



# A Foot Soldier for Patton: The Story of a "Red Diamond" Infantryman with the US Third Army

By Michael C. Bilder, James G. Bilder

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## A Foot Soldier for Patton: The Story of a "Red Diamond" Infantryman with the US Third Army By Michael C. Bilder, James G. Bilder

A brutally honest depiction of day-to-day combat in World War II . . .

A rarely frank account of the U.S. infantry experience in northern Europe, *A Foot Soldier for Patton* takes the reader from the beaches of Normandy through the giddy drive across France, to the brutal battles on the Westwall, in the Ardennes, and finally to the conquest of Germany itself.

Patton's army is best known for dashing armored attacks, its commander combining the firepower of tanks with their historic lineage as cavalry. But when the Germans stood firm the greatest fighting was done by Patton's long undersung infantry—the foot sloggers who were called upon to reduce enemy strong points, and who took the brunt of German counterattacks.

Michael Bilder, a member of the 5th Infantry ("Red Diamond" division), played a unique role in the Third Army's onslaught. A rifleman foremost, he was also a German-speaker, called upon for interrogations and special duties. Also a combat lifeguard, he played a key role in successive river crossings. An astute observer, he relates dozens of fascinating insights into the campaign, from dealing with German snipers to intoxicated Frenchwomen, as well as relaying the often morbid humor of combat. Laughter, for example, erupts among Bilder's unit when a hated Graves Registration officer, known for robbing the pockets of the dead, gets his hand blown off by a German booby trap.

When the 5th Infantry comes up against the fortress of Metz, the battle is detailed in all its horror, as is the sudden drive into the flank of the Bulge, where the Americans face their first winter battle against enemy veterans of Russia. Incidents common to the ordinary GI, but which seldom see the light of day in histories, are routinely related in this book, enriching the reader's sense of the true reality of World War II combat.

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

“...a brutally honest depiction of day-to-day combat in hedgerow country...relates dozens of fascinating insights into the drive to the Westwall...Incidents common to the ordinary GI during extreme combat conditions, but which seldom see the light of day in any histories are related... enhanced my understanding of the true reality of combat...” (AMPS)

“...provides an important and worthwhile glimpse inside the Army that fought across Europe.” (*Free Lance Star*)

“Written by an ideal father son team, the book is easy to read and offers the general public or historians an outstanding wartime memoir.” (*Journal of America's Military Past*)

“...compelling reading about GI level combat in WWII Europe. I never expected it to be this good, but it is.” (*Magweb.com / Russ Lockwood*)

“...an excellent if often searing account of life as front line combat soldier in some of the worst actions of the ETO.” (*Military Modeling*)

“...a frank, often humorous, and deeply penetrating look at combat and army life from an ordinary GI's point of view. ...filled with... vignettes and personal remembrances, the kind that only the best memoirs can deliver.” (*WWII History Magazine*)

a treasure that told of front line combat with honesty...enriched the study of history by providing the perspective of one man who had experienced the horror of war and the joy of homecoming. I had certainly enjoyed this book. (*World War II Database*)

### **About the Author**

Michael Bilder was inducted into the th Infantry Division in April 1941 and in 2006 was awarded the Legion of Honor, France's highest decoration, for his WWII service. A retired carpenter, he lived in the house he built himself in 1960 and where he and his late wife raised five children, until his passing in Spring 2010. James, his youngest, has a BA degree in Journalism from Lewis University and a Masters in Sciene from Loyola. He served as the mayor of Worth, Illinois from 1993 to 2001 and is currently in private industry, living only a few miles from his father with his wife and four children.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Rosa Johnson:**

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