



# **An Irresistible Force: Lieutenant Colonel Ben Vandervoort and the 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry in World War II**

*Phil Nordyke*

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**Product Description** During World War II, perhaps no unit had a more outstanding combat record than the 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry of the 82nd Airborne Division, under the command of the legendary Lieutenant Colonel Ben Vandervoort, famously portrayed in the movie, *The Longest Day*, by John Wayne. The battalion was at the forefront of many of the most fierce battles of World War II, making four combat jumps in just fourteen months: Sicily, Italy, Normandy, and Holland. It fought in the Battle of the Bulge and in Germany in the closing days of the war. Now, Phil Nordyke tells the story of this incredible leader and his paratroopers in their own words using over one hundred written and oral accounts to draw the reader into the close combat experienced by these amazing men. The reader will feel the emotions and realism associated with combat, as conveyed in the words of the veterans themselves. From the Back Cover Lieutenant Colonel Ben Vandervoort, forever immortalized by John Wayne in the movie, *The Longest Day*, was one of the great combat commanders of World War II. He led one of the finest infantry battalions ever fielded by the United States Army—the 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment. Their incredible true story is now told for the first time in the words of Lieutenant Colonel Vandervoort and his troopers. Phil Nordyke has gathered an amazing amount of first person accounts through interviews, oral histories, diaries, letters, memoirs, awards files, and official accounts. He has skillfully woven their words together in an exciting and powerfully compelling narrative that puts the reader into the heart of combat with these elite warriors.

Vandervoort and his paratroopers were at the forefront of some of the most crucial battles of World War II, making four combat jumps in just fourteen months—Sicily, Italy, Normandy, and Holland. He led the battalion through the entire Normandy campaign, despite badly breaking his ankle upon landing by parachute shortly after midnight on the morning of D-Day, June 6, 1944. Vandervoort was awarded the first of two Distinguished Service Cross medals for extraordinary heroism during the defense of Ste.-Mère-Église, the first town liberated in Normandy, France. He again led his battalion in Operation Market Garden and the epic capture of the Waal River bridges at Nijmegen, Holland, made famous by the movie, *A Bridge Too Far*. For its actions during the close combat assault that captured the two bridges, the battalion was awarded a presidential unit citation, and Vandervoort was awarded a second Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary heroism. During the Battle of the Bulge his battalion, although heavily outnumbered and fighting against armored vehicles, stopped powerful elements of the 1st SS Panzer Division, the spearhead of the Sixth SS Panzer Army, at Trois Ponts, Belgium. In 1990, the Army Command and General Staff College's Center for Army Leadership selected Lieutenant Colonel Vandervoort as the outstanding battle commander of the Second World War.



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