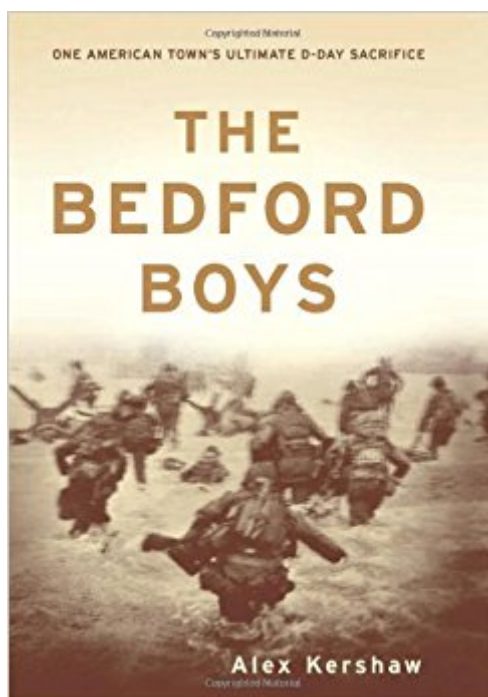


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The Bedford Boys: One American Town's Ultimate D-day Sacrifice



Synopsis

June 6, 1944: Nineteen boys from Bedford, Virginia--population just 3,000 in 1944--died in the first bloody minutes of D-Day. They were part of Company A of the 116th Regiment of the 29th Division, and the first wave of American soldiers to hit the beaches in Normandy. Later in the campaign, three more boys from this small Virginia town died of gunshot wounds. Twenty-two sons of Bedford lost--it is a story one cannot easily forget and one that the families of Bedford will never forget. The Bedford Boys is the true and intimate story of these men and the friends and families they left behind. Based on extensive interviews with survivors and relatives, as well as diaries and letters, Kershaw's book focuses on several remarkable individuals and families to tell one of the most poignant stories of World War II--the story of one small American town that went to war and died on Omaha Beach.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

June 6, 1944 has been written about extensively by American authors almost from the moment it happened. The invasion to free western Europe has filled perhaps more pages than any other event in history. Beyond books, D-Day has been the subject of more movies than one can count. Among the most famous films about D-Day was The Longest Day and a generation later Saving Private Ryan. What else can be said about the invasion of Europe? Somehow, the story of the young men from Bedford, Virginia has been overlooked. When you read the book you'll ask the same question I did....Why didn't Stephen Spielberg make his movie about WWII using this story instead of the fictional story of Private Ryan. When you read the Bedford Boys by Alex Kershaw you'll ask the same question. Bedford, Virginia is a small blue ridge mountain town of 3000. Before WWII jobs

were scarce. Most of the men of the town joined the national guard unit to augment their meager incomes. Most earned a dollar a day for the days they trained. When the war started their unit became part of the 116th Infantry, one of the most battered units in Europe. On D-Day twenty-one of Bedford's sons would die on the beaches of Normandy. No other town of any size would suffer such a devastating loss. Twenty-one sons, brothers, fathers, boyfriends all lost; lost as completely as anyone can be lost....erased with the sweep of an hour hand. It boggles the mind even today nearly 60 years later. Alex Kershaw does a wonderful job of bringing these young men to life. These young soldiers aren't just characters on the stage of history. As you learn about them, wome in more detail than the others, they become real people. The book follows them from prewar Bedford, through training, and on the a blood stained beach in France.

Alex Kershaw's "The Bedford Boys" is about people. It is a history of what war does to individuals and those left behind. We are told that 5,000 Americans died on June 6, 1944, D-Day, but that is a statistic. This narrative is about folks who died trying to cross the beach code named Omaha i; Bloody Omaha. It is the names that make this volume uniquely harrowing, singularly distressing, exceptionally depressing. It is similar to the effect Maya Lin's Vietnam War Memorial in Washington has on people, 58,000 names memorialized in polished stone. Touch a name; contact a soul. Bedford, Va, lost a higher percentage of its sons on D-Day than any community in America and that is the main reason the National D-Day Memorial was dedicated in the tiny village of Bedford in June, 2001. But 56-years of time and the presence of the president of the United States were not enough to salve the losses on Omaha Beach. Mothers and fathers were emotionally wounded by their losses, siblings permanently disheartened, widows and fiancées everlastingly scarred. Mr. Kershaw's book relentlessly reminds us that war is about humans. The Bedford boys were shaped by the Depression, and the young men of Company A of the first Battalion of the 116th Regiment of the 29th Division had joined the National Guard in the 1930s for social purposes and also for the essential dollar-a-day they were paid when they were in training once each month and for two weeks in the summer. Many other Bedford inhabitants i; more than 1500 i; served in the armed services during World War II, but Company A was special. These men had grown up, gone to school, played baseball, and worked together, dated each other's sisters, trained and deployed as a group, and were in the first wave to assault Omaha Beach at H Hour on June 6.

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