



Brothers In Arms: The Epic Story of the 761St Tank Battalion, WWII's Forgotten Heroes

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Anthony Walton

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A powerful wartime saga in the bestselling tradition of *Flags of Our Fathers*, **BROTHERS IN ARMS** recounts the extraordinary story of the 761st “Black Panthers,” the first all-black armored unit to see combat in World War II.

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar first learned about the battalion from family friend Leonard “Smitty” Smith, a veteran of the battalion. Working with acclaimed writer Anthony Walton, Abdul-Jabbar interviewed the surviving members of the battalion and their descendants to weave together a page-turning narrative based on their memories and stories, from basic training through the horrors on the battlefield to their postwar experiences in a racially divided America.

Trained essentially as a public relations gesture to maintain the support of the black community for the war, the battalion was never intended to see battle. In fact, General Patton originally opposed their deployment, claiming African Americans couldn’t think quickly enough to operate tanks in combat conditions. But the Allies were so desperate for trained tank personnel in the summer of 1944, following heavy casualties in the fields of France, that the battalion was called up.

While most combat troops fought on the front for a week or two before being rotated back, the men of the 761st served for more than six months, fighting heroically under Patton’s Third Army at the Battle of the Bulge and in the Allies’ final drive across France and Germany. Despite a casualty rate that approached 50 percent and an extreme shortage of personnel and equipment, the 761st would ultimately help liberate some thirty towns and villages, as well as the Gunskirchen Lager concentration camp.

The racism that shadowed them during the war and the prejudice they faced upon their return home is an indelible part of their story. What shines through most of all, however, are the lasting bonds that united them as soldiers and brothers, the bravery they exhibited on the battlefield, and the quiet dignity and patriotism that defined their lives.

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