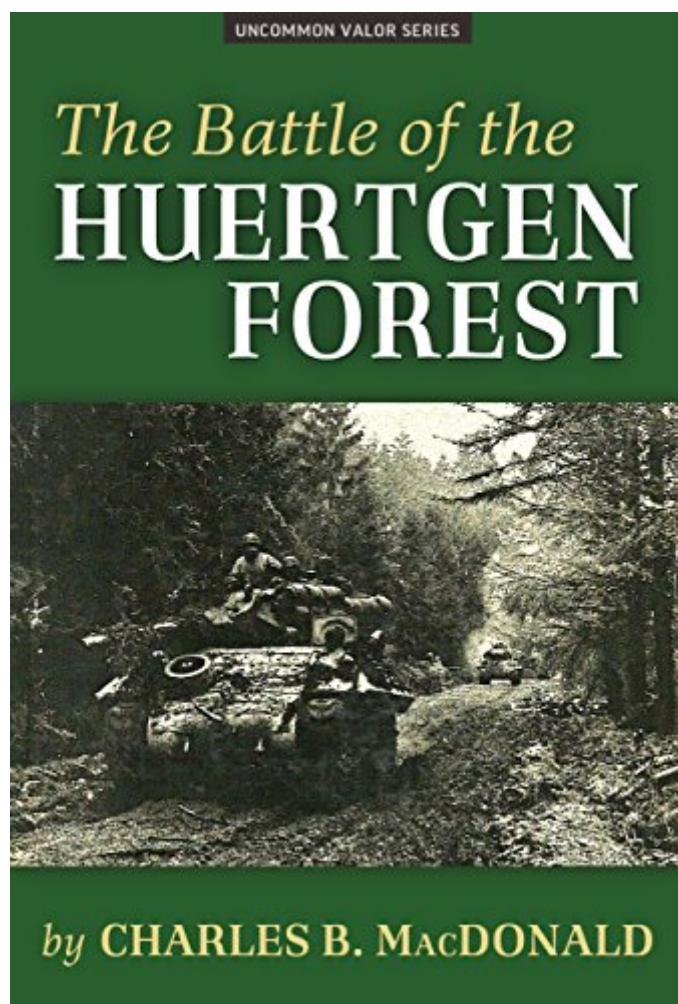


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The Battle Of The Huertgen Forest



Synopsis

The Battle of the Huertgen Forest, first published in 1963 and written by Official Department of the Army Historian Charles B. MacDonald, recounts the story of one of the bloodiest battles of World War II. In September 1944, three months after the invasion of Normandy, Allied armies prepared to push German forces back into their homeland. Just south of the Belgian city of Aachen, elements of the U.S. First Army began an advance through the nearly impenetrable Huertgen Forest. Instead of retreating, as the Allied command anticipated, the German troops prepared an elaborate defense of Huertgen, resulting in intense battles involving tanks, infantry, and artillery. The battle for the forest ended in December, when a sudden German offensive through the Ardennes to the south forced Allied armies to fall back, regroup, and start their attack again ("The Battle of the Bulge"), and which eventually culminated in the collapse of the Nazi regime in May 1945. The Battle of the Huertgen Forest provides a well-documented overview of the disposition, strengths, and weaknesses of American and German forces, as well as personal vignettes from both officers and foot-soldiers. With a depth of knowledge based on his own combat experiences, MacDonald, a captain in the U.S. Army at the time and a participant in the battle, portrays the American and German troops with empathy and demonstrates flaws in the American strategy and how the costly battles of Huertgen Forest could have been avoided altogether. Includes 3 maps.

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Customer Reviews

Excellent account of one of the toughest battles in Europe, WWII. My father fought in this and said it was hell. My uncle fought on the German side and said it was hell. The account is skewed a bit to the American view, but the victors often write the history, at least at first. There are other accounts written by German soldiers whose viewpoint is different, but these books are primarily in German. Fortunately I'm fluent in both as a son of a U.S. soldier and a German mother, and I grew up in a small German town near Frankfurt for the majority of the first fifteen years of my life. Despite the relentless propaganda of WWII merely being a war between the "Nazis" and the Allies, the true complexities of this war are not so simple. The average Wehrmacht soldier was fairly apolitical and they were soldiers, plain and simple. Some loved Hitler but many thought he was horrible for Germany, but to say so out loud was dangerous. I know, because my great uncle on my mother's side was murdered by the Nazis in 1937, twelve years before my birth, because he was an anti-Nazi. Most Americans have no understanding of the realities of a government where dissent can end up in one's own death, without trial, without any evidence but an accusation. One lesson every American should learn, but mostly doesn't, is that it CAN happen here. It merely takes a combination propaganda, a certain level of unsophisticated voters, a feeling of being "mistreated" by the rest of the world and a powerful military. Mix in the final ingredient of a reckless, sociopathic leader and the recipe is complete. Be warned: I'm a relatively old man now and have little to fear, but for those who are young and have young families, if this scenario should come to pass your lives will be forever changed for the worse. Be careful what you wish for and take the lessons of history to work for a better outcome even if it is a harder and slower road to take.

This book is a detailed account of a large battle that occurred between the U.S. Army and Nazi Germany just prior to Nazi Germany's final offensive referred to as "The Battle of the Bulge." The battle of the Huertgen Forrest was a major slug-fest that resulted in massive casualties on both sides. The U.S. Army, in particular, took horrific casualties in this battle as compared to other combat actions and I believe that is one of the main reasons this battle was not brought more into the public limelight; this and the fact that the Battle of the Bulge followed so closely behind the battle for the Huertgen Forrest. The Battle of the Bulge, being the final desperate 'push' made by Nazi

Germany to stop the Allied invasion of Germany, took the spotlight away from the battle for the Huertgen Forrest. This book provides the reader with specific strategic details of the battle and the U.S and Nazi combat units that participated. For those of you who are not familiar with military jargon regarding Army unit organization I recommend you do a little research and learn what specifically constitutes an "Army," "Division," "Company," "Regiment," "Platoon," or "Squad," is. This will give you a better understanding of the various unit strengths addressed in this book. A few years ago HBO made a movie called, "When Trumpets Fade." This movie, although centered on one specific soldier and his battle experiences, addressed the raw combat carnage that occurred during the battle for the Huertgen Forrest.

Analytical and carefully researched. Very well presented tactical account with just enough operational and strategic information to clarify the reasons for the battle and the tragedy that comes with operational leadership sloppiness. The difficulty of the struggle and the needless loss of American soldiers doing and redoing ill defined objectives is carefully laid out without spectacular gore. The author has an excellent point about the missed operational significance of the dams but gets carried away with it in the end using the benefit of 20/20 hindsight to beat up on the decision makers on the ground at the time. Other than that this book should be required reading at Command and General Staff College (vs. some of the stuff they had us read). and I highly recommend it for any WWII enthusiast. If read before reading battle of the Bulge books it will add a lot of insight to what went on there.

This is a brilliantly written story describing the day by day actions of the American's drive to move through the almost impenetrable Huertgen forest in the drive to the Roer. I enjoyed the author's style, his "just right" amount of detail, and the flow of the narrative. The tragic events caused at times by over optimism, or excess caution, or unwillingness send higher authorities the grim truth of casualties, and the piecemeal replacement of one division after another into the forest against a well entrenched German force led to a war of attrition causing tens of thousands of needless casualties. This long battle has been mentioned - but in a passing way, in many books I have read about the Battle of the Bulge, war in Europe et al, but this book puts this drawn out fight on center stage where it belongs! I recommend it highly to anyone interested in the WW II battles as the American Armies were crossing the border into Germany at Aachen and southwards. It is a military history more at the unit & higher levels, describing the decisions made, and also contains enough of the infantryman's feelings to make it a living book. If you put it down - good luck, for it is a book that

takes you into the action played out in a dark, cold & rainy hell that never seemed to end for those who were there.

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