



All the Way to Berlin: A Paratrooper at War in Europe

James Megellas

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In mid-1943 James Megellas, known as “Maggie” to his fellow paratroopers, joined the 82d Airborne Division, his new “home” for the duration. His first taste of combat was in the rugged mountains outside Naples.

In October 1943, when most of the 82d departed Italy to prepare for the D-Day invasion of France, Lt. Gen. Mark Clark, the Fifth Army commander, requested that the division’s 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Maggie’s outfit, stay behind for a daring new operation that would outflank the Nazis’ stubborn defensive lines and open the road to Rome. On 22 January 1944, Megellas and the rest of the 504th landed across the beach at Anzio. Following initial success, Fifth Army’s amphibious assault, Operation Shingle, bogged down in the face of heavy German counterattacks that threatened to drive the Allies into the Tyrrhenian Sea. Anzio turned into a fiasco, one of the bloodiest Allied operations of the war. Not until April were the remnants of the regiment withdrawn and shipped to England to recover, reorganize, refit, and train for their next mission.

In September, Megellas parachuted into Holland along with the rest of the 82d Airborne as part of another star-crossed mission, Field Marshal Montgomery’s vainglorious Operation Market Garden. Months of hard combat in Holland were followed by the Battle of the Bulge, and the long hard road across Germany to Berlin.

Megellas was the most decorated officer of the 82d Airborne Division and saw more action during the war than most. Yet *All the Way to Berlin* is more than just Maggie’s World War II memoir. Throughout his narrative, he skillfully interweaves stories of the other paratroopers of H Company, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment. The result is a remarkable account of men at war.

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