

The 12th SS: Vol.1, the History of the Hitler Youth Panzer Division

Hubert Meyer

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The defining work on Hitler's elite fanatical boy soldiersWritten by the division's former chief of staff. Volume one details all aspects of the division's history with a balanced mix of both tactical and strategic accounts, including the creation and training of these teenage warriors and their baptism of fire in the Normandy campaign in World War II.

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James Yee says

This is a very interesting book told from the German perspective. Sometimes there are too many mundane details, but I can understand the author wanting to include them since he was writing a history on his unit rather than just a story about the unit. Once you figure out what you can skim through, the rest of the account is fascinating.

One thing I hadn't realized before was just how important the landing fleet was. You always hear about the total air superiority we had, but the author laments about the overwhelming artillery support we had on land and sea. One of the main reasons the Germans had no way of effectively counterattacking the beachheads was because we were able to shoot up everything during daylight hours. In one case he mentions the HMS Rodney managing to strike one of their assembly areas causing calamitous casualties. That is just one example of how the author meticulously compared Allied and German sources so he could piece together such a detailed history of the unit.

The first volume focuses on the battles around Caen through August 1944.

David Howell says

The 12th SS was made up of young men who had been brought up in the nazi ideology and turned into soldiers whose baptism of fire was in Normandy in the summer of 1944. This book traces the beginning of the division, its formation, training and movement to the coast of France with the 1st SS Panzer Corps. An excellent book on the Hitlerjugend and their campaigns
