

1995

The Malmedy Massacre

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Recommended Citation

Wenger, Michael and Bauserman, John M. (1995) "The Malmedy Massacre," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 48 : No. 4 , Article 18.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol48/iss4/18>

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and barges assigned to the convoy, and although damaged itself with a cracked deck the *Mason* led the detachment through a treacherous channel and escorted it to safe harbor. After reaching port, its damage repaired, the *Mason* returned to escort other stranded convoy vessels to port. Commander Alfred L. Lind, the task group commander, recommended each crew member for a letter of commendation; all were withheld for no apparent reason other than the race of USS *Mason's* crew.

The crew discuss a possible U-boat contact in another crossing. Surviving members still argue about whether they had an encounter with the "red-dog" that night in January 1945. (A *Mason* officer recalls Ed Ross saying "Boy, red-dog is really on the loose," referring to German submarines that attacked the convoys. The crew adopted the term to refer to any German submarine attacking the convoys escorted by the *Mason*.) Accounts like these are truly informative, making Kelly's *Proudly We Served* enjoyable professional reading.

In today's climate of national political debate over affirmative action, Kelly provides a historic benchmark from which to judge the progress of equal opportunity in the United States Navy. Today, we consider it almost routine to see successful African-Americans rising to new heights of authority and responsibility in the Navy. It has not always been that way, and there is ample reason to believe that the playing field in the Navy is still not completely level for all of its members. There are still isolated cases of discrimination akin to those described in *Proudly We Served* that are

experienced by men and women of color who wear the uniform.

Racism is a disease in this country, and to eliminate affirmative action in the Navy (right now congressional debates are taking place about abolishing mandated affirmative action programs) would be tantamount to eliminating the only remedy for that disease. Accurate, historical, comparative evidence of racism's prolonged existence is readily available. Perhaps not enough people have read books like *Proudly We Served*.

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Bauserman, John M. *The Malmédy Massacre*. Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane, 1995. 148pp. \$19.95

Few acts of Axis brutality during World War II provoked more revulsion and stronger emotion among Americans than did the massacre of nearly seventy U.S. soldiers on 17 December 1944 during the Battle of the Bulge. SS troops herded the captured soldiers into a field at a road junction near the Belgian town of Malmédy and murdered them with machine gun fire. The massacre became the stimulus for the heightened urgency surrounding the Allied mission in Europe and strengthened American determination to crush the Nazi state as quickly as possible.

The units involved were the U.S. Army's Battery B, 285th Field Artillery Observation Battalion (with assorted hangers-on) and German troops from *Kampfgruppe* (battle group) Peiper,

composed of elements from the 1st SS Panzer Division. During the first hours of the German offensive, confusion served as a catalyst for certain chance ingredients—poor judgment on the part of the Americans, cold brutality ingrained into SS troops of the advancing German spearheads, and just plain bad luck—and combined all to form a deadly prescription at an obscure Belgian crossroads.

John Bauserman offers his work as a compilation of “detailed information of the events before, during, and after the Malmédy Massacre.” To support his effort, he draws from an array of primary and secondary sources, particularly the Army’s Judge Advocate General records (now in the National Archives) from the 1946 Malmédy trial at Dachau, in which the German officers responsible for the murders were tried for war crimes.

Bauserman commences with a discussion of German objectives, the role of *Kampfgruppe* Peiper in the advance, and the orders issued, from Hitler down to the tactical level, especially those pertaining to the treatment of prisoners of war. The book’s subsequent organization exhibits a strict dichotomy between German and American material: the German version is based on captured enemy documents and POW interrogations; the American interpretation of events is rooted in after-action reports, numerous survivor statements, personal interviews, and trial testimony. Bauserman elects not to interpret the German and American stories in light of each other but rather as separate, detailed, stand-alone accounts that chronicle the antagonists’

activities during their advance to Baugez, the “battle” that ensued, and the American surrender and subsequent massacre. Excellent maps (with two exceptions) provide a “crime scene” feel to the book, which, when combined with the emotionally charged and devastatingly graphic individual accounts, offer an intriguing and intense reading experience. Informative appendices also enhance the work.

However, Bauserman’s work falls short in several respects. It is unfortunate that more effort was not expended to meld the disparate elements of the story into a cohesive whole. Much material appears simply to have been stitched together; at times the narrative flows poorly and exhibits irritating redundancy. Inclusion of English equivalents for SS ranks in parentheses encumbers the text and is unnecessary—the same material constitutes half the book’s glossary.

Bauserman’s endnotes are weak and uneven. He frequently cites only a National Archives record group, without including document titles or box numbers, which considerably diminishes the value of the book as a reference tool. On *Kampfgruppe* Peiper’s complex movements leading up to the massacre, Bauserman includes only two vague footnotes planted at the end of the chapter. His blanket statements regarding miscarriage of justice during the trial of the Malmédy defendants (which he mentions only in passing) and the alleged innocence of a large number of the accused stand bereft of supporting material—which is quite extraordinary, considering the controversial nature of the assertions. However, I reserve my

harshest criticism for Bauserman's use of victims' names in captions of photographs of body recovery and even autopsies. This practice should be avoided by military historians.

The value of this work stems from the substantial amount of fresh information it contains about the massacre. Its faults notwithstanding, the book does illuminate the vastness of military history's virgin prairies, which, but for the plows of energetic researchers like John Bauserman, will never yield harvests.

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Boyne, Walter J. *Clash of Wings: World War II in the Air*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994. 414pp. \$25

The message of *Clash of Wings* is: "Year by year, as the war expanded the industrial efforts of the combatant nations, airpower became evermore important, to the point that it became a necessary condition for victory in Europe in 1944, and the decisive element in the Pacific in 1945." That is an argument that will appeal to Air Force retirees like Colonel Walter Boyne and me, but it is liable to cause others to demand qualifiers on the last clause at least. The publisher's hype is correct in the assertion that this book is the first survey (in any case one of very few) of the history of airpower in World War II. The blurb is more open to question in calling it "the definitive, comprehensive history of air power during World War II." That would be impossible in a single

volume, especially one written for a wide market.

Walter Boyne's combination of education and experience equipped him well to write a survey for the popular market and to produce a work far above the norm in terms of balance and accuracy. He was born on the eve of the Great Depression and began his twenty-five-year career as an Air Force aviator not long after the onset of the Cold War. It seems clear to me this has brought a leaven of the practical aviator not often found in this kind of a survey. Further, his long experience at the Air and Space Museum put him into a favorable position, in that it allowed him personal contact with many survivors of the events that he covers—veterans from not only the other American air forces but also from the air arms of our allies and even our enemies. Boyne's long association with the museum and his many writings about various airplanes yield a grasp of aviation technology of other services that exceeds what is expected of a writer educated in business administration, or even of most U.S. Air Force veterans. Though *Clash of Wings* was not written only for aviation buffs, it does contain more information on the design and performance of individual aircraft than is usually found in surveys.

Its focus, however, is on the operational dimension of the Second World War. It is sound on logistics and strategy, but its emphasis is on the employment of air power. It was a pleasant surprise to find in a book by an Air Force retiree that the Pacific War and naval aviation receive such thorough and accurate treatment