



Surrounded by Heroes: Six Campaigns with Divisional Headquarters, 82d Airborne, 1942-1945

Leonard Levenson

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When the author was inducted into the U.S. Army in 1942 he had no reason to expect special treatment. Instead, because he was a typist and draftsman, he was grabbed up by an outfit desperately in need of those skills. It was the G-3 (Operations) Section of the 82nd Airborne. Len Levenson thus gained a ringside seat for some of the greatest campaigns of World War II.

The 82nd fought throughout the ETO, from the invasions of North Africa, Sicily and France, to the Netherlands, the Bulge and the drive on Berlin. And throughout the campaigns sat Levenson at the division's nerve center, typing orders, drafting battle maps, and acting as liaison. A rare enlisted man with "bigoted" (top secret) status, he was privy to the 82nd's actions as they were being devised. In the process, he was able to gain firsthand looks at Ridgeway, Gavin, Patton, Montgomery and other luminaries who came through the Headquarters.

Along with the divisional staff, the author arrived in battle in many different ways—by ship, plane, glider, parachute and jeep. With the rest of the All American Division he shared the blistering heat of Africa, the bonechilling cold of the Ardennes, the confusion of battle, and the ever-present enemy fire.

Rising from private to master sergeant, Levenson thought that he had "the best job in the army." In this revealing memoir, however, he never fails to give full credit to the men on the firing line who suffered the greatest hardships and casualties. The author has provided a rare behind-the-scenes view of the 82nd Airborne in World War II, yet he is the first to acknowledge that his greatest honor was to be "Surrounded by Heroes."

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