



Soldiers of Freedom: The WWII Story of Patton's Panthers and the Edelweiss Pirates

Samuel Marquis

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The World War II novel Soldiers of Freedom is filled with fascinating historical information and lesser-known heroes from the war.

In the waning days of World War II, three freedom fighters remain devoted to the cause in Samuel Marquis's intense historical novel *Soldiers of Freedom*.

McBurney, a New York teenager, is eager to enlist in the US military. Even the discrimination he suffers as a black man doesn't lessen his determination to fight at the side of his fellow soldiers. At the same time, in Germany, a band of teenage rebels fight their own war against the Nazi forces that have decimated their country. Both groups, despite being discounted and disparaged by others, show determination and courage in the fight for freedom.

Part of a series, *Soldiers of Freedom* blends facts and fiction. Extensive historical notes at the end of the book delineate what's real from what's imagined, as well as covering the fates of the book's principal characters. High-level descriptions of historic events and battle strategy commingle with the more intimate dramas of the three leading characters: McBurney; Angela, who joins a youth resistance group against her Wehrmacht father's wishes; and General Patton, who calls on McBurney's tank battalion for ground support during his campaign to defeat the Third Reich.

Despite many tense, pulse-pounding scenes of danger and action, the book never loses sight of the horrible realities of war, or of the lethal risks that the characters face in standing up for their principles. McBurney and Angela's youthful idealism doesn't last long in the face of Nazi brutality. Descriptions of bombed-out villages and farmland are devastating, and those of concentration camps are even more so. Small details, like Angela deriving hope from a single surviving church among the rubble of Cologne, are used to great emotional effect.

The book's emphasis on exposition sometimes brings the pace to a halt; it lingers on certain points longer than is necessary, taking time away from developing its many characters. However, the points raised in the course of such exposition are valid and important ones, including the shameful history of racism in the US military. Still, background information is often repeated multiple times, and the book's historical tangents do not always contribute to the story itself. The nature of the story lends itself to the usage of racial slurs against black and Japanese people, while attempted rape is used to emphasize the Nazis' inhumanity.

Despite the Allied victory, the war's end brings sorrow and disappointment to the story's leads, who have lost irreplaceable people and dreams; the world they return to is not the one they longed for. Still, the ending finds people proud to have given their all; they retain hope that their actions have planted the seeds of a better tomorrow.

Filled with fascinating historical information, the World War II novel *Soldiers of Freedom* shines a welcome spotlight on some of the lesser-known heroes of the war.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (April 29, 2020)

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