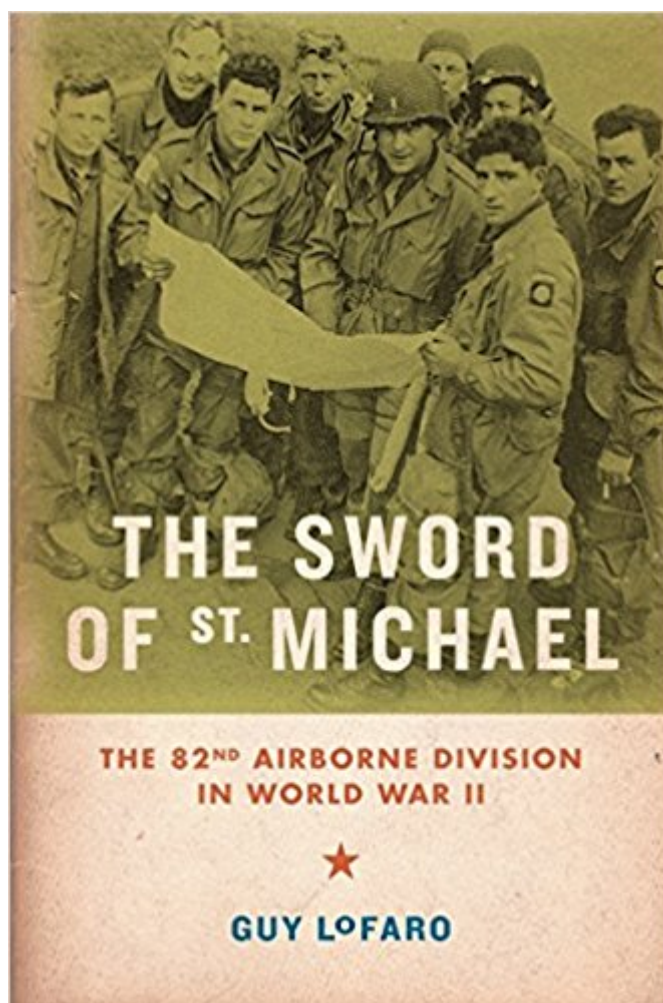


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# The Sword Of St. Michael: The 82nd Airborne Division In World War II



## Synopsis

The 82nd Airborne Division spent more time in combat than any other American airborne unit of World War II, and its fierce battlefield tenacity earned it the reputation of one of the finest divisions in the world. Yet no comprehensive history of the 82nd during World War II exists today. *The Sword of St. Michael* corrects this significant gap in the literature, offering a lively narrative and thoroughly researched history of the famous division. Author Guy LoFaro, himself a distinguished officer of the division, interweaves the voices of soldiers at both ends of the chain of command, from Eisenhower to the lowest private. Making extensive use of primary sources, LoFaro offers a work of insightful analysis, situating the division's exploits in a strategic and operational context.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Kirkus Reviews, September 2011 ["A comprehensive history of the 82nd Airborne Division in World War II, from an officer of that famed unit. A tour de force for military historians and WWII buffs, and a lesson on the leadership skills required to effectively conceive and coordinate a mission."](#)  
[Booklist Online, 9/27/11](#) ["An established military historian proffers a massive volume on the 82d Airborne Division in WWII. This tome is so massive that it holds material on everything from grand strategy to developments in tactics and equipment to the colorful personalities in which the airborne troops abounded. Military specialists are not the only ones likely to find this book absorbing and valuable."](#)  
[Asbury Park Press, 10/23/11](#) ["\[A\] scholarly and really interesting account. Talk about detailed! The author seems to know his stuff, and then some."](#)  
[Tucson Citizen, 11/6/11](#) ["This book brings into sharp](#)

focus the struggles and triumphs of WWII's most famous fighters.

Guy LoFaro is an 82nd Airborne Division combat veteran and former West Point history professor. He lives in Atlanta.

Guy LoFaro's book "The Sword of St. Michael..." is an absolute masterful erudition of the history of the 82nd Airborne Division during World War II. From 1969-72, I was a paratrooper with the "All American Division." I spent a lot of time at the 82nd Airborne Museum reading everything that I could so that I could find inspiration to serve as the "Greatest Generation" did during WWII, if called for combat operations. The amount of research that went into this book is massive. I highly recommend this book for all military historians and current members of the US Armed Forces.

I had a hard time getting started with it. Not an easy read. However, that being said, I am glad I continued: it has many stories I saw here for the first time--and I feel all their stories are deserving to be told.

The Sword of St. Michael is just what I like a unit history to be: Scholarly and detailed without being plodding and with numerous personal accounts and quotations from the men who were there, both in the headquarters and on the front lines. From the difficulties of conceiving and implementing a new type of warfare in the face of stubborn resistance from the "old soldiers" in Washington, to the satisfying yet somber parade down 5th Avenue in New York city in 1946 the author does a fantastic job of immersing the reader in the story of this elite unit. At the end, the reader will close the book, take a deep sigh and stare off into space wondering where men like that come from...

My husband really loves this book and said it is so intense he couldn't read but a few pages every night. He will recommend it to all of his veteran friends.

Gave it to my dad, a Vietnam combat vet. He can't read stuff about Vietnam specifically, but he digs war history. He sat in front of the fire and pretty much read through all 600 pages in a couple of days. He is intelligent, likes history and science, is not overly sentimental, and has a very rational mind. So, if that's you or your giftee, this is probably a good choice.

If you want a close up look of the 82nd's lead from the front style at the platoon level read, Jim

Megellas' book, "All The Way to Berlin". For a micro-macro view of WWII's best fighting men in the best Airborne Division, read LoFaro's book. With all due respect to the 101st Airborne and its chronicler Stephen Ambrose, the 82nd's All Americans were at war first and last. And, in the "Sword", LoFaro provides the proof that they were the Airborne's finest fighting men.

Somebody needed to tell the stories of the 82nd Airborne and there is no one better situated than a former officer in the Division and a hero in his own right, Guy LoFaro. For those who don't know LoFaro's story, read his legendary "Dining-In speech" at the U.S. Military Academy in 2003 ([...]). LoFaro was speaking of loyalty and particularly after he was nearly killed by a haywire trainee on a shooting spree at Fort Bragg, NC in 1995. I know personally of LoFaro's character as we were friends in high school in suburban St. Louis in the middle 1970s. Guy was always there for his friends and he knew from an early age he wanted to go to West Point and be a soldier. As an eventual Ph. D. in history, LoFaro exhibited loyalty to his 82nd Airborne by crafting a brilliantly researched and written history of the Division during WWII. As someone who writes for a living, I stand in awe of this work. It is both exhaustive and crisp, big picture and microscopically detailed. The skill it took to scope in and out of the grand overall strategy and back to life for the average soldier during ferocious battles is extraordinary. As he says of one of the heroes of the book, General James "Jumpin' Jim" Gavin, he was no "chateau general," he led from the front lines. Well, LoFaro is no chateau historian -- he conducted numerous interviews and consulted hundreds of sources. The writing is engaging and swims in military language, strategy and equipment but doesn't get lost in it. This is a work that will stand up 50 years from now as important. After reading the extraordinary tales of courage and perseverance by the soldiers, it is obvious why LoFaro devoted such effort in making sure history didn't let them evaporate into the ether. These are men who literally by will and courage turned the tide of the war. At each and every juncture of their involvement in WWII -- in Sicily, Italy, the Cotentin Peninsula, Holland, the Battle of the Bulge, those campaigns teetered on failure and were salvaged by the extraordinary courage and bravery of the 82nd Airborne. They literally walked into the teeth of machine gun and other fire repeatedly, and, with great loss of life and limb, prevailed. The taking of the bridge at Waal, Belgium, was one noteworthy example where troopers staged a nearly impossible river crossing taking heavy casualties and eventually breaking the Germans hold on a crucial stronghold at a key juncture in the Northern European Theater. This is a great World War II military history book and an important American history book in general. If I were in charge of schools in America, I'd make it required reading for every child so they get an appreciation of the superhuman sacrifice these remarkable

men made on our behalf. Along the way, they would also learn about what it takes to research and write a magnificent history book.

I usually prefer to read first hand accounts of WWII battles, but you don't get the big picture in the autobiographical accounts. This book combines the two, big picture and individual accounts. The author covers the "birth" of US Army airborne to the 82nd Airborne division's victory march down 5th Avenue. Very well written, holds your attention and I highly recommend it to those who are interested in the history of WWII and the 82nd Airborne.

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