. Jesus Christ, there's the green light. We're holding 150 miles per hour and still eight minutes out. OK, let's go—Bill Lee (former commander of the 101st Airborne Division)! There goes my leg bag and every bit of equipment I have. Watch it, boy! Watch it! Jesus Christ, they're trying to pick me up with those machine guns. Slip, slip, try and keep close to that leg bag. There it lands beside that hedge. Goddamn that machine gun. There's a*

*road, trees—hope I don't hit them. Thump. Well that wasn't too bad. Now let's get out of this chute.*

So I lay on French soil working free from my chute, machine gun bullets whistling overhead every few minutes, more machine gun tracers going after planes and chutes still coming in. All of us had lost our leg bags containing most of our weapons in the initial blast when we exited the plane. Why we were experimenting with leg bags on this jump when we had never rehearsed with them during training was beyond me. I later discovered that in our small contingent from Easy Company, we all lost our leg bags and ended up using whatever weapons we could scrounge from dead troopers. Unfortunately, we had no idea if these guns were properly zeroed, but there was little time to worry about anything except survival.

On the outskirts of town (Ste. Mere-Eglise), I saw a large fire, which turned out to be a downed plane. In the distance, a church bell tolled out a warning to the countryside that the airborne infantry was landing. The sound of the bell sent a tingling sensation down my back. When I landed, the only weapon I had was a trench knife that I had placed in my boot. I stuck the knife in the ground before I went to work on my chute. This was a hell of a way to begin a war.

## PART ONE

# **Band of Brothers**

From this day to the ending of the world ...  
We in it shall be remembered ...  
We gallant few, we band of brothers.  
For he today that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *Henry V*

# 1

## Beginnings

I am still haunted by the names and faces of young men, young airborne troopers who never had the opportunity to return home after the war and begin their lives anew. Like most veterans who have shared the hardship of combat, I live with flashbacks—distant memories of an attack on a battery of German artillery on D-Day, an assault on Carentan, a bayonet attack on a dike in Holland, the cold of Bastogne. The dark memories do not recede; you live with them and they become a part of you. Each man must conquer fear in himself. I have a way of looking at war that I have stuck with in combat and the six decades since the war. I look at those soldiers who were wounded in action as lucky because they often had a ticket to return home. The war was over for them. The rest of us would have to keep on fighting, day in and day out. And if you had a man who was killed, you looked at him and hoped that he had found peace in death. I'm not sure whether they were fortunate or unfortunate to get out of the war so early. So many men died so that others could live. No one understands why.

To find a quiet peace is the dream of every soldier. For some it takes longer than others. In my own experience I

have discovered that it is far easier to find quiet than to find peace. True peace must come from within oneself. As my wartime buddies join their fallen comrades at an alarming rate, distant memories resurface. The hard times fade and the flashbacks go back to friendly times, to buddies with whom I shared a unique bond, to men who are my brothers in every sense of the word. I live with these men every day. The emotions remain intense. Here is my story set against the backdrop of war and among the finest collection of men I've ever had the pleasure to know.

I was born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, on January 21, 1918, the son of Richard and Edith Winters. At the time of my birth, my family lived in New Holland, a small town near Lancaster. We moved to Ephrata while I was young and then settled in Lancaster when I was eight years old. What I recall most vividly from my youth was that I was scared to death to go to school and of the strangers around me. By the time I attended junior high school, I had finally adjusted to my changing environment and began to exhibit some leadership talent. The school's principal took a liking to me and I became a school crossing guard. I guess this was the first time that I was in a position to exhibit any leadership. Reading and geography were always my favorite subjects. I was an average student academically and enjoyed high school athletics, particularly football, basketball, and wrestling. My dad worked as a foreman for Edison Electric Company. For forty dollars a week, Dad labored tirelessly to provide for his family and to ensure we had the necessities of life. He was a good father, who frequently took me to baseball games in Philadelphia and in the neighboring communities. I had a wonderful mother—very conservative. She came from a Mennonite family, but never converted to that faith. Honesty and discipline were driven into my head from day one. Not surprisingly, Mother

was undoubtedly one of the most influential people in my life. A mother takes a child; she nurtures him, she instills discipline, and she teaches respect. My mother was the first one up every morning; she prepared breakfast for my sister Ann and me; and she was the last one to bed every evening. In many respects she was the ideal company commander, and subconsciously, I'm sure I patterned my own leadership abilities on this remarkable woman. In my early days at home, she had always impressed on me to respect women, and my father had repeatedly told me that if I was going to drink, I should drink at home. I made up my mind, however, that I wasn't going to drink, and I have never lost my respect for women.

My early heroes were Babe Ruth and Milton S. Hershey, who had recently established a chocolate empire near Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Every American boy admired Babe Ruth, the most popular ballplayer of his era. As for Hershey, he was not only a shrewd and determined businessman, he was also a great philanthropist. Born in 1857 on a farm in central Pennsylvania, Hershey believed wealth should be used for the benefit of others. He used his chocolate fortune for two major projects: the development of the town of Hershey, Pennsylvania, in 1903 and the establishment of the Hershey Industrial School for orphaned boys in 1909. Now known as the Milton Hershey School, the school's original deed of trust stipulated that "all orphans admitted to the school shall be fed with plain, wholesome food; plainly, neatly, and comfortably clothed; and fitly lodged.... The main object is to train young men to useful trades and occupations, so that they can earn their own livelihood." Any man who would dedicate his life to doing something for orphans had to be a good man. I admired Hershey tremendously.

Growing up during the Great Depression was hard, but Lancaster County provided sufficient jobs for most of the residents. Lancaster lies in the heart of Pennsylvania Dutch

country, where the residents developed a work ethic that stemmed from our heritage and our religious affiliation to the Mennonite and the Amish backgrounds. This work ethic rubs off and it accounts for the fact that each day, you strive to do your best.

I graduated from Lancaster Boys High School in 1937 and matriculated to Franklin & Marshall College, where I finally buckled down and studied harder than I had ever studied in high school. While going to school, I naturally did a great deal of reading. The subjects ran from poetry and literature to philosophy, ethics, religion, sociology, psychology, and all the other subjects associated with a liberal education. To defray college expenses, I earned money for tuition by cutting grass, working in a grocery store, and in what might have been prophetic of my future career with the paratroopers, painting high-tension towers for Edison Electric Company. Studies, work, and the ever-present lack of funds did not provide much opportunity for running around, but I did have a great deal of time to spend with my inner thoughts and ideas stimulated by reading. In June 1941, I graduated tops in the business school and earned a bachelor's degree in science and economics.

Rather than having the draft interrupt a promising business career, I immediately volunteered for the U.S. Army. Under the Selective Training and Service Act recently enacted by Congress, each man was required to serve one year of military service. It was my intention to serve my time, and then be free of my commitment to the military. My official entry date was August 25, 1941. Though I felt a strong sense of duty, I had no desire to get into the war currently raging in Europe. I preferred to stay out of it, and I was hoping the United States would remain neutral. Volunteering for military service was merely the quickest way to rid myself of compulsory service. I had already decided not to volunteer for anything, to do the

minimum work required, and to return home to Lancaster as soon as my year was up. As the day approached for me to join the army, I expressed my intention to just pass my time to my foreman at Edison Electric, who was a former military man. He jumped on me and told me in no uncertain terms to do my best every day and not to become a slacker. In the years ahead, I sent him a note through my father and thanked him for straightening me out.

September found me at Camp Croft, South Carolina, where I underwent basic training. Pay for a private was \$21.00 a month, a far cry from what I had been receiving prior to my enlistment. Military life suited me, but my initial months in the U.S. Army were characterized by long periods of boredom punctuated by brief interruptions of spirited activity. When the majority of the battalion deployed to Panama in early December, I remained at Croft to train incoming draftees and volunteers. I still enjoyed reading, but since I had been in the army, I had not been able to enjoy the luxury of the dreams and aspirations that characterized my youth. The army managed to take up a large portion of the twenty-four-hour day, and by the end of each day, my body was half-dead and my brain stopped functioning about the time that Retreat sounded. If anything, my career was aimlessly drifting.

My world changed dramatically the following Sunday when our unit received news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. I first heard of the attack while on a weekend furlough at the Biltmore Estate outside Asheville, North Carolina. After the initial shock wore off, my next reaction was somewhat selfish as I realized that I was going to be in the army for more than one year. Everyone clearly understood that he was now in service for the duration of the war and that before too long, each of us would deploy to a combat theater of operations. None of us was exactly sure how each was going to be affected, with the exception that all of us had that empty feeling in the bottom of our

stomachs that the country had been attacked without provocation. My duties as a trainer changed dramatically now that the nation was at war. Now that the army had a definite purpose, the cadence around camp quickly accelerated. Officers cracked down on us, proclaiming no Christmas furloughs, censoring mail. Everything now went according to wartime law. The changes gave me an eerie feeling at first, but when I looked at it from a different perspective, I did not feel too badly; the sooner we retaliated against Japan, the quicker the war would be over.

In retrospect, the U.S. Army was totally unprepared for the war in which it was about to embark. Two weeks after the Japanese attack, supply sergeants at Camp Croft collected all our gas masks and shipped them to the Pacific Coast in anticipation of a possible Japanese assault on the California coast. I could not help but think that a few insignificant masks—training masks, no less—would not have much effect on the outcome of the war. Before the reality of war totally transformed the army, I hitchhiked home to Lancaster to enjoy a ten-day furlough with my family.

In mid January, the army picked up its pace and rapidly transitioned from a peacetime establishment to a wartime military force. Six-day weeks gave way to seven-day workweeks. This gave me the opportunity to observe some of the officers more carefully. Most of the officers at Camp Croft had come directly from the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), including my platoon leader. Neither he nor the other platoon leaders knew their jobs. My frustration reached new heights one rainy day when a lieutenant came to teach our platoon about the new M-1 Garand 30-06 semiautomatic rifle, which the army was just fielding. In giving the nomenclature and the operation of the new weapon, he picked up a 1903 Springfield rifle and spent forty-five minutes talking about the M-1. The lieutenant

didn't even realize he wasn't holding an M-1. I thought this was impossible as no leader could be this dense.

I knew that I was a better man than most of the officers whom I had met, so I flirted with joining the commissioned ranks. I was already exploring the possibility of attending Officers Candidate School (OCS), when our commanding officer asked me if I would be interested in becoming an officer. I was very fortunate to be selected since at the time I was only a private and most commanders were picking noncommissioned officers (NCO) who were career soldiers and who had considerably more experience than I had. Things proceeded rapidly from that point. After filling out an application, I breezed through another physical examination and went before a board of officers. I had hoped to have a few hours to prepare for the interview, but I was told to report that afternoon. I tried to be as confident as possible and evidently succeeded because I received orders to attend a three-week preparatory course at Camp Croft for officer candidates.

Competition in the course was stiff and I certainly had to work to make the grade, for just about everybody attending the course was at least a sergeant, while I was a temporary corporal. I felt like an innocent babe in the woods when I compared myself to these seasoned NCOs. What I lacked in experience, however, I compensated for by studying. The one advantage I had over the other officer candidates was a college education, and I clearly understood the importance of study and doing my homework.

The course itself was very broad. The directors of the intelligence, communications, and heavy weapons schools delivered comprehensive lectures to the class during the first few days. By the end of three weeks we received a detailed summary about every aspect of the army. Overall I thoroughly enjoyed the preparatory course and enjoyed the opportunity to acquire additional training before reporting to Fort Benning, Georgia. By keeping my nose to the

grindstone, I finished the course with flying colors. The only question remaining was to which OCS class I would be assigned. Until I received definitive orders, I remained at Camp Croft.

As I awaited news of my next assignment, I briefly considered an offer to transfer to Fort Knox, Kentucky, to attend OCS as a member of the Armored Corps. Here was a chance to put an end to all the suspense and to get going quickly so I could leave in a few days. After thinking it over and asking the advice of the other officers, I decided against their common advice and decided to stick with the Infantry. I already had seven months of background in the ground service, and the thirteen weeks at Fort Benning would give me a background sturdy enough to enable me to carry my head high. In the Armored Corps, I'd be taking it cold and I was darned if I wanted to be an officer if I couldn't be a good one. On April 6, I received news that I'd be leaving Camp Croft for the class that started the following day.

Fort Benning, nestled in the red hills outside Columbus, Georgia, is a picturesque military post. Benning was an old army camp with modern facilities. Trees lined the wide streets and brick barracks contained modern furniture and reading rooms. Officer candidates were housed in wooden barracks, like at Croft, but the post was far cleaner than what I had experienced. The food wasn't plentiful, but it had a certain quality; in fact, it was nearly as good as home cooking.

The equipment used in the course was complete and the best possible. Every time I'd turn around there was a tank going by, somebody jumping from an airplane or off the jump tower that had been constructed for parachute troops. I was particularly impressed with the paratroopers who ran around Fort Benning at an airborne shuffle. Their cadence reflected a military unit with a high degree of morale and enthusiasm.

Within a few days of looking things over, I planned to ask my parents if they cared if I joined the paratroopers after I received my commission. When I finally announced my intentions, I received a strong veto, and many more from friends and neighbors. I had usually taken my parents' advice, but this time I was determined to trust my own judgment. The more I looked at the paratroopers, the more I was inclined to join them as soon as I graduated from OCS. Of all the outfits I'd seen at Fort Benning, they were the best looking and most physically fit. After ten months of infantry training, I realized my survival would depend on the men around me. Airborne troopers looked like I had always pictured a group of soldiers: hard, lean, bronzed, and tough. When they walked down the street, they appeared to be a proud and cocky bunch exhibiting a tolerant scorn for anyone who was not airborne. So I took it in my head that I'd like to work with a bunch of men of that caliber. The paratroopers were the best soldiers at the infantry school and I wanted to be with the best, not with the sad sacks that I had frequently seen on post.

In addition, the physical training appealed to me: lots of running—five miles before breakfast, and every place they went during the day. The only thing holding me back was my swimming. I was no flash at that angle and it was a requirement to join the paratroopers. Another selling point was the pay of an airborne 2d lieutenant, \$268 a month, which wasn't bad while it lasted. Still, I would have to be accepted, as all the paratroopers were volunteers and they were hand picked to join the elite airborne forces. I reckoned that was why they were so damn good. In the event that I was accepted into the paratroopers, it would mean another month at Fort Benning and then on to an advanced airborne school for parachute officers.

The officer candidate course itself proved physically and mentally demanding, but not as difficult as I had anticipated. Officer candidate school in 1942 was a

rudimentary course conceptualized by Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall and implemented by Brigadier General Omar N. Bradley, the commandant of the Infantry School. Officer candidates attended classes and conducted field exercises six days a week, being off Saturday afternoon and Sunday. Classes focused on the essentials of combat leadership and familiarity on weapons systems, infantry tactics, and general military subjects. Following the ordinary training day, we studied an average of two hours every night. After a few weeks the cadre conducted an evaluation to determine which candidates would probably be the best officers and surprisingly, this old private won over the more seasoned NCOs.

One of the peculiarities of OCS was that the cadre was so strict. For almost eight months at Camp Croft, I had never been giggered for any infraction during daily inspections. In April, however, I was cited for two minor deficiencies during a barracks inspection. That was good compared to the average candidate, who received one almost daily. We had to have our shoes exactly in position, uniforms spaced equidistant on hangers, and the fold in blankets 7 inches instead of 6 inches. The cadre went around with rulers during every inspection. They ran us ragged daily and we studied like fools each and every night. Missing a formation resulted in dismissal from the course. The transportation to and from Columbus was so inadequate that I resigned myself to remain on post and study for three months, to see an occasional movie, and to eat some ice cream.

Classes covered myriad military topics, ranging from demonstrations on the functions of supply to firepower demonstrations on fortifications with tanks and trucks. Each week the officers and noncommissioned officers told us the next week would be the toughest yet, and they always spoke the truth. Within two weeks we had what was supposed to be the toughest test we would have while we

were at Benning. The subject was map reading, but after college, the examination seemed like a true-and-false test. I was not worried in the least about studies, but I studied just for my own satisfaction. Marches increased in length and duration and much more time was spent in the field and on the firing ranges. The range demonstration that perked my interest was one that had been designed to fire machine guns over the heads of our own troops and to hit the enemy. We also learned how to aim at one target and hit another, the idea being that you could still score a hit if a smoke screen had been laid to obscure the principal target. Two weeks prior to graduation we completed the weapons portion of the course and I was not sorry, for all I had been thinking about were lugs, cams, operating rods, and gas-operated and recoil-operated firing mechanisms.

After considerable time on the firing ranges, we began tactical training, which I particularly enjoyed because I could use my head once again. During one field problem, we observed a battalion in the attack at a river line as a company of engineers constructed a footbridge, a vehicle bridge, and a ferry under fire, cover of smoke, and fire from airplanes. In retrospect, I characterized the course as a thirteen-week marathon in the Georgia swamps. As the course neared completion, my ambition remained with joining the airborne troopers and the more I learned about the infantry, the more I was sold on the fact that I wanted no part of it. Stories circulated throughout Fort Benning that 50 percent of the infantry either died from disease resulting from living in the filth or from casualties on the front lines. After observing firsthand the life a doughboy lived, I thought a doughboy had to be crazy.

During my time at OCS one of the officer candidates caught my attention. Lewis Nixon was the son of privilege and wealth. Born September 30, 1918, Nixon was the grandson of the last man to design a battleship as an individual. Educated at Yale and the Massachusetts