



## Below the Salt

*John A. Busterud*

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" Below the Salt tells the exciting story of how the 90th Infantry Division discovered the greatest treasure to be found by Allied forces in World War II, buried deep underground in a German salt mine. It sets the stage for momentous event by following the division from its D-Day landings on Utah Beach, through its heartrending struggles to become a successful fighting unit in the hedgerows of Normandy, gradually transforming itself into one of the best battle-hardened divisions in Europe as it closed the Falaise Gap, raced across France, crossed the flooded Moselle River, created a bridgehead across the Saar River, helped to trap thousands of Germans in the Bulge, forced a surprise assault crossing of the Rhine, and eventually ended the war in Czechoslovakia.

Despite the 90th Division's exploits in battle, the tale that wagged its dog proved to be the capture of the Kaiseroda Mine in the small village of Merkers, Germany in April 1945. Deep in the potash mine the division found untold wealth: virtually the entire gold and currency reserves of the German Reichsbank, together with all of the priceless art treasures which had been removed from Berlin's museums for protection against allied bombing raids and possible capture by rapidly advancing Russian troops. Taking the mine stirred the imagination of the public and the press. All of America's top military leadership in Europe, including Generals Eisenhower, Bradley and Patton, visited the mine and viewed the treasure. It was a heady experience for the battle-weary GIs of the 90th Division, and a welcome respite from combat. Below the Salt concludes with the story of what happened to all of the gold and art treasures after the war."

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