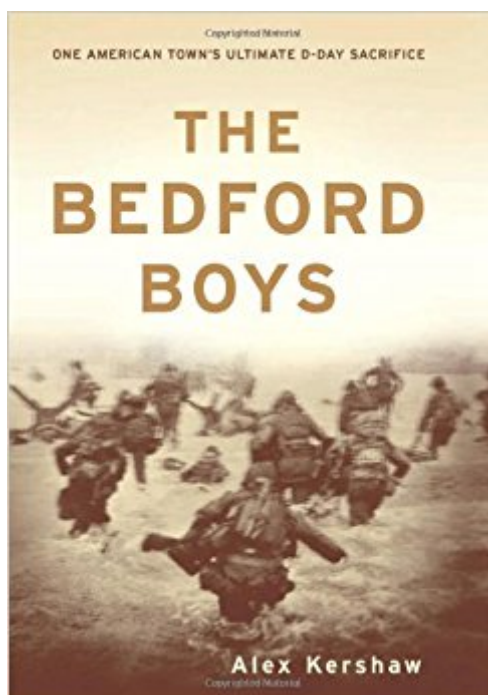


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# The Bedford Boys: One American Town's Ultimate D-day Sacrifice



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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 Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I purchased this book when it was first published. I am native of Bedford, Virginia. I am part of the infamous "Mud Alley Gang", the neighborhood where many of those "Bedford Boys" written about were raised and some families still live there. We have an annual dinner for members of the old neighborhood. It is held the Friday before Thanksgiving each year, and last year we had a discussion about those old days and Alex Kershaw's book. I think it is the most definitive story of our situation. It rates an excellent 5 stars for those of us who lived this story. I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Kershaw last year when he was the Speaker for the Memorial Day Ceremonies at the National D- Day Memorial there in Bedford. I had Mr. Kershaw to autograph my copy and I hope to have it signed by all who attend our dinner this year. I have purchased several others over the years to give to my children and grandchildren, as this story should never be forgotten. ... I will again in a

couple weeks urge others who have not yet read the book to please do so. It is indeed "our story" too. .Respectfully Submitted Dale Wilson, Sr.

Two of my uncles stormed the beach at Normandy. One was a medic and the other in infantry. They spoke of the Bedford boys and I always wondered what they went through and what happened during that day. This book gave a glimpse of their sacrifice.

This should be required reading in school. These men gave their lives for my freedom. They are gone, no life, Their families lost them, the children and grandchildren they would have had. We must never forget or it can all happen again.

As an immigrant from Germany and having grown up over there in post-war Germany among relatives who discussed nothing but WWII, I married an American soldier who was stationed there and came to California to live in 1965. I have always wondered even as a child who the people actually were who sacrificed their lives on the beaches of Normandy. This book tells the story of a very young group of men from Bedford, Virginia, a small town of 3000 who lost 19 of its citizens in the first assault wave on Omaha Beach. It is a moving account of these young kids , right out of High School for the most part who enlisted in the National Guard to make a few extra dollars during the Depression and on whom in the end the success of the invasion depended. Very well written connecting the personal stories with the larger story of the invasion and 6 June 1944.

I think that every High School student should have to read this! An excellent book for adults, especially those interested in World War 2.

I purchased this book because a friend loaned me his copy to read. I enjoyed the book so much that I wanted my own personal copy. If one wants to know something about WWII and D-Day they should read this book. Also, if you are ever near Bedford, Virginia, you should take a trip to see the D-Day memorial. This memorial is the only D-Day memorial in the United States and was built with private donations. There was no U.S. government money used in its construction. Every year on June 6th there is a remembrance held at the Bedford memorial. I have attended the D-Day remembrance and would recommend it to anyone who has any interest in WWII.

Really appreciate the effort that went into the production of this book. Compilation of research

material and personal recollections is awesome. I have read other works of Mr. Kershaw and look forward to others. Ron Stinson

I was fortunate enough to be on a cruise to Normandy when Alex Kershaw was the lecturer and his knowledge of WW II was phenomenal. We are fortunate to have some young men who care about what happened then to teach our children, The Bedford Boys will forever live on in any memories and those of the future..

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