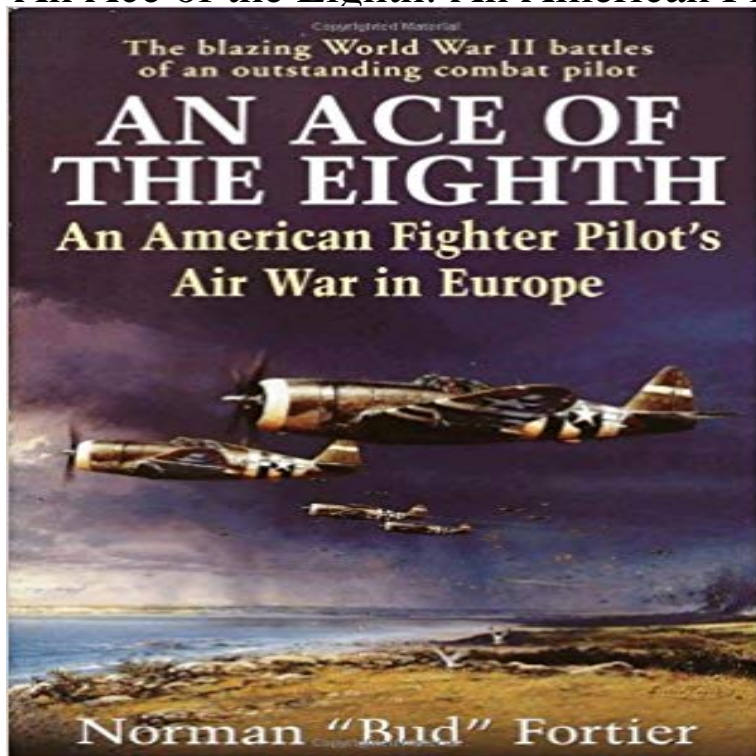


An Ace of the Eighth: An American Fighter Pilots Air War in Europe



FOR A FIGHTER PILOT IN THE MIGHTY EIGHTH, DEATH WAS ALWAYS A HEARTBEAT AWAY. When the skies of Europe blazed with the fiercest air battles in history, fighter pilots like Norman Bud Fortier were in the thick of it, flying four hundred miles an hour at thirty thousand feet, dodging flak and dueling with Nazi aces. In their role as escorts to Flying Fortresses and Liberators, the fighter squadrons ability to blast enemy aircraft from the sky was key to the success of pinpoint bombing raids on German oil refineries, communication and supply lines, and other crucial targets. Flying in formation with the bomber stream, Fortier and the rest of his squadron helped develop dive-bombing and strafing tactics for the Thunderbolts and Mustangs. As the war progressed, fighter squadrons began to carry out their own bombing missions. From blasting V-1 missile sites along Frances rocket coast and the hell-torn action of D day to the critical attacks on the Ruhr Valley and massive daylight raids on German industrial targets, Fortier was part of the Allies bitter struggle to bring the Nazi war machine to a halt. In describing his own hundred-plus missions and by including the accounts of fellow fighter pilots, Fortier recaptures the excitement and fiery terror of the worlds most dangerous cat-and-mouse game.

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