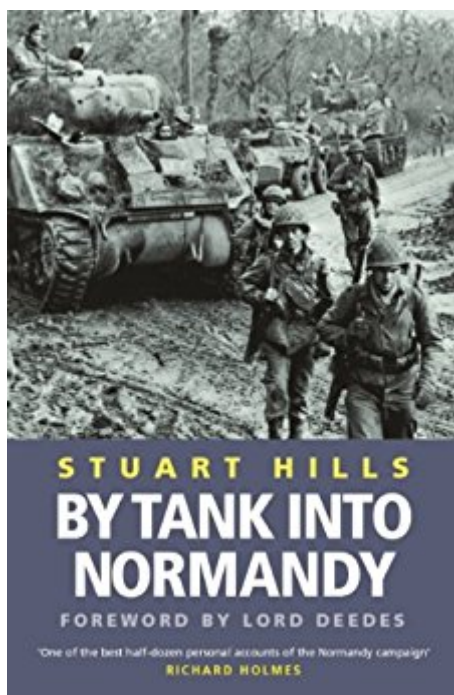


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By Tank Into Normandy



Synopsis

'One of the best half-dozen personal accounts of the Normandy campaign' - Richard Holmes
Stuart Hills embarked his Sherman DD tank on to an LCT at 6.45 a.m., Sunday 4 June 1944. He was 20 years old, unblooded, fresh from a public-school background and Officer Cadet training. He was going to war. Two days later, his tank sunk, he and his crew landed from a rubber dinghy with just the clothes they stood in. After that, the struggles through the Normandy bocage in a replacement tank (of the non-swimming variety), engaging the enemy in a constant round of close encounters, led to a swift mastering of the art of tank warfare and remarkable survival in the midst of carnage and destruction. His story of that journey through hell to victory makes for compulsive reading.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A 20 year old Lieutenant in charge of a Sherman! The author is unstinting in his honesty about the fears and horror of war. He lost many friends killed or wounded, some burned beyond recognition in the charnel houses that their tanks became. The book is written in the first person and describes his experiences, both good and bad. He recounts about the Padre, whose self appointed task was to be at the front lines, removing the often burnt beyond recognition bodies from the destroyed tanks and

making sure the occupants received a proper burial. This gentleman deserves a book unto himself. A shrewd observer, the author recounts how his tank smelled after 4 days of continuous combat - I believe "rank" is the word he used, as well as the small pleasures and outright terror of being a junior officer, (and younger than the men he commanded). He had one crewman who would not leave the tank for four days while they were in a rest area. They called it "bomb happy". Eventually, he was taken off to hospital, never to be seen again. Such is the terror experienced. This is not Hollywood; it is reality. Highly recommended even if you are not an armour or WW2 buff.

This narrative of Stuart Hills is a warmly personal account of front line service with the Sherwood Rangers tank force. It is one of those books that leaves me with the feeling that I not only have read the book but know Stuart Hills personally. It is filled with detail of life at the front with all of its horrors and it's exhilarating moments as well. The author describes his life and his training as a way of involving the reader prior to putting you in a sinking Sherman Duplex Drive tank as you approach the Normandy Beach under fire. Later, he involves you in the daily routines and sudden shock of dangerous combat with the loss of many personal friends. Hills saw it all and tells us what it was like from Normandy to final victory. All in all, a compelling narrative for those who wish to understand WWII combat from an intensely personal viewpoint

This book told the story of a schoolboy approaching adulthood at the beginning of WW2. He becomes an officer, storms the beaches of Normandy, and learns the reality of tank warfare. Luckily, he was associated with a group of experienced tankers. The author takes us on a ride through France, Belgium and into Germany. He shows the reader his feelings about war, and what it was like losing both friends and comrades alike. It is well worth reading.

I admit a tendency to glorify the great battles I read about, a mistake. Here is a book so filled with loss, that it's hard to believe. The author survives the battles, and suffers as his friends are cut down making their way into the Fatherland. A must read. Sad. Brutal.

I echo many of the comments of the other reviewers. This book is very readable, a nice unit history and quite moving. I have no problem with the late Mr. Hills not dealing with day to day maintenance (he was an officer, so unlikely to have to do much of that, although he mentions the workout required in loading ammunition) and using British English (given he was British...). He does tell the reader he was using a 75mm armed Sherman, and it was diesel powered, thus it was most likely a

M4A2, or Sherman III in British parlance. The book is heart-breaking as he describes the death and injury of so many of his friends. His discussion of how various crew became bomb-happy and the intervention of the medics makes clear the difficulties all faced, including Mr. Hills. Given the actions he describes, he was at the sharp end a lot of the time. Mr. Hills gives a very thorough account of his time in the war, and I only wish he'd told us a little more about how things turned out for him and his family after the war. Regardless, this is one of the best WW2 memoirs I've read, and we're lucky it was published.

The book is well written and well edited, but it does not seem to have a focus on what type of book it wants to be. If it is a history of the invasion, there are many and they are better documented and researched. What I thought this would be was a detailed account of the British invasion and liberation of France, Holland, and Belgium. It was not that either. Most of the scenes lack any real detail. Almost nothing on the tank and how it operates except in generalities. Engagements are written with a strange selection of detail for the events. Details are copious on the lead up to the battle some setting and historical context, the movement to engagement, and then most battles are similar to we lost 3 tanks and destroyed 6 including a Panther. Many times there is discussion of the terror of the German 88, but when an 88mm AT gun is destroyed there is no detail of how this is done with shorter, lower velocity 75mm tank guns. In another second a Jagdpanther is destroyed from 10yds away, but no detail of the effects of the guns at this range. Did the shells pierce, spall off inside, what happened? So, all in all, the book is interesting, but the meat is not in the engagements, but in the injuries sustained by crews, the priest who accompanies them and some detail on the people in the tanks.

I read so many WWII stories, loves them all and continue to be amazed by the endurance, commitment and loyalty of the young men who served then. I have the honor being a Veteran during the Korean War, makes me appreciate them even more

One of the best WW2 memoirs. Extremely well written with a perfect balance of anecdotal battle history and personal reflection. There are few books that give one this sense of allied tank warfare - it's well worth the read. It's more than autobiographical history; it's a damn good book.

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