

Tom Hicks's story begins when he joins the LMS straight from school and follows his early life on the railways in the 1930s, through enlistment, training as a paratrooper, wartime service, imprisonment and his return to the LMS as an engine driver. Tom volunteered for war service in 1939 and was initially placed in the military railway of the Royal Engineers. In search of adventure, he successfully applied to join the newly formed 1st Parachute Squadron of the Royal Engineers. The intensity and rigors of parachute training are described in detail, as are the comradeship and humor that came to the fore as this small 150-man unit fought throughout the Second World War as part of the 1st Parachute Brigade. The excitement of the first parachute jumps are relived together with the parachute operations in North Africa, Sicily and the Battle of Arnhem. It was here after nine days of fighting with his mates falling around him that Tom was wounded and taken prisoner. Following the battle, Tom was transported in a cattle truck to Germany where he was used as forced labor in a lead mine until being liberated by the Americans in 1945. With insightful commentary from Tom's son Norman, this is the story of an ordinary soldier, who was motivated by pride in his unit. It was this that would not let him leave the army when he was twice given the opportunity to return home to support the struggling railway system. Tom has recounted his experiences with a keen eye and the sense of humor that has always enabled him to triumph in the face of adversity.

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