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The Angels: A History of the 11th Airborne Division, 1943-1946

Edward M Flanagan Jr

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The Angels: A History of the 11th Airborn Division, 1943-1946, first published in 1948 and illustrated throughout with maps and photographs, recounts the activities and combat history of the Division, which fought in the Philippines, conducted the Los Baños raid to free Allied prisoners, and served as part of the occupation force in Japan.

Overview: The Division was activated at Camp Mackall, North Carolina on February 25, 1943, and was composed of former glider and veteran Airborne troops. Upon activation, the Division began intensive training to get the glider troops jump-qualified, and the Division was ready to move overseas in early 1944. Sent first to New Guinea for training in jungle combat, the Division took part in the Leyte landings in the Philippines in November 1944. Moving inland, the unit relieved the battle-weary 24th and 37th Infantry Divisions with the mission to clear a mountain pass from Burauen to Ormoc. It took 3 months of bitter fighting, often hand-to-hand, to drive the Japanese defenders from the pass and surrounding heights. In late January, 1945, the 11th went back into action after a short rest, landing at Nasgubu Beach, Luzon, 70 miles from Manila. Their objective was to remove enemy opposition from a major highway and link with Allied forces attacking Manila. After capturing Fort McKinley and Nichols field, the 11th launched their assult on Manila joining the 1st Cavalry Division and the 37th Infantry Division who were attacking from the North. Once the capitol was secured, the 11th made a daring raid behind enemy lines and freed more than 2,100 Allied civilian and military POWs from the Los Baños Internment Camp, considered one of the most successful rescues in military history. Following the Los Baños raid, the 11th Airborne spent the next few weeks mopping up resistance in southern Luzon.

In May, 1945, the Division began preparations for the expected invasion of Japan, but with Japan's surrender in August, the Division instead moved to Okinawa to escort Gen. Douglas MacArthur into Japan. The 11th Airborne landed at Atsugi Airdrome near Tokyo, and occupied an area in and around Yokohama. They remained there until mid-September 1945, when they moved to northern Japan. The division later took over control of almost half the island of Honshu and all the island of Hokkaido. The 11th Airborne remained in Japan until 1949 before returning to the U.S.

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