

AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

Combat Infantry: A Soldier's Story

D.E. Anderson Jr.

Donald E. Anderson

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Four Stars (out of Five)

Most of the people who served during wartime didn't fight at the front. A very small percentage actually saw 'the sharp end,' combat. Even fewer survived it. Most of them probably couldn't talk about it, when they got home.

Donald E. Anderson, a soldier from 1940 to 1945, served in the Thirty-Fifth Regiment, Twenty-Fifth Division. A quiet man, in January of 1997, he was finally ready to tell his story.

Years of meticulous work are evident in Donald E. Anderson Jr.'s chronological assemblage of his father's stories. From voluminous handwritten notes, interview cassettes, old photographs, decorations, and discharge papers, Anderson transcribes his father's memories into a magnificent account of the Pacific Ocean theatre of World War II. This memoir brings people and places to life; vivid details and pages of personal photographs greatly enhance the story.

The honest, fearless soldier did not shrink from painfully revisiting memories he had buried long ago. The book recounts the sickening carnage as men on both sides become killers, thinking only of destroying the enemy. The memoir describes the steaming, mosquito-infested jungles of Guadalcanal, the Solomon Islands, and New Caledonia; noting what it was like for soldiers to climb vertical rock and cut through the "green hell." Anderson also relates his father's accounts of Kamikaze pilots and fighter planes, nighttime air raids, snipers, and the constant fear of attack.

The particulars of combat and military terms are clearly explained. Every page is full of the reality of war: the sight and smell of mangled, decomposed bodies; the effects of malaria and shell shock; the terrifying dreams. Accounts of violence and deprivation are contrasted with lighthearted anecdotes, including a visit from Bob Hope and the support of native Filipinos.

Anderson relates the everyday interactions between soldiers—their jokes and loyalty to one another, the act of dividing packages from home, and their responses to orders.

A few duplicated words and incomplete sentences are evident in the text, but they do not lessen the impact of this riveting book. Through it, the Anderson men fulfill a commitment to enlighten a nation about the heroics of its armed forces. Not only our troops, but civilians, pacifists, and the uninitiated will be a captive audience for this informative and heart-wrenching memoir. *Combat Infantry* brings honor to the Anderson family, to Donald Anderson Sr.'s World War II comrades, and to all who have served.

Mary Popham