

"Poignant and gripping, *Beneath Haunted Waters* reminds us of a side of war we seldom hear about, the high toll it takes outside of combat. Flying into a mountainside at night is just as deadly as flying into a hail of enemy gunfire and just as painful for the families of those killed. Perhaps even more so, because in the two cases Peter Stekel expertly reconstructs here, years passed before the survivors knew how their sons lives ended."

Adam Hochschild

Lecturer at the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley and author of *To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914-1918* and *Spain in Our Hearts: Americans in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939*.

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"Peter Stekel has written a fascinating and highly-readable account of two military training accidents that but for his and the efforts of others profiled in his book, might have fallen into obscurity. Any disaster takes place at the intersection of multiple paths, each one of which has contributed. *Beneath Haunted Waters* is a highly-readable tour down these side roads that lead us to new ways of thinking about history, warfare, aviation, journalism and civics in mid-20th Century America."

Christine Negroni, author of *The Crash Detectives Investigating the World's Most Mysterious Air Disasters*.

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If you like history and mysteries and good story telling you need to read this book. I am deeply involved with vintage aircraft and my favorite book on this topic is *Final Flight* by Peter Stekel. Peter is not an aviation historian and that is his greatest strength. He has picked stories of human drama and tragedy from his beloved Sierra Nevada Mountains which happen to involve the loss of aircraft. His meticulous research uncovers the stories behind the accidents and his description of the investigation is as fascinating as his conclusions.

*Beneath Haunted Waters* has all the appeals of *Final Flight* and more above. It tells the story of two enormous bombers of World War II with large crews that were lost in the High Sierra, the second searching for the first, and which both found their final resting places at the bottom of lonely lakes. The loss of thousands of young people in aircraft crashes across the United States during World War II is a sadly forgotten strand of history. Producing a myriad of aircrew for a global conflict required hundreds of thousands of training flights in the USA. During this endeavors thousands of young trainees died as a result of mistakes, mechanical failures and simple bad luck.

In *Beneath Haunted Waters* Peter weaves a wonderful story around the discovery and investigation of the two lost planes over several decades. He meticulously researched the individual lives of all the lost aviators which brings poignancy to the story of the lives cut short. As in *Final Flight* he also gained an impressive knowledge of the relevant aircraft, flying conditions and other challenges that probably caused these tragedies. This book will appeal to a wide range of readers from those who enjoy the splendor and natural history of the mountain back country to those who are aficionados of aviation or World War II. It is evocative, educational and a flat out good read.

Adrian Hunt, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Flying Heritage and Combat Armor Museum

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"In *Beneath Haunted Waters* Peter Stekel has successfully overcome the most difficult obstacles in writing about aviation disasters. He has coupled deeply detailed research with the best of storytelling. The crewmen in these stories would be proud to know how well their stories have been captured in this book.

"The stories Stekel has written about in this book have begged to be told for decades. Finally, we can now know the in depth details that have never been told with such depth and clarity.

"Just when one thinks there is nothing further to write about on old military plane crashes a book like this comes along. Stekel has captured both the facts and spirit of these crashes in the most readable manner.

"It is a little recognized fact that thousands of American fliers died in aviation accidents during training for World War Two. In this book Stekel tells the fascinating stories behind two of the crashes whose wreckage evaded discovery for decades. This is a unique book about military aviation and the fates of crews who never made it to combat.

"The waters of the world still hold the wreckage of many missing airplanes whose fates remain a mystery. For once, in this book, we can finally know so many answers that have hung out there for seemingly endless decades on two of those crashes. Stekel has used extensive research and great storytelling to close the books on these two bomber crews.

"The fates of far too many World War Two bomber crews still remains a

mystery seven decades after the shooting stopped. Finally, because of Stekel's in depth research and storytelling skills, we can now read the rest of the story for two of these crews. Mystery solved."

Brian Linder  
Aviation Archeologist

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"The B-24 hidden for 17 years in what is now Hester Lake has fascinated me since 1961, the year after it was found. I was then working on a summer trail crew only a mile or two from this wreckage, and heard the story of its discovery from the park ranger, Leroy Brock, who stumbled onto it. So interesting was it to me, I later visited the grave site of its crewmen in Arlington National Cemetery. In *Beneath Haunted Waters*, Peter Stekel recounts the history of these plane wrecks with an historian's eye for detail and a story teller's gift for touching the human heart."

Butch Farabee, author of *Big Walls, Swift Waters: Epic Stories of Yosemite Search and Rescue*.

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"Peter Stekel has achieved a penultimate success with this compelling must read work about two B-24 Liberators that vanished in California during World War II. The Hester and Huntington Lakes B-24's are part of High Sierra lore. The author has provided an in-depth understanding of what happened and why. He pays close attention to the suffering of the next of kin, and the determined heroism of one crewman's father in searching for his lost son. It's an expertly written tale about two long missing World War II era B-24's, and the High Sierra Lakes that held them. The fate of their crews, a troubling mystery, is fully described and explained by a master story teller."

G. Pat Macha, aviation archeologist and author of several books about airplane crashes in California including *Historic Aircraft Wrecks of San Diego County*, *Historic Aircraft Wrecks of San Bernardino County*, and *Aircraft Wrecks in the Mountains and Deserts of California*, with Don Jordan.

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"In *Beneath Haunted Waters* Peter Stekel unfolds four equally gripping and poignant stories. He takes us into the cockpits to experience the dread of two World War II bomber crews struggling with uncertain navigation and aircraft malfunctions. He leads us into the world of aircraft wreck hunters captured by the mystique surrounding these bombers in the lakes. His deep research illustrates the often forgotten fact that America lost significantly more aircrews during the Second World War in training accidents than in

combat in the Pacific Theater. And, finally, he makes us relate to those lost flyboys and grieve for them.”

Randall Peffer, author of *The Hunt for the Last U-Boat* and *Never to Return*.

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“In *Beneath Haunted Waters*, author Peter Stekel recovers a compelling story of bravery and unspeakable loss from the icy vastness of California’s Sierra Nevada. This wartime story of youthful bravery and the desperate times that put these men at risk deserves to be read and remembered by us all.”

William C. Tweed, author of *King Sequoia: The Tree that Inspired a Nation* and *Uncertain Path: A Search for the Future of National Parks*.

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“Peter Stekel’s *Beneath Haunted Waters* tells the story of the discovery and investigation into the mysterious disappearance of two Liberator bombers lost in California’s Sierra Nevada Mountains during World War II. Stekel expertly brings to life the personal stories of the bomber crews and those who uncovered these lost aircraft. A great read!”

Nicholas A. Veronico, author of *Hidden Warbirds: The Epic Stories of Finding, Recovering, and Rebuilding WWII’s Lost Aircraft*.

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“Peter Stekel has, once again, penned a meticulously researched account that pays homage to America’s Hidden Battle, that of the rigors, dangers, and incredible number of lives lost in training.

Michael Sledge, author of *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Identify, Bury, & Honor Our Military Fallen*.