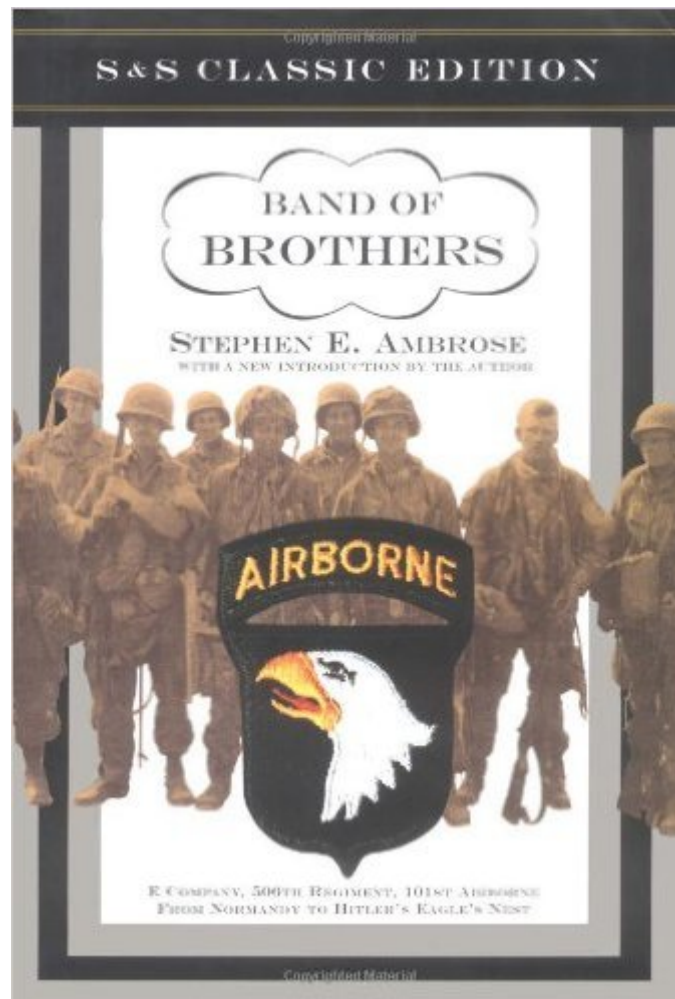


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Band Of Brothers: E Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne From Normandy To Hitler's Eagle's Nest



Synopsis

Stephen E. Ambrose's iconic story of the ordinary men who became the World War II's most extraordinary soldiers: Easy Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, US Army. They came together, citizen soldiers, in the summer of 1942, drawn to Airborne by the \$50 monthly bonus and a desire to be better than the other guy. And at its peak "in Holland and the Ardennes" Easy Company was as good a rifle company as any in the world. From the rigorous training in Georgia in 1942 to the disbanding in 1945, Stephen E. Ambrose tells the story of this remarkable company. In combat, the reward for a job well done is the next tough assignment, and as they advanced through Europe, the men of Easy kept getting the tough assignments. They parachuted into France early D-Day morning and knocked out a battery of four 105 mm cannon looking down Utah Beach; they parachuted into Holland during the Arnhem campaign; they were the Battered Bastards of the Bastion of Bastogne, brought in to hold the line, although surrounded, in the Battle of the Bulge; and then they spearheaded the counteroffensive. Finally, they captured Hitler's Bavarian outpost, his Eagle's Nest at Berchtesgaden. They were rough-and-ready guys, battered by the Depression, mistrustful and suspicious. They drank too much French wine, looted too many German cameras and watches, and fought too often with other GIs. But in training and combat they learned selflessness and found the closest brotherhood they ever knew. They discovered that in war, men who loved life would give their lives for them. This is the story of the men who fought, of the martinet they hated who trained them well, and of the captain they loved who led them. E Company was a company of men who went hungry, froze, and died for each other, a company that took 150 percent casualties, a company where the Purple Heart was not a medal "it was a badge of office.

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Customer Reviews

Band of Brothers, by Stephen Ambrose, is the story of E (Easy) Company of the 101st Airborne Division in World War II. It's a very personal account, as Ambrose conducted numerous interviews with the surviving members of the company and uses those interviews to imbue a sense of closeness to the action and the men who went into that action. It's a very effective book, though it does seem to be "history lite." I'm not really sure why, because Ambrose has obviously done a lot of research in producing this story. Perhaps it is because it's not a typical history book with documentation from all over the place. Instead, he seems to have used only a couple of sources besides the men of Easy themselves. Then again, is that a bad thing? Personally, I don't think so, at least not in this case. Ambrose is not attempting to write a history of World War II. He's writing the story of a group of men who formed relationships and bonds that would carry them through the rest of their lives. I found this book fascinating. Most of the history books I have read have been very abstract, telling about the moving of units and what they did and how successful they were in battle. They always have some personal angles involved, either talking about letters written home, or some personal stories of valor. Ultimately, though, they are about the battles themselves. These books can be very interesting. Band of Brothers tells us everything about a group of men and how they fought. We get to laugh with them, we get to see the horrors that they have seen. We also get to see the incompetence that sometimes becomes prevalent in wartime. Ambrose doesn't pull any punches, and neither do the men of Easy to whom he spoke. They are very outspoken about the people they didn't like.

As you would expect from the title, this book is focused on the stories of the individuals who made up this "band of brothers". Stephen Ambrose based his account on personal interviews and diaries and letters written at the time, occasionally moving back to a larger view when he quotes from an official history or other text. This is the story of Easy Company, 2nd Battalion, 506 Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101 Airborne Division. A famous group in a famous unit, fighting from Normandy in the early hours of D-Day, through Holland in the spectacular failure of Operation Market-Garden and Belgium in a gallant stand at Bastogne in the Battle of the Bulge, all the way to Hitler's "Eagle's Nest" in the Austrian mountains, where the victors had a well-deserved feast of wine, women and song. This is an incredible story, told mainly in the words of those who were there, and you can feel

the fear, exhilaration, killing fury, bitter cold and biting hunger along the way. But most of all you can feel the camaraderie of soldiers thrown together in a remote training camp in 1942, who trained and fought as a band of brothers and now, sixty years on, still maintain their closest friendships with each other. In another sense it is a story of an amazing soldier - Second Lieutenant Winters, one of the founding officers of Easy Company, who ended up a Major commanding the battalion. He led his troops with coolness and courage, intelligence and humanity. He gained more than respect, he gained the love of these warriors, and he earned it through common sense decisions in training and in combat. His decisions saved the lives of his men and cost the enemy dearly, and his small unit actions are still cited as textbook examples. This book is chockablock full of infantry minor actions.

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