Beyond Band of Brothers: The War Memoirs of Major Dick Winters by Cole C. Kingseed

They were called Easy Company—but their mission was never easy. Immortalized as the Band of Brothers, they suffered 150% casualties while liberating Europe—an unparalleled record of bravery under fire. Dick Winters was their commander—the best combat leader in World War II to his men. This is his story—told in his own words for the first time.

On D-Day, Dick Winters parachuted into France and assumed leadership of the Band of Brothers when their commander was killed. He led them through the Battle of the Bulge and into Germany, by which time each member had been wounded. They liberated an S.S. death camp from the horrors of the Holocaust and captured Berchtesgaden, Hitler’s alpine retreat. After briefly serving during the Korean War, Winters was a highly successful businessman. Made famous by Stephen Ambrose’s book Band of Brothers—and the subsequent award-winning HBO miniseries—he is the object of worldwide adulation.

Beyond Band of Brothers is Winters’s memoir—based on his wartime diary—but it also includes his comrades untold stories. Virtually all this material is being released for the first time. Only Winters was present from the activation of Easy Company until the war’s end. Winner of the Distinguished Service Cross, only he could pen this moving tribute to the human spirit.

Features:
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Are natural leaders born or made? It seems that Richard D. Dick Winters life has been a quest to answer that question. And in the final chapters of _Beyond Band of Brothers: The War Memoirs of Major Dick Winters_, he does provide the answer. Winters, the level-headed commander of Easy Company, portrayed in Stephen E. Ambrose's book, turned HBO mini-series Band of Brothers, needs no introduction. Written in the autumn of his years, Winters culls a lifetime of inner reflection and a quest to live in peace, after leading soldiers in some of the most deadly combat of World War II. The result is a frank, sometimes brutally honest testament to the moral fiber of the American citizen soldier, who shouldered an undying responsibility to God, country, family, and above all, the men he led into battle. Sixty years from now, when the events of the Second World War sink ever so deeper into the pages of history, Winters message will still be sought. Like the men he led of Easy Company, he will gain the respect of new generations of soldiers, and, if events mirror those of his life, continue to save lives.

As in a recent biography by Larry Alexander (_Biggest Brother: ... _) (2005)) Winters pens only a dozen pages of his early life before delving right into his military career. Winters was the product of many good influences in his upbringing: his family, Mennonite background, a strong work ethic, and no vices. Unlike Alexanders gallant attempt to penetrate his subject without much success, Winters prose is down to Earth. The sense the reader gets of the words coming from the horses mouth is reassuring, and holds ones attention. Also unlike Alexanders biography, Winters refers to the correspondence with his wartime pen-pal, DeEtta Almon sparingly. Winters confesses early on that his aim in writing the book is to tell the stories that Ambrose and HBO left out. There are some new addenda. Sadly, Winters updates us of the most recent passing of the men from Easy Company we have come to know and admire for their portrayal in the film, and in the documentary, We Stand Alone Together: The Men of Easy Company. It is evident that Winters loves and respects those men as much as they do him. For the most part, however, Winters version holds true to Ambrose's book, and Hanks and Spielbergs film, barring artistic license of the latter, of course. One can easily detect the strong contribution Winters had on Ambrose work. In some places, the narrative is so similar to Ambrose, one gets the impression Ambrose quoted Winters liberally, without the customary quotation marks. Winters admires the late historian immensely, however, and devotes a chapter to Ambrose at the end of the book.

The bulk of Winters memoir is devoted to the people and events that left an indelible mark on his life: the men and battles of Easy Company. He goes on at length about the man we have all come to despise: Herbert M. Sobel. Despite Sobels brutal leadership style, Winters credits him with
molding the character of the core of Toccoa men that made-up Easy Company. Winters offers his take on the myths surrounding Ronald Speirs, who was rumored to have murdered German prisoners, and shot an American sergeant who was allegedly drunk, and disobeyed an order to attack. Curiously, a strategically placed typo may perhaps be a loop-hole out of a possible slander suit...see if you can find it, and you be the judge. Likewise, Winters makes no qualms about utilizing what he called my killers, in vital tactical situations, most notably, the silencing of four 105mm. guns at Brecourt Manor, the textbook execution that was without a doubt, Winters crowning moment in combat. For devoted Band of Brothers fans, the two individuals he singles out will not surprise. There are also heart-felt accolades for his two closest friends, Lewis Nixon, and Harry Welsh, as well as, a cadre of Easy Company enlisted men, most notably, Floyd Talbert, and Carwood Lipton, just to name a few. The loving relationship Winters formed with the English couple he was quartered with at Aldbourne, Wiltshire, his second parents, never left him.

Winters life after the war is treated as briefly as his life before. Winters was a self professed ninety-day wonder, whose warrior spirit was molded running up Currahee, and tempered in combat. As a combat leader, he felt there was no place for him in a peacetime, and chickens**t army. His chapter spelling out his principles of good leadership should be memorized by every aspiring military officer or corporate manager.

So were Winters leadership abilities innate, or nurtured? That is for the reader to decide.

We are indeed privileged to have this memoir of a truly extraordinary and humble man. But I am sure he would be the first to agree, that there were probably scores of Dick Winters who fought their way across the fields of Europe, or the deserted islands of the Pacific. Many lie beneath thousands of white marble crosses, or Stars of David. Many more, like the men Winters led, are embarrassed by the word hero, and prefer to remain silent. Dick Winters is their messenger, their representative, and a model field grade officer of the Second World War. The media has made Winters a celebrity, and his peaceful life that he promised himself on D-Day has been shattered by well-wishing, and autograph seeking fans from all over the world. There is even a campaign to up-grade his Distinguished Service Cross to a Medal of Honor. This memoir is, I suspect, Winters final word on the subject. Read it! Learn from its many lessons, and respect the officers and men of Easy Company. That is Dick Winters legacy, and worth more to him than a chest full of medals.

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