



Dog Tags Yapping: The World War II Letters of a Combat GI

Morton D. Elevitch

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A chronicle of war infused with uncommon cheer, *Dog Tags Yapping: The World War II Letters of a Combat GI* is a young man's education in life and death and a narrative of war told completely in letters.

During World War II, thousands of high school graduates were drafted into the army to be trained in colleges as engineers or other technicians but instead were assigned to fighting units and joined the great assault in Europe after D-Day. One of those reprogrammed combat infantrymen was Morton Elevitch from Duluth, Minnesota. Elevitch's cartoons, drawings, and extremely unconventional letters home—rescued from box-in-the-basement oblivion after a more than fifty-year dormancy—recover the story of one rerouted GI in a voice that is compelling and new. Embellished with a boyish flair, the quirky and playful documents collected here impart a distinctly personal and uncalculated record of war, family, and coming of age. "It's much easier to wield a melancholy pen than to sit down and cry," Elevitch declares to his father.

Sparkling with a patina of wit and the bittersweet allure of lost innocence, the words and letters of "Privitch Elevate" offer the immediacy of the events as they unfolded. With the ease and expertise expected of a more seasoned storyteller, the young Elevitch escorts readers through his basic training and departure for Europe, duty in Brittany with the 94th Division and departure for Germany, combat under Patton's command, wounding by mortar fragments, convalescence in England, and his return to France with the Signal Corps to guard prisoners and await demobilization. But along with these letters are the stories of his relationships with his parents, his brother, the men of his company and even the prisoners of war. The author's perspectives on the war radically change. Both comic and tragic in its treatment of war's chaos and tedium, this sensitive personal history covers experiences from the adjustment to military life and the temptations of flesh to the pain of wounds and recovery and the exposure to foreign countries and cultures.

Presaging his career as a novelist and editor, Elevitch's words and drawings sketch an audacious and highly imaginative portrait of a young man during an exceptional time in world history. Evocative of life lived and nearly lost, his jarring accounts of combat reveal a soldier who was wounded not only in body but also in soul, in a war that changed him forever—just as it changed everyone it touched. Reproduced here as they were originally written, alongside a gallery of photos and hand-drawn battle maps, Elevitch's cartoons and letters were initially intended for only three persons. But with their unique historical value and affecting exploration of the human spirit, they resurface in *Dog Tags Yapping* and result in an exhilarating ride for all readers through his "wild bivouac of the mind."



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