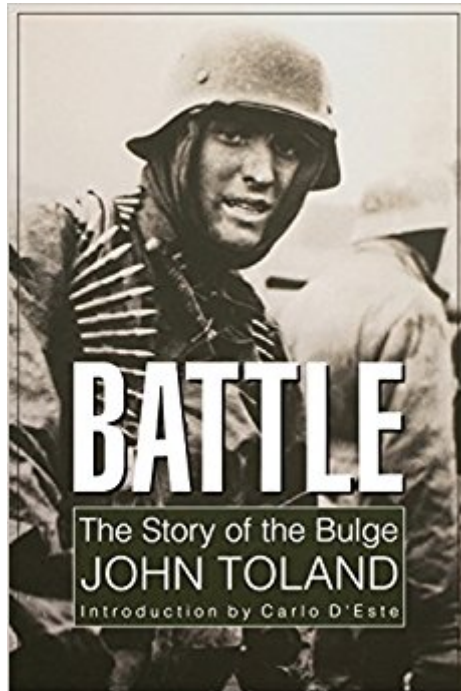




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# Battle: The Story Of The Bulge



## Synopsis

"The perspective of 15 years, painstaking research, thousands of interviews, extensive analysis and evaluation, and the creative talent of John Toland [paint] the epic struggle on an immense canvas. . . . Toland writes with the authority of a man who was there. . . . He tastes the bitterness of defeat of those who surrendered and writes as if he had the benefit of the eyes and ears of soldiers and generals on the other side of the line. . . . If you could read only one book to understand generals and GIs and what their different wars were like this is the book."-Chicago Sunday Tribune John Toland has written numerous books on World War II, including *Infamy: Pearl Harbor and Its Aftermath*. Carlo D'Este is the author of *Patton: A Genius for War* and other works.

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"The perspective of 15 years, painstaking research, thousands of interviews, extensive analysis and evaluation, and the creative talent of John Toland [paint] the epic struggle on an immense canvas. . . . Toland writes with the authority of a man who was there. . . . He tastes the bitterness of defeat of those who surrendered and writes as if he had the benefit of the eyes and ears of soldiers and generals on the other side of the line. . . . If you could read only one book to understand generals and GIs and what their different wars were like this is the book."-Chicago Sunday Tribune (Chicago Sunday Tribune)"The author has devoted years to studying memoirs, interviewing veterans and consulting military documents, both German and American. He also has revisited the old battlefields in Belgium and Luxembourg. . . . Toland has told the whole story with dramatic realism. . . . It is a story of panic, terror and of high-hearted courage."-New York Times Book

Review (New York Times Book Review)"For the first time in the growing literature of World War II, the inspiring story of the stubborn, lonely, dogged battle of the Americans locked in this tragic salient is told. . . . gripping . . . You cannot put it down once you start it." —*San Francisco Chronicle* (San Francisco Chronicle)

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History singles out certain events to feature as running points in wars. The anniversaries of specific battles and victories are observed and celebrated with films, books, newspaper articles and special television programs. In the process, other battles, many times more meaningful and significant than those immortalized, go relatively unnoticed. The "Battle of the Bulge" was one of those put into a shadow by the celebrated victory that resulted from the famous united attack by allied troops. ships and planes at Normandy Beach. Some histories declare that "D-Day" marked the end of the War in Europe. This book describes the battle in Europe that began as those troops marched from Normandy toward Berlin. It mentions the great success of the secret strategies that led to Normandy, and the shock that led the German high command generals to suggest to Adolf Hitler that it would be advisable for Germany to surrender, while there was still time to negotiate. Hitler, however, possessed with the belief that he was invincible and a brilliant strategist ordered his armies to resist the allied forces, and to make their way to a major east-west river, follow it and take over a major allied supply port, thus, in his crazed imagination, would turn the tide of the war. His generals followed orders. The tremendous clash between these two forces occurred, not on a classic rolling, chessboard battle field, but on narrow mountain and valley roads in the dead of winter, among quaint villages and two lane dirt roads, some of which ended nowhere, in a region that saw no reason to make roadmaps. Visibility beyond a few hundred yards was often impossible, as the skies denied air cover over stormy mountains, and commanders of tank divisions on both sides, leading columns of tens of thousands of troops, in both directions, often encountered each other by surprise. Combat units proceeding to a common destination from different directions ran into confusion at uncharted intersections, bridges were built and blown, supply trains bogged down, and ubiquitous deployments of strategically placed tank destroyers covered narrow passes on mountain roads. The Battle of the Bulge became headline material when one American General, stalled in a primitive Belgian forest, his troops surrounded by German tank divisions, received a message from the German commanding general, suggesting he surrender. He sent his reply back

via the German messenger, written in German: "NERTZ!!" this determination and courage typified the spirit of our troops as they suffered massive casualties and setbacks, but won that battle and eventually reached Berlin. The account is filled with the unique, innovative imaginations of military leaders on both sides, cut off from orders from a central command, creating their own strategies and tactics, successfully prevailing over massive opposition. This is the war that was maybe too complex and daunting to describe, even after it was over,]. There are many veterans still around who were there. This book is written for them, includes many of their names; and reveres the incredible courage and travail of those troops as they fought under horrendous conditions. "Battle" is an understated title. as the "Battle of the Bulge" was a campaign, the last leg of the most terrible war in world history. No military library is complete without this book and the accounts it contains..

I am reading this book as an introduction to some of the specifics of the Bulge. I understand the overall battle - German surprise offensive, St. Vith, Bastogne, bad flying weather, etc - but I am looking for specifics from all across the front with regard to which units were involved and did what. This book mostly delivers that. The book is as fast-paced as the battle itself, and this can be confusing for a newcomer. The detail is there, for the most part, but it is hard to fit it into the battle as a whole. A large reason for this is the lack of maps; there are just a few sprinkled throughout the book. Unfortunately, the battle - and thus the book - was dominated by the need to capture villages and cities to make use of road networks. I do not believe there is a single map that shows all relevant cities, roads, and rivers (the map before the first chapter has all these features, but they are covered up by the large arrows indicating the German offensive). As a result, when jumping from unit to unit along the front, I find myself simply becoming disoriented. My primary interest is troop movements from a tactical perspective, and so this is a problem. Overall, the book is very good, and provides exposure to all areas of the battle. I now know what I am looking for if I want to explore any one portion further.

BATTLE, The Story of The Bulge by John Toland (1959, First Edition) Battle, by John Toland, was the third in a trilogy of books on WWII. The first was an excellent little book, The Damned Engineers, 1970, by Janice Holt Giles, followed by The Bitter Woods, 1969, by John S. D. Eisenhower. Availability of Toland's BATTLE is limited and I happened to receive a 1st edition published in 1959. The Damned Engineers is limited in scope to mainly the heroic exploits of the 291st Engineer Combat Battalion around Malmedy and Trois Points. Toland and J. S. D. Eisenhower present a comprehensive portrait of the Battle of The

Bulge, the last great German offensive between December 1944 and January 1945. I am happy that I read all three books and now feel I have a relatively complete understanding of the epic battle. Eisenhower's book presents a good background of events and key figures, whereas Toland gives the reader practically none. Both authors present vignettes of key individuals and small groups of soldiers and civilians that are needed to personalize the bloody conflict. Eisenhower's BITTER WOODS gives better and more comprehensive details to the conflict between British General Montgomery and Supreme Commander Dwight Eisenhower, but my edition of Toland's book was published while Eisenhower was still President, and if the General were to give the gory details to any historian, it is understandable that he'd given them to his historian son. The end stages of the battle (generally the last three weeks of Jan. 1945) are hardly covered in any detail in Bitter Woods as if it were as though Eisenhower ran out of steam or his publisher made him cut the volume drastically and they were taken from the final chapters. Toland captures these weeks vividly and paints a dramatic picture of how the battle served to evolve the American soldier into a mature, and vicious, group of veterans. At the same time, the retreating Wehrmacht was pounded and ground down in retreat by US artillery, air forces and bitter winter weather into a defeated force, thereafter generally incapable of effective combat. For students of WWII, I heartily recommend all three books. JHE, 6/29/2014

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