

This creative nonfiction narrative is about the intimate experiences of both soldiers and civilians during World War II and primarily follows the route of my grandfather, Philip M. Wade, who participated in the invasion of southern France and was a prisoner-of-war in Poland. By exploring the little-known battle of Montelimar and the small P.O.W. camp of Oflag 64, I hope to illuminate the human stories that often get lost under the weight of numbers, lists, names and statistics during war by bringing them back to life through literature. I am challenging, in particular, the notion of World War II being the last “good” war; combating the simplistic and romantic images we have of the Nazis as the merciless enemy, and the Allies as the unquestionably good heroes; and highlighting the roles of civilian resistance and aid in Allied success and survival. My research was drawn from two different pools of information: interviews conducted on site in France and Poland, as well as primary documents gathered from veterans, museums, and archives; and the thorough research and analysis, by a number of well-established historians and specialists, of the battles and the situation in Poland. The element that left the greatest impression on me, over the course of my travels and my research, was the level of impact global warfare had on civilians, their ways of life and standard of living, and in particular, the impact on their collective memory and their sense of national pride and self-respect. This is the component I have tried to refine and emphasize the most in the writing of this particular work.