



# **Victory Was Beyond Their Grasp: With the 272nd Volks-Grenadier Division from the Huertgen Forest to the Heart of the Reich**

*Douglas E. Nash*

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As the Allies were approaching the German frontier at the beginning of September 1944, the German Armed Forces responded with a variety of initiatives designed to regain the strategic initiative. While the "Wonder Weapons" such as the V-1 flying bomb, the V-2 missile and the Messerschmitt Me-262 jet fighter are widely recognized as being the most prominent of these initiatives upon which Germany pinned so much hope, the Volks-Grenadier Divisions (VGDs) are practically unknown. Often confused with the Volkssturm, the Home Guard militia, VGDs have suffered an undeserved reputation as second-rate formations, filled with young boys and old men suited to serve only as cannon fodder. This groundbreaking book, now reappearing as a new edition, shows that VGDs were actually conceived as a new, elite corps loyal to the National Socialist Party composed of men from all branches of Hitler's Wehrmacht and equipped with the finest ground combat weapons available.

Whether fighting from defensive positions or spearheading offensives such as the Battle of the Bulge, VGDs initially gave a good account of themselves in battle. Using previously unpublished unit records, Allied intelligence and interrogation reports and above all interviews with survivors, the author has crafted an in-depth look at a late-war German infantry company, including many photographs from the veterans themselves. In this book we follow along with the men of the 272nd VGD's Fusilier Company from their first battles in the Huertgen Forest to their final defeat in the Harz Mountains. Along the way we learn the enormous potential of VGDs . . . and feel their soldiers' heartbreak at their failure.

Among Douglas Nash's previous works is Hell's Gate: The Battle for the Cherkassy Pocket, January-February 1944, a work unsurpassed for insight into the other side of the hill in WWII.

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