

A Taste of War: Soldiering in World War II

Alfred de Grazia



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"I went down the hill and worked my way East to where any survivors might show up. There emerged a few Italian civilians, women, children, older men. 'Is this all of you?' I asked. 'They are all dead,' they said, 'all dead!' 'Didn't you get our warning?' I asked a woman who appeared to be fairly composed. 'Yes, and we tried to get out...' " Drafted into the army in the wake of Pearl Harbor, Alfred de Grazia, a young political scientist at the University of Chicago, revisits a war experience which takes him from basic training to OSS and to the very first unit of psychological warfare created in the Army of the United States, through six campaigns of World War II, from North Africa to the invasion of Sicily, to the Battle of Monte Cassino, to the Liberation of Rome, to the landings in Southern France, to the defeat of Germany and to the liberation of Dachau, ending, age 25, as commanding officer of the Combat Propaganda Team of the Seventh American Army... All the while striving to stay in touch with his wife Jill Oppenheim, an enthusiastic letter-writer, who is expecting, then rearing, their first baby, while keeping him abreast the events on the home front... He meets ordinary and extraordinary people in extraordinary circumstances, learning lessons both practical or tragic. Two especially drove home: "Do what you think best, but do it." And: "Watch you don't trip on a mine."

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