



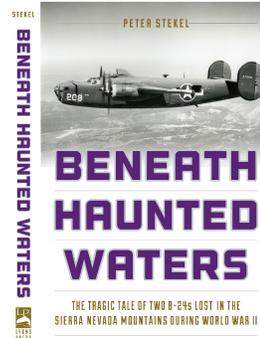
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Beneath Haunted Waters

The Tragic Tale of Two B-24s Lost in the Sierra Nevada Mountains During World War II

Peter Stekel

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Description

It's the first week of December, 1943. Returning early in the morning during a training exercise to their base in Fresno, California the six-man crew of #463, a B-24 Liberator bomber, disappear. A day later a squadron of ten Liberators is sent in search of #463. While over the Sierra Nevada mountains, *Exterminator*, one of the searching aircraft develops engine trouble and crashes into Huntington Lake reservoir. A few hundred feet above the ground, two of the eight crewmen successfully bail out of the stricken B-24. The remaining six men perish when their bomber sinks straight to the reservoir's bottom.

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The two missing aircraft were soon forgotten and World War II ground on for nearly two more years. But the families of these lost boys (during the 1930s and 1940s young men were referred to as "boys") never gave up. They never forgot. In 1955, *Exterminator*, Huntington Lake's "Plane in the Lake" was uncovered when the reservoir was drained in order to perform repairs on the dam. Clinton Hester, father of the co-pilot on #463 spent the following 16 years searching for his son in the wilderness around Mt. Whitney. He died one year before the crash site was found in an alpine lake now bearing the family name.

Beneath Haunted Waters tells the tragic tale of the loss and discovery of these two airplanes. It's also the story of the boys who flew the Liberators and what kind of training they received. The book also contains an explanation of what might have caused both bombers to crash. Peter Stekel has successfully overcome the difficult obstacles in writing about aviation disasters by coupling meticulously detailed research with the best of storytelling.

There are thousands of histories and memoirs by those who served during the World War II. However, little has been written that covers the terrible toll of aviation training accidents during the war. The United States lost more aircraft and crews to training accidents than in air combat with the Empire of Japan. *Beneath Haunted Waters* also tells this story and explains why it had to happen this way.

Contributor Information

Peter Stekel is the author of *Final Flight, The Mystery of a WWII Plane Crash and the Frozen Airmen in the High Sierra* (Wilderness Press), *Best Wildflower Hikes Western Washington* (FalconGuides), *Best Hikes Near Seattle* (FalconGuides), two works of fiction and over 700 magazine and newspaper feature and news stories.