



Silent Invaders: Combat Gliders of the Second World War

Gary Best

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Combat gliders were called by some as 'Death Crates', 'Purple Heart Boxes', 'Flying Coffins' and 'Tow Targets'. They were not pretty and had no graceful lines. Viewed from the front, they had a pug nose and a sloping Neanderthal forehead. Their wings looked like the heavily starched ears of a jackrabbit placed at right angles on a canvas-covered frame. Twice the length of the body, these wings were eighty-four feet in length, 70 per cent as long as the Wright Brothers' first powered flight at Kitty Hawk. They could not become airborne, let alone fly, unless assisted by an engine-powered tow plane. And for those riding in the back, it was like flying 'through the gates of hell'. The men who were trained and assigned to guide gliders into battle were said to be the only pilots who had no motors, armament, parachutes and no second chances. Like the aircraft they commanded, they were called inglorious names such as The Bastards Nobody Wanted, Glider Gladiators in Wooden Chariots; Hybrid Jackasses and Glory Boys. Beautifully written, profoundly illustrated and researched, *Silent Invaders: Combat Gliders of the Second World War* is a work that is dedicated to those brave men under impossible odds from the British and American servicemen on D-Day, the doomed Operation Market Garden in Holland and Hitler's radical commando raid to rescue Mussolini.

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