



Other Clay: A Remembrance of the World War II Infantry

Charles R. Cawthon

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Other Clay is a survivor's account of World War II infantry combat, told by a front-line officer whose 116th Infantry Regiment landed at Omaha Beach on D-Day and fought its way across Europe to the Elbe.

Charles R. Cawthon joined the Virginia National Guard in 1940—to avoid being drafted and to spend his expected one year of service in officer training. When America entered the war, his division was among the first shipped out to England, where they spent two years preparing to spearhead the largest amphibious military operation in history.

On the beaches of Normandy, on June 6, 1944, the U.S. Army suffered its heaviest casualties since Gettysburg. The losses were greatest among the infantry companies that led the assault, and Cawthon describes firsthand the furious and deathly chaos of the daylong battle to get off the beach and up the heights. Reduced by casualties to half its preinvasion strength, Cawthon's regiment still managed to fight off German counterattacks and engage in an all-out pursuit across France before the Germans counterattacked again at the Ardennes forest.

Thoughtful, candid, and revealing, Cawthon's memoir is a deeply felt and carefully recollected study of men confronting the face of death—their fear, their courage, their hunger and exhaustion, their loyalty to one another, and their miraculous and unreasoning ability to go one more step, one more day, one more mile.

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