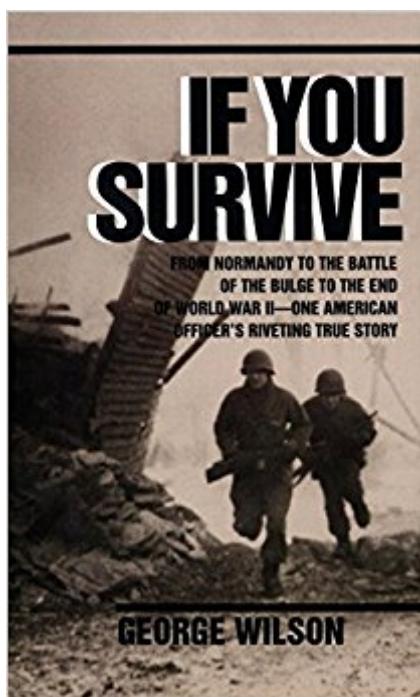


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If You Survive: From Normandy To The Battle Of The Bulge To The End Of World War II, One American Officer's Riveting True Story



Synopsis

"If you survive your first day, I'll promote you." So promised George Wilson's World War II commanding officer in the hedgerows of Normandy -- and it was to be a promise dramatically fulfilled. From July, 1944, to the closing days of the war, from the first penetration of the Siegfried Line to the Nazis' last desperate charge in the Battle of the Bulge, Wilson fought in the thickest of the action, helping take the small towns of northern France and Belgium building by building. Of all the men and officers who started out in Company F of the 4th Infantry Division with him, Wilson was the only one who finished. In the end, he felt not like a conqueror or a victor, but an exhausted survivor, left with nothing but his life -- and his emotions. If You Survive One of the great first-person accounts of the making of a combat veteran, in the last, most violent months of World War II.

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Customer Reviews

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accounts of the making of a combat veteran, in the last, most violent months of World War II.

George Wilson (1921â "2005) was a first lieutenant in the U.S. Army during World War II. He wrote about that experience in his bookÂ If You Survive, which is now required reading at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

This book was absolutely, positively, amazing and I would recommend it to anybody that enjoys a good book filled with detail and sentiment. I have yet to read another book that had me on edge as much as this book did. I loved every single part of the book between the graphic details, the riveting war scenes, and the thoughtful remarks made by George Wilson. I am sad that I have finished this book but have gained some valuable insight through Wilson's account of World War II and this a book I will never forget. Thank you, Mr. Wilson for sharing your experiences with us and thank you for your service.

If you survive your first day, I'll promote you. So said George Wilson's commanding officer on the first rugged day behind the beaches, and a promise not ever really fulfilled. Unlike so many war biographies this account is literate and a hugely pleasurable read. It alternates between the truly tense, and the frontline irony and despair at getting good tactical direction based on anything like good intelligence. From the beaches, to the horror of the Battle of the Bulge, the ludicrous ease with which the Hindenburg Line was pierced - nobody in the pretty good German command structure thought of preparing the "wall" for attack from the rear. The full horrors of bombardment, the noise, the terrifying injuries and the dismemberment of combatants, the inevitable death of civilians, the mental breakdowns of so many soldiers, battle fatigue and wet, waterfilled foxholes are all recounted clearly with passion, and the 'take-it-or leave it' observations of a man who saw it all in its horrible, occasionally funny, ironic, irritating and plain anger-making detail. Never does the narrative get blocked in military minutiae yet I suspect every key individual relevant to his story is accurately named and ranked. George Wilson is a talented writer with an easy style, and ability to create excitement and tension. I cannot recommend it highly enough, it is undoubtedly one of the finest narratives recording those times.

The book documents the daily events of the young Second Lt from his entering the war, to the shooting of his first enemy man in combat, the hard ships of living in fox holes, living off of K Rations for nine months, lack of ammo at times, the cold weather, shortages of proper clothing for his men

and explains in detail his own personal feelings when at times half of the men in his company were killed in one short battle. The Strong leadership capabilities of his SGT's and this continued for a period of about nine months before he received his first break from daily battles. He is promoted to LT and prior to the Battle of the Bulge he is a Captain and is the only one still alive from the 160 men in the initial "F" Company of the Twenty-second Infantry Regiment of the Fourth Infantry Division, commanded by Colonel "Buck" Lanham. He discusses the cost in grief, human suffering and devastation, immeasurably expensive of lost lives and just why it is that "why can't human beings think of the losses - before we start a war where in the end no one really wins". Mankind must step forward in wisdom and emotional maturity to stop these catastrophe events. Awarded the Silver Star and three (3) Purple Hearts. His thoughts are as all, who have served in war, at the end - exhaustion - survivorship - nothing but life and your emotions remain.

I just could not put this down . The author's account of his experience as a platoon and company commander for 8 months from shortly after D-Day till early 1945 bring home just what a god-awful butcher shop the front line was . A few days of contact could easily wipe a unit and Wilson's first hand descriptions of just how that happened (again and again) are absolutely riveting . Well , well worth reading .OK , now the quibbles . The story is told in a tone one would expect in a unit history : dry , replete with dated military manual jargon (the company doesn't go forward , it attacks in platoon column , etc) , it is larded with unnecessary extraneous detail (we are told that Lieutenant Smith commands B Company on his right flank , Lieutenant Jones commands D Company on his left flank in a given action when neither have been mentioned previously or will be again) .A more serious reservation might be the author's equating " leader " with commissioned officer . Were the NCOs in the ETO really that faceless and unhelpful ? And no , this is not exNCO sour grapes . I served as a commissioned officer in wartime and was privileged to lean heavily on those men who had been in the Army almost as long as I had been alive .As I said , these are quibbles . The book is overall a fine contribution to ETO history .

Interesting perspective from Normandy to Germany. A very good read.

Normandy, the Breakout, the Huertgen Forest and the Battle of the Bulge were four of the most epic battles in Europe. George Wilson vividly describes his experiences as a young Infantry Platoon Leader and Company Commander. Casualties were high (over 200%) after some battles. As a young leader with what we'd now describe as meager training, he applied the lessons he learned

through experience toward accomplishing often impossible missions. Some of the young soldiers put into his charge died so quickly that he never even had a chance to know their names. At one point, his unit was so decimated that he didn't have a single sergeant alive to lead the small teams into yet another seemingly impossible situation. This story is a reminder of the bravery of the nameless and faceless young men who fought in Europe who endured horrors, privations and indescribable events yet persevered to defeat evil. If I were to recommend only one book about World War II as seen by a typical soldier, this would be it.

If you want to try to experience what it was like on the battlefields of WWII, read this book. It evokes feelings in you that make you never wanting to experience being a soldier. I understand my dad better. Thank God for the USA soldier and their unselfish commitment to that which is good and right.

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