



# **The Chaplain's Conflict: Good and Evil in a War Hospital, 1943-1945 (Williams-Ford Texas A&M University Military History Series)**

*Tennant McWilliams*

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As chaplain for the US Army's 102nd Evacuation Hospital in the European Theater, Renwick C. Kennedy--"Ren" to those who knew him--witnessed great courage, extreme talent, and many lives snatched from the precipice of death, all under the most trying conditions. He also observed drug and alcohol abuse, prejudice, narrow-mindedness, and chronic depression.

What he saw, he chronicled in his journal, and what he wrote, he processed with an intellectual and ethical rigor born of his remarkably sophisticated worldview and his deeply held Christian faith. With Kennedy's war diaries and postwar articles published in *Christian Century* and *Time* magazines in front of him, historian Tennant McWilliams spent a year retracing every step, every turn, every location of the 102nd in wartime France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany, compiling rich detail on this episode in Kennedy's life.

McWilliams's interviews with citizens of France and Luxembourg who recall the 102nd further revealed local people's reactions to the army hospital that illuminated both Kennedy's severe criticism and his enduring praise for evac life. The result is a candid view of what went on in the World War II evac hospitals. With a nuanced and gritty style, *The Chaplain's Conflict* shatters the self-interested and sometimes sentimental images of evacs held by some among the medical community.

This complex and compelling observation of doctors practicing war-zone medicine in World War II will hold great appeal for readers of military and medical history, as well as those interested in the socio-cultural, ethical, and religious implications of war and military service.

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