



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

By Alex Kershaw

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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.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This accessible and moving group biography portrays the men of Company A, 116th Infantry Regiment, 29th Infantry Division, who were part of the first wave at Omaha Beach in WWII. Initially, 103 of them left the small town of Bedford, Va.-now the site of the national D-Day memorial-when the local National Guard was called up in 1940; 34 were still with the company on D-Day. Of these, 19 died in a matter of minutes and three more perished in the Normandy campaign. Men lost ranged from the company commander, Captain Taylor N. Fellers, from a wealthy Bedford family, to Frank Draper Jr., a fine athlete and soldier from the wrong side of the tracks. Long-time National Guardsman John Wilkes died as the company's top sergeant, while Earl Parker left behind a daughter he never saw. Both Holback brothers and Ray Stevens died, while Ray's twin Roy Stevens was one of the handful of survivors. Kershaw (Jack London) includes combat sequences that give a vivid private's-eye view of the particular hell that was Omaha Beach, while one of the most moving portions of the book is the simultaneous arrival in Bedford of nine "We regret to inform you..." telegrams. A capsule history of Bedford before the war, its role as part of the home front during it and its current place as (controversial) memorial site are all covered, but the book's central focus is on the town where a good many survivors remain whose memories have not faded and whose emotional wounds have not healed.

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From [Booklist](#)

On June 6, 1944, Allied armies launched their massive invasion of Europe--D-Day, in other words. Among the thousands of soldiers headed for France were 34 men from the town of Bedford, Virginia, aboard *Empire Javelin*, a British troopship. Nineteen of them were killed in the first minutes of combat, when their landing craft dropped them into the water off Normandy. Two more were killed later in the day from gunshot wounds. No other town in the U.S. endured a greater one-day loss. Kershaw's book is more than just another war story; here is an in-depth account of this blue-collar town and its 3,000 people. The soldiers included three sets of brothers, a pool-hall hustler, husbands, farmers, and a couple of "highly successful Lotharios." Kershaw describes in painful detail how the next of kin were notified of the soldiers' deaths via Western Union telegrams and how the news devastated their lives. Drawing on interviews with survivors and relatives, newspaper clippings, letters, and diaries, Kershaw has chronicled one community's great sacrifice.

George Cohen

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Review

"The Bedford Boys is written like Sebastian Junger's *A Perfect Storm*."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Steven Dillinger:

As people who live in typically the modest era should be update about what going on or data even knowledge to make these individuals keep up with the era that is certainly always change and progress. Some of you maybe will update themselves by reading through books. It is a good choice to suit your needs

but the problems coming to you actually is you don't know what type you should start with. This The Bedford Boys: One American Town's Ultimate D-day Sacrifice is our recommendation to help you keep up with the world. Why, because this book serves what you want and need in this era.

Jason Serrano:

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