



# **Descending from the Clouds: A Memoir of Combat in the 505 Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82d Airborne Division**

*Spencer F. Wurst, Gayle Wurst*

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Wearing the remnants of a WWI uniform and pulling a water-cooled 30-caliber machine-gun, Spencer Wurst marched through his hometown of Erie, Pennsylvania, in 1940 as a member of the National Guard. He was 15 years old. Five years later he was a hardened platoon sergeant leading his troopers through the frozen killing fields of “Death Valley” in Germany’s Heurtgen Forest. A squad leader in Company F, 505 Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82d Airborne, for most of the war, Wurst jumped into Italy in September 1943, and received his baptism of fire at Arnone. Jumping into Normandy on D-Day, he received his first Purple Heart in the liberation of Ste. Mère-Eglise, and a second Purple Heart in grueling combat through the hedgerows. On his third jump, Wurst’s bravery under fire earned him the coveted Silver Star when he and his fellow paratroopers were swept up in the ferocious battle with the SS for the Highway Bridge at Nijmegen, Holland, in Operation Market Garden. A few months later, the dawn of his twentieth birthday found him serving on point in the long, freezing march to the shoulder of the Bulge. A unique view of combat from pre-war training and mobilization to First Army maneuvers, parachute school at Fort Benning, and Europe’s killing fields, Wurst’s poignantly written and carefully researched memoir has been hailed as an outstanding addition to the literature of WWII.

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