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Media Contact: Eugene Brissie, Senior Editor
246 Goose Lane | Guilford, CT 06437
Direct: (203)458-4693 | ebrissie@rowman.com

Beneath Haunted Waters

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

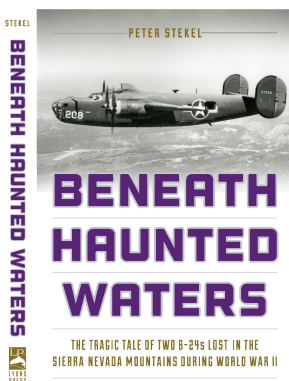
New Book Explores True-Life Mysterious Disappearance of Military Training Aircraft in 1943 and a Father's Search for His Son.

Some Places Are Haunted, Not by Ghosts but by People Obsessed With Visiting That Place Over and Over Again.

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.

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.

Through years of meticulous archival research, interviews with experts, and his own mountaineering visits to the crash sites, Peter Stekel tells the tragic tale of the loss and discovery of these two airplanes. *Beneath Haunted Waters* is also the story of the boys who flew the Liberators and what kind of training they received. Little has been written about 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.



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

by Peter Stekel

\$18.95, 6X9 Trade Paper

Publication: September 30, 2017

ISBN 978-1-4930-2530-5

314 pages with chapter end notes, bibliography, and index

Illustrated with B&W photographs

Three Maps

Review copies available on request

