



War Games: Inside the World of Twentieth-Century War Reenactors

Jenny Thompson

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D-Day with beach umbrellas in the distance? Troops ordering ice cream? American and German forces celebrating Christmas together in the barracks? This could only be the curious world of 20th-century war reenactors. A relatively recent and rapidly expanding phenomenon, reenactments in the United States of World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War now draw more than 8,000 participants a year. Mostly men, these reenactors celebrate, remember, and re-create the tiniest details of the Battle of the Bulge in the Maryland Woods, D-Day on a beach in Virginia, and WWI trench warfare in Pennsylvania.

Jenny Thompson draws on seven years of fieldwork, personal interviews, and surveys to look into this growing subculture. She looks at how the reenactors' near obsession with owning “authentic” military clothing, guns, paraphernalia, and vehicles often explodes into heated debates. *War Games* sheds light on the ways people actually make use of history in their daily lives and looks intensely into the meaning of war itself and how wars have become the heart of American history. The author's photographs provide incredible evidence of how “real” these battles can become.

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