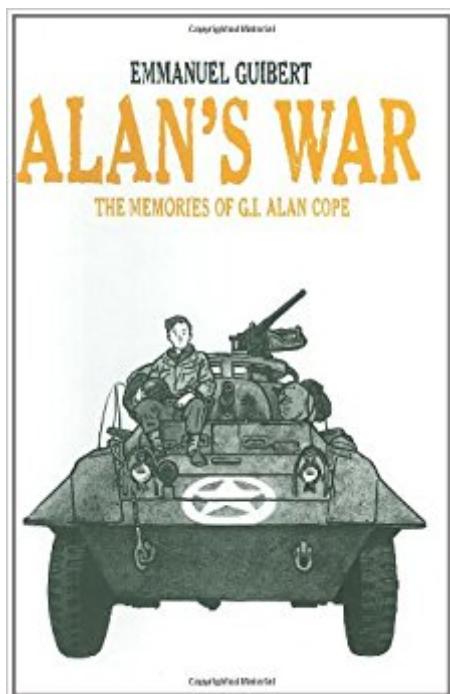


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# Alan's War: The Memories Of G.I. Alan Cope



## Synopsis

"When I was eighteen, Uncle Sam told me he'd like me to put on a uniform and go off to fight a guy by the name of Adolf. So I did." When Alan Cope joined the army and went off to fight in World War II, he had no idea what he was getting into. This graphic memoir is the story of his life during wartime, a story told with poignant intimacy and matchless artistry. Across a generation, a deep friendship blossomed between Alan Cope and author/artist Emmanuel Guibert. From it, Alan's War was born — a graphic novel that is a deeply personal and moving experience, straight from the heart of the Greatest Generation — a unique piece of WWII literature and a ground-breaking graphic memoir.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Guibert writes and draws for American G.I. Alan Cope in this poignant and frank graphic memoir of young soldier who was told to serve his country in WWII and how it changed him forever. When he first enters Fort Knox at 18, he is young and impressionable, more of a dreamer than the military type. Slowly, Cope grows through his experiences in the war. He forges candid friendships with his fellow soldiers and remains ever insightful in his recollections of the war and his life afterward. Together, Cope and Guibert forge a story that resonates with humanity. Guibert's illustrations capture the time period vividly. While the subject matter is familiar from many wartime memoirs, Guibert's fluid, simple but assured linework captures the personalities of Cope and his friends, elevating the material to a far more affecting level. (Oct.) Copyright © Reed Business

Grade 10 Up  
Cope was a paper delivery boy in California in 1941 when Pearl Harbor was bombed. A couple of years later, at 18, he was drafted into the U.S. Army and shipped off to Europe. In 1994, he met cartoonist Guibert and recounted his wartime experiences and what he'd thought of them during the intervening years. The resulting book published in France a year after Cope's death in 1999 puts readers nearly inside the skin of a young man who learns to deal with Army regulations, a number of Western cultures, friendships, and what turned out to be a lifelong exploration of life's possible meanings. Guibert allows Cope to speak directly from the pages, where the images he is describing unfold in small, neat panels in which grays, black line, and open white space provide details of expression, furnishings, the open countryside, and military equipment. Guibert and Cope are well matched and compelling as storytellers. There is no central dramatic moment here. Cope's major wartime work involved neither attacks nor defenses—but the complete honesty offers insights and answers often omitted in war stories. Cope becomes so real that, as he ages across the final quarter of the book, teens will stay involved with how his youthful experiences and ideals colored his mature choices and memories.

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At first blush, this graphic novel might seem disappointing -- No violence, no purple hearts, no Hollywood heroics. Alan Cope led a basically quiet life that started when he was sent to Europe during the occupation/rebuilding of France and Germany (his stations). However, it's the everyday things, the quiet observations, and the personal revelations that remind us that war isn't just the John Wayne's or A. Murphy's of Hollywood: Guibert reminds us that everyday people donned uniforms and did their duty, then returned to civilian life ... Simple as that, and that fact matters.

Alan's War and The Photographer are my favorite Emmanuel Guibert books. These memoirs are well executed and feel unique among graphic novels. While I recommend starting here if you are new to Guibert, I do not recommend the follow-up prequel California Childhood. Despite being attached to Alan Cope in this book, I was less captivated by his childhood.

This is an interesting memoir in graphic novel style. The pictures have an elegant simplicity. A French author, years after the fact, illustrated the stories of a young American G.I. who happened to

arrive in Europe just as WWII was ending. He was a sensitive observer, and made some interesting friendships in that curious post-war period. Imagine touring Europe in a tank!

My first graphic novel, I cannot praise this touching, true story enough. The illustrations are perfect, the story real; it "shows" rather than "tells" the realities of war and being a soldier.

great stuff!

This is a remarkable book. Guibert's style is immediately engaging -- it sounds corny but it was easy to believe he was speaking directly to me. The art is equally engaging. It supports the story without distracting, and provides a fantastic sense of time and place. They worked together to keep me riveted from cover to cover.

In an amazing act of cultural sympathy, French cartoonist Emmanuel Guibert befriended the elderly US vet Alan Cope and now proceeds to tell Cope's own story as though Cope was still with us, playing the ventriloquist. Guibert has a finely tuned ear for the enthusiasms and hesitations of his former friend, and *ALAN'S WAR* stands as an inspiring tribute to the power of friendship between generations, for you'd have to be awfully sensitive to be able to catch to this degree the nuances of a generation born in the 1920s, not to mention rendering all of Alan's adventures in a complementary, impressionistic panoply of evocative panels. We can almost imagine that Cope wrote this himself! I heard of this book from my friend, the editor and poet Ben Mazer, who had spread the word that *ALAN'S WAR* contains a pen-and-ink portrait of our mutual friend, the California writer Landis Everson, one of the original "Berkeley Renaissance" poets of the 1940s. Indeed Landis does appear in some of the brief, postwar sections of the book, when Cope is trying to get his footing back in a society ostensibly at peace, but inwardly seething with the tensions of the Cold War. And it's an interesting take on Landis Everson, but believe me, he plays only a tiny part in this very long saga of war and youth. Alan Cope himself we get to know well, though there's ultimately a distance he keeps between himself and Guibert. It seems like there's all sorts of things he leaves out. Why for example, his hatred of America? It is said that a companion volume, *ALAN'S YOUTH*, is to follow, and maybe we'll get some clues about his emotional shutdown. His love of his comrades is a little eye-opening, too, and beyond that Alan seems to have encountered every aggressive gay man in the whole US armed forces. His regret? That he didn't kiss back the brother of a California neighbor who professed his love for him. Other reviewers have noted Alan's

tolerance of what were then thought of as sexual deviants. Actually ALAN'S WAR for all its good intentions, and its very real grace, is a little bit boring... But many will love it, and biographers of Pound and Henry Miller and Octavio Paz will turn to it for some intrig

This is the story of one man's war. It is not the story of WWII, but the story of one man (Alan Cope) and his personal day to day life as he lived through those years in France. Alan didn't fight in any famous battles or according to himself, show any acts of bravery. His war could be called mundane, but no one can go through fighting and surviving a world war without having tales to tell and these are Alan's tales in his own words illustrated by Emmanuel Guibert. The book was good and I enjoyed my time with it. There are a few things that made it not a five-star read for me. It drags a bit, being overly long. Guibert doesn't do as much of his photograph/illustration mixture artwork for a good portion of the book, which I can understand because of the lack of photos taken during the actual combat years, but still I felt their absence. Finally, I simply didn't like Alan. I had a small inkling after reading the story of his childhood that as an adult he might rub me the wrong way, and this book certainly confirmed that. I didn't like his worldview, outlook, or opinions. So that does take away from the enjoyment of reading the minutia of his life. But all told I did like this quiet, personal look at one man's war.

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