

PRAISE FOR DEAD MAN'S RIDGE

“What makes Dead Man's Ridge not just a great read, but a great book are Peter M. Hanrahan's portraits of soldiers, from the generals to the privates, from Americans to Brits, to Germans. Hanrahan has a gift for revealing character through action and dialogue. Also, kudos to his re-search, reader-friendly prose, and novel-like narrative, which kept me buzzed all night, because I could not stop reading until the end at 3:55 A.M. Dead Man's Ridge is better than all the movies you've seen about The Battle of the Bulge.”

Ernest Hebert, Author/Professor of English, Emeritus, Dartmouth College

“Peter M. Hanrahan talked for hours with his wife's uncle about the old veteran's experience in World War II, when his untested platoon was virtually wiped out in the Battle of the Bulge. This led Hanrahan on a deeper search for other personal accounts of soldiers from the 17th Air borne Division, whose first action came in that bloody and decisive campaign. And what a treasure trove he discovered. Through their letters and reminiscences, Dead Man's Ridge brings the reader to the bitterly cold days in Belgium when young American men got introduced to the horrors and heroism, the chaos and camaraderie of desperate combat against a seasoned enemy. Day-by-day accounts of major figures, from Patton to Eisenhower and even Hitler, provide the larger context of the epic battle, but it is the granular testimony of the men who did the fighting and dying that gives this book its power—and its heart.”

Dayton Duncan, Author/Filmmaker

“Peter Hanrahan delivers a gripping and deeply researched account of one of the most brutal yet lesser-known engagements of the Battle of the Bulge. Dead Man's Ridge places readers alongside the young paratroopers of the 17th Airborne Division as they face impossible odds in the frozen forests and snow-covered fields of Belgium during the final months of World War II.

Drawing heavily from unpublished personal accounts, Hanrahan brings the chaos, fear, and courage of combat vividly to life. The narrative captures both the strategic importance of the battle and the personal sacrifices made by the men who fought it. The descriptions of the relentless artillery barrages, bitter winter conditions, and desperate infantry assaults create an immersive experience that highlights the true cost of war. What makes this book particularly compelling is its focus on ordinary soldiers thrust into extraordinary circumstances. The bravery and resilience displayed by the paratroopers of the 513th Parachute Infantry Regiment are both inspiring and heartbreaking, especially when viewed against the staggering casualties they endured. A powerful and respectful tribute to the men who fought on Dead Man's Ridge, this book is essential reading for military history enthusiasts, World War II readers, and anyone interested in stories of courage under fire.”

Donna's Book Addiction, Instagram

“The roles played by the 101st and 82nd Airborne during the Battle of the Bulge are well known. The 101st achieved legendary status at Bastogne; the 82nd played a less heralded but acknowledged role at St. Vith. Almost forgotten are the accomplishments of third US airborne division at the Battle of the Bulge, the 17th Airborne.

“Dead Man’s Ridge: The Bravery of American Paratroopers at the Battle of the Bulge,” by Peter M. Hanrahan, tells that story. It redresses part of the memory gap of the battle.

Activated in April 1943, the 17th is America’s forgotten airborne division. It arrived in Britain in August 1944, too late to participate in the airdrops in Sicily, Normandy or Operation Market Garden in September 1944. By November it was in France, part of the Allied Army’s theater reserve. The Battle of the Bulge, which started December 16, 1944, saw it committed to combat for the first time.

This book follows the 17th from its inception through the postwar fates of its veterans. Its focus is the Battle of Flamierge, a three-day battle fought in January 1945, late in the Battle of the Bulge. The division, light infantry, was committed against what General George Patton thought was retreating German infantry.

Instead, they encountered German armor, launching an attack to once more isolate Bastogne. The 17th Airborne stopped that effort, but at great cost. To hold what division histories called “Dead Man’s Ridge,” it took over 1000 casualties, including 50 percent of the fighting strength of its 513th Parachute Regiment.

It was a fight as heroic at the stand of the 101st Airborne, during the siege of Bastogne. It was overlooked because it took place late in the Battle of the Bulge, after the tide had turned against the Germans. Attention, especially postwar, shifted away from the battle once Patton relieved Bastogne, and the Germans began retreating in the north. While there are many histories of the opening weeks of the battle, few cover its end phase, when the 17th Airborne was committed.

“Dead Man’s Ridge” fills that gap. While it offers a comprehensive account of the Battle of the Bulge, its focus is on the last half of the battle, when Germany launched a set of major attacks to again cut off Bastogne. It also brings richly deserved attention on the 17th Airborne, showing readers its history through the eyes of those who served in it.”

Mark Lardas, Author/Historian

“Peter M. Hanrahan’s Dead Man’s Ridge is as close as a civilian can get to wartime. Yes, his story does deal with the big picture of World War II battles, but its power and strength lie in the remarkably detailed and sometimes terrifying experiences he was able to capture from World War II veterans. As a reader, it was easy for me to picture what those soldiers were going through and realize the strength and will they call on not only to survive, but to save the world from horror. Their war was personal, and the author enables the reader to make us feel what they felt.”

Tom Kearney, Editor/Writer/Teacher

“As the grandson of a soldier of the 513th PIR, The Battle of the Bulge and Operation Varsity have always been of special interest to me. However, despite the 17th Airborne’s critical role in the final year of the war, its actions are often overlooked in the bigger picture and frequently relegated to a sentence or two at most. In *Dead Man's Ridge: The Bravery of American Paratroopers at the Battle of the Bulge*, Peter Hanrahan seeks to remedy this oversight, as he expertly tells the tale of a tragically overlooked battle, and more importantly, the men who fought it. I expected to learn about the experiences of Niilo Liimatainen, but Hanrahan has provided so much more. From first-hand accounts of many soldiers on the frontlines, to an incredibly thorough and approachable summary of the build up to the Battle of the Bulge, this book goes above and beyond in bringing the full weight of this battle into focus. Most importantly, Hanrahan has written a book that honors the memory of the men who fought that day in Belgium. Those young men were not simply characters in a story, but real men, with real lives, and they all deserve to be remembered as such. Hanrahan has done his part to ensure that happens.”

Nicholai Lilley, Grandson of James W. Lilley, 513th Parachute Infantry Regiment, B company

"War is a vague concept. It can never capture what is horrifically experienced by soldiers as bullets and bombs take lives and devastatingly wound women and men both physically and psychologically. Peter M. Hanrahan has penned a powerful story of the 513th Parachute Infantry Regiment during the Battle of the Bulge and their stories fifty years after the conflict's end. A must read for those wanting to understand what it means to face life or death from a foxhole."

David L. Neidert, Historian/Author/Educator

“For those readers interested in WW2 history, especially famous battles then this book is for you. *Dead Man's Ridge* gives a unique insight into one of the key campaigns, The Battle of the Bulge. It includes many first-person accounts from some of the men in Patton’s army from their first enlisting and training in the US to deployment into Europe and action at the frontline. When you mention “Battle of the Bulge” most think of the famous “siege of Bastogne” but this book focuses on the efforts to push back the German advance after Bastogne had been relieved, particularly at a ridge in Flamierge, some 5 miles NW of Bastogne. Heavy losses were sustained on both sides in what Patton thought would be a simple rout but turned out to be one of the bloodiest encounters of the battle. With the emphasis on telling the tale from the GIs perspective, the reader is exposed to the extraordinary conditions under which troops had to operate. Heavy artillery bombardment, relentless machine gun fire, the horrors of seeing your comrades being blown apart in front of your eyes all while trying to survive the freezing temperatures with unsuitable gear.

The book is very well researched and well written. I would certainly recommend it to those who think they have read enough about the Battle of the Bulge. This is different and provides a real insight into what many GIs went through. Your respect for their bravery will increase immensely!”

Michael Neill, Waterstones Reviews

“At its core, *Dead Man's Ridge: The Bravery of American Paratroopers at the Battle of the Bulge*, surely began as a passion project for author Peter M. Hanrahan. The finished product is so much more. The book is a detail-rich account of American heroism told deftly with picture painting, writing, and easy storytelling. It is a thorough, honest, and valuable, and pulls back the curtain about a pivotal, if less remembered, unit of the U.S. World War II effort, the 17th Airborne Division, which suffered substantial losses at the Battle of the Bulge. No bells and whistles propped up this publication, just diligent research, and a strong desire to chronicle a slice of military history using the simplest of tools: roll-up-your-sleeves research that yielded anecdotes and first-person, frontline accounts. The book reveals truths about conflict, brotherhood, the ugliness of life-and-death battle, and serves as a reminder that war-story history can be handed down powerfully in small doses, one letter, one interview, one discovered reminiscence, and one battlefield campaign at a time. I was absorbed, drawn in by a sense of time, place and journey. I was transported and connected to real-life soldiers, like Niilo Liimatainen, which made this book, in an equally compelling way, a story of human history. I savored the stories within the story that will pull the reader along.”

Paul Miller, Journalist/Editor

“I couldn’t put this book down. My uncle was with the 194th GIR company D 2 battalion. He fought with these men on Dead Man’s Ridge. Not only were these men brave, but they had guts and believed in America and what it stood for. It’s all in the book.”

Amazon Reader Review

“Beautifully written. *Dead Man’s Ridge* is one of the best books on The Battle of the Bulge to date. The writing flows well and each chapter is thoroughly researched with such care and attention to detail. This book is an absolute treasure and a must have for any history buff’s bookshelf.”

Goodreads Reader Review