

*Voices of Camp Forrest
in World War II*
By Dr. Elizabeth Taylor

Lt. Col. Darrin Haas Gives his Review of:

VOICES OF CAMP FORREST IN WORLD WAR II

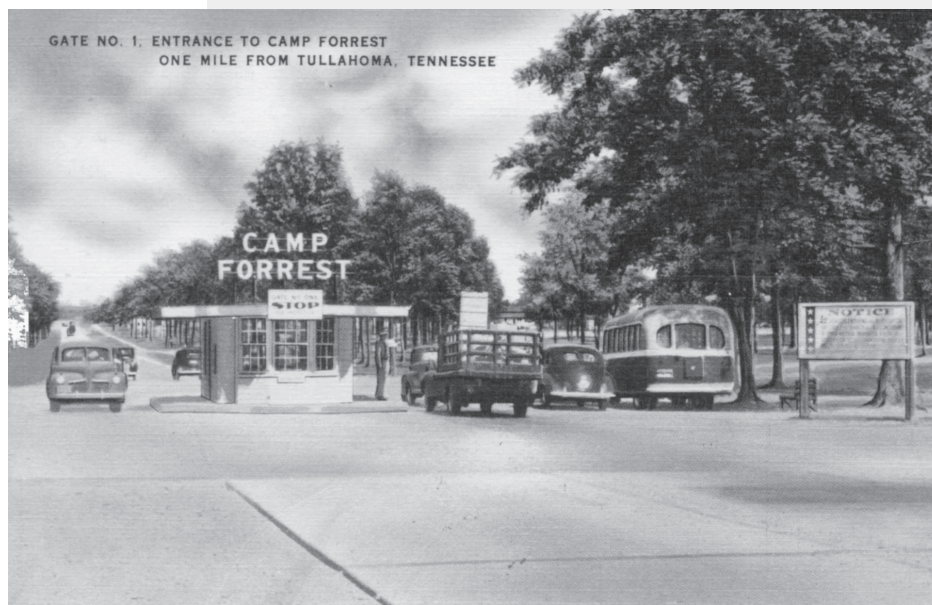
Tullahoma's Volunteer Training Site is the largest and one of the most widely used training facilities maintained by the Tennessee National Guard. Thousands of guardsmen, soldiers, ROTC cadets, and countless other government agencies use the state-of-the-art facility to train and qualify on various weapon systems each year. However, it is more than just a training site. It is a time capsule for our state's history. Now thanks to Dr. Elizabeth Taylor and her new book, *Voices of Camp Forrest in World War II*, a major part of that history has been unearthed.

Through meticulous and painstaking research spanning over a decade, Taylor explored the history of Camp Forrest, a major encampment built to support the U.S. Military's expansion at the onset of World War II. As war loomed in 1940, the U.S. Govern-

ment constructed military facilities throughout the country to prepare for the impending conflict. In September 1940, the U.S. Government chose to expand Camp Peay, a Tennessee National Guard training camp in Tullahoma. Originally built in 1926, Camp Peay consisted of over 1,000 acres of military training area. Within a year, it was renamed Camp Forrest and expanded to nearly 85,000 acres. Approximately 22,000 to 28,000 laborers flooded into Tullahoma to construct the roads, buildings, and countless other facilities needed to mobilize and train soldiers for combat.

At Camp Forrest's height, it had over 1,300 buildings, 55 miles of roads, and five miles of railroad tracks. There were numerous training areas, artillery and rifle ranges, and an airfield. It also featured one of the first urban training facilities, a "Nazi

A vintage postcard from Camp Forrest. (Courtesy Photo)



village,” where Army Rangers and Soldiers trained to fight in inhabited areas. Throughout the war, Camp Forrest existed as a self-sustaining city with over 70,000 Soldiers and another 12,000 civilians on post at any given time. However, when the war ended, the federal government deemed the camp too costly to maintain and decommissioned it. Many of the buildings were removed or destroyed and much of the property was repurposed.

Throughout her book, Taylor looks at the impact Camp Forrest had on Tullahoma and the Middle Tennessee area. She examines the effect Pearl Harbor had on Middle Tennessee, the construction of Camp Forrest, and what it was like to live and work at and around the camp. She also looks at the effect housing prisoners of war had on

the area and the impact decommissioning the facility had on the local economy.

In order to tell this story, Taylor personally interviewed many of the soldiers, families, and civilians who lived, worked, trained, and grew up in and around Camp Forrest. She scoured through countless newspapers, personal diaries, and scrapbooks found in the archives and personal collections to weave her story together. Taylor’s interest stemmed from research she conducted on prisoners of war interred in Tullahoma during the war. Camp Forrest served as a prisoner of war facility holding German, Japanese, and Italian prisoners. By 1944, more

than 20,000 German prisoners were detained there, many awaiting processing and shipment to other POW facilities around the country.

Overall, *Voices of Camp Forrest in World War II* is a masterful work I would highly recommend to any reader interested in the history of World War II, Middle Tennessee, or the Tennessee National Guard. Taylor’s scholarship is sound, vibrant, and full of interesting stories keeping the reader riveted and engaged. Her work is incredibly well written and impeccably researched. It is an essential read for anyone interested in Tennessee and World War II history.

- LT. COL. DARRIN HAAS