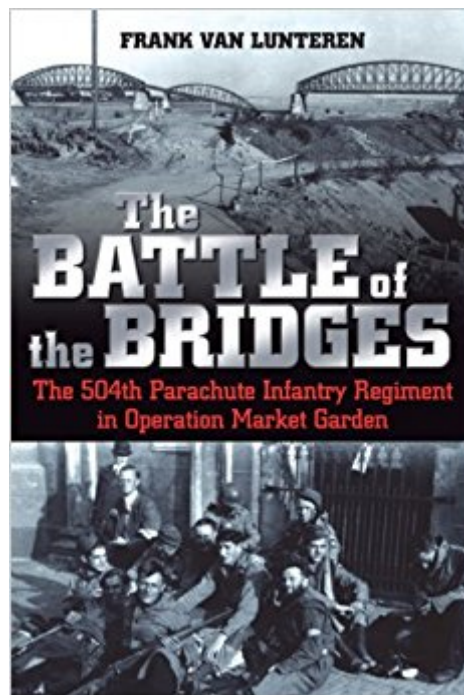




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# The Battle Of The Bridges: The 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment In Operation Market Garden



## Synopsis

Operation Market Garden has been recorded as a complete Allied failure in World War II, an overreach that resulted in an entire airborne division being destroyed at its apex. However, within that operation were episodes of heroism that still remain unsung. On September, 17, 1944, the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, floated down across the Dutch countryside, in the midst of German forces, and proceeded to fight their way to vital bridges to enable the Allied offensive to go forward. The 101st Airborne was behind them; the British 1st Airborne was far advanced. In the 82nd's sector the crucial conduits needed to be seized. The Germans knew the importance of the bridge over the Waal River at Nijmegen as well as James Gavin and his 82nd troopers did. Thus began a desperate fight for the Americans to seize it, no matter what the cost. The Germans would not give, however, and fought tenaciously in the town and fortified the bridge. On September 20 Gavin turned his paratroopers into sailors and conducted a deadly daylight amphibious assault in small plywood and canvas craft across the Waal River to secure the north end of the highway bridge in Nijmegen. German machine guns and mortars boiled the water on the crossing, but somehow a number of paratroopers made it to the far bank. Their ferocity thence rolled up the German defenses, and by the end of day the bridge had fallen. This book draws on a plethora of previously unpublished sources to shed new light on the exploits of the "Devils in Baggy Pants" by Dutch author and historian Frank van Lunteren. A native of Arnhem the site of "The Bridge too Far" the author draws on nearly 130 interviews he personally conducted with veterans of the 504th, plus Dutch civilians and British and German soldiers, who here tell their story for the first time.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 368 pages

Publisher: Casemate (July 9, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1612002323

ISBN-13: 978-1612002323

Product Dimensions: 1 x 6.2 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 24 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #127,779 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #13 in Books > History >

Europe > Netherlands #962 in Books > History > Military > World War II #1305 in Books

## Customer Reviews

"Through years of painstaking research and close contact with 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment veterans, Frank van Lunteren has added much to our understanding of Market Garden. On these pages, the human story comes to life, sometimes tragic, sometimes amusing, but always poignant and compelling." (John C. McManus, Ph.D., Author of SEPTEMBER HOPE: THE AMERICAN SIDE OF A BRIDGE TOO FAR and THE DEAD AND THOSE ABOUT TO DIE, D-DAY: THE BIG RED ONE AT OMAHA BEACH) It is rare to find such an engrossing book as Frank van Lunteren's "The Battle of the Bridges." Anyone who wants to read firsthand experiences of one of the most amazing actions in the western European Theater of the Second World War must get this book. (Doug McCabe, curator of the Cornelius Ryan Collection) "Battle of the Bridges" provides an exhaustively researched account of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment's exploits during Operation Market Garden. The legendary crossing of the Waal river to seize the Nijmegen bridges is covered in exceptional detail. (Steven Zaloga, Author of US Airborne Divisions in the ETO" and his most recent "The Devil's Garden: Rommel's Desperate Defense of Omaha Beach on D-Day") A review cannot do justice to this book-it must be read! For those familiar with the actions of America's airborne soldiery, you will have your beliefs revitalized! Would any other airborne regiment of the U.S. Army have done as well- perhaps- but in this case it was the 504th - and to it must go the laurels of "the Battle of the Bridges"! (Airborne Quarterly)... a superb book about the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment's role in Operation Market Garden. Today, Frank should be considered as the authority on the subject of the World War II 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment. He has interviewed countless veterans of the regiment and has dug deeply to find previously little known accounts of the actions of the participants in the regiment's combat. As a result, his narrative in this book is full of new first person accounts of the battles fought by the regiment to capture the Grave Bridge, which spanned the Maas River, as well as a vital lock bridge on the Maas-Waal Canal on the first day of the operation, and subsequent capture of the northern ends of the two massive bridges across the Waal River in Nijmegen after an epic crossing of the river under extremely intense enemy fire. In addition, Frank's narrative provides the reader with multiple perspectives where available from veterans who participated in the same action, which many readers such as myself value and appreciate, although others might find the repetition to be not to their liking..... included a number of previously unpublished photographs of the 504th, the bridges, and the battlefields in the book.. adds greatly to

the known information of the regiment and of this battle. I highly recommend this book for anyone interested in the World War II history of the United States Army's airborne forces. I can hardly wait for Frank's upcoming companion books about the 504th's other campaigns as I am sure they will be excellent as well. (Phil Nordyke, Author and Historian)

The Battle of the Bridges is a seminal contribution to the gloried history and daring exploits of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment during Operation Market Garden, with special focus on the suicidal daylight crossing of the Waal River and subsequent capture of the bridges in Nimegen. Combining historical research with extended personal interviews of both American, British, and German soldiers and Dutch civilians, Frank Van Lunteren's suspenseful writing compels the reader to share the intimate, desperate, unbelievable struggles of American soldiers fighting, bleeding, and dying to free Holland from years of pernicious Nazi occupation. ...reaffirms his stature among the very best military historians documenting the U. S. 82nd Airborne during WWII. ... As the nephew of Pvt. Louis P. Holt, Company H, 3rd Regiment, 504th, who died crossing the Waal in one of those pathetic canvas boats, I can only express my admiration and appreciation to Frank for his ongoing efforts to ensure that all those who fought, and especially the many who died, during the battle of the bridges, remain forever alive, forever heroic, and forever exemplary models to future generations. (James Louis Holt, Ph.D.)

"Another remarkable account of quite amazing heroism - the story of the "Devils in Baggy Pants" sees Dutch military historian Frank Van Lunteren telling the tale of a battle within a battle that made heroes of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment during operation Market Garden, itself considered something of a failure. This story will make you think again." (Books Monthly)

A readable but informative book...supplemented by well chosen maps and illustrations. 4 stars. (ARRSE)

Frank van Lunteren was born and raised in Arnhem, the Netherlands. His interest in military history dates to the 1980's, when as a child he first visited the Airborne Museum in Oosterbeek. He went on to study political history at the Radboud University in Nijmegen, while privately researching the exploits of the paratroopers, and at the 61st convention of the 82nd Airborne Division Association in Harrisburg, PA in August 2007, he was Guest Speaker at the 504th Regimental Dinner. He originally conducted research on the wartime service of Ted Bachenheimer (1923-44), the famous top scout of the 504th PIR during World War II. But his contacts proliferated, as did his project, and he eventually met and interviewed so many veterans that the present work on the entire 504th PIR's service in Market Garden is the Result.

Frank van Lunteren masterfully writes about the exploits of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment in operation Market Garden. He has used all the rare original sources which are available, like after action reports, combat interviews, narratives and the research by Cornelius Ryan. His well documented and well researched book tells exactly what happened, but he keeps away from the context of the operation and the controversies surrounding some of the decisions made by various division and corps commanders. A great book with touching stories of combat by the heroes of the 504th.

Frank Van Lunteren has done a masterful and interesting job of pulling together actual accounts of Operation Market Garden. While Cornelius Ryan's book was about all the units who participated, Frank zeroes in on the 504--those Devils in Baggy Pants. My uncle was one of those H Company "Devils" who participated in the Waalcrossing...probably one of the most amazing battles in US military history. This is a fabulous addition to the great books written by Burriss (I Company) and Megellas (H Company) because it covers the entire regiment during Operation Market Garden. The number of people interviewed and other research included are a testament to Frank's amazing skill as a historian.

Very detailed account of combat by those proud and brave men who served in the Regiment, in a battle that should have never occurred. Lay the lives of those lost and injured at the feet of that ego driven Gen. Montgomery. He adds this to his wonderful resume next to the failure to take objectives on D-day. Shame on the US army for this political decision to join in this folly. Stupid decisions by high command and boys don't come home.

Excellent! A must have for anyone interested in a factual account of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment in Operation Market Garden during WWII.

My Dad, Lt Joseph D. Shirk was in I Company all the way from Africa to Berlin and until this book came out he had never talked about this operation or his participation. The only discussions that we ever had were about his good times with friends in London and Paris. I recognize some of the names in the book because I've served in the 1st of the 504 PIR myself know the Division lore backwards and forwards. I knew he had been wounded in the Bulge but never here....it was not on his DD 214 Record of Service. This book tells a wonderful story using the operation as a canvas and then the memories of those who fought in it as its paint. Frank Van Lunteren has accomplished

a wonderful feat of communication with his masterful telling of the human side of the Operation Market Garden. Thanks Frank...good job.

Exciting and riveting story of amazing hero's by front line soldiers very brave men.

This book has Excellent historical detail. Great job!! More than you will get anywhere I have readl enjoyed it thoroughly! Try it...

Another book you must read

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