

***The Few*, by Alex Kershaw**

reviewed by Hal Marshman Sr

I received *The Few* as a Christmas gift from a friend, and it didn't take me long to get into it.

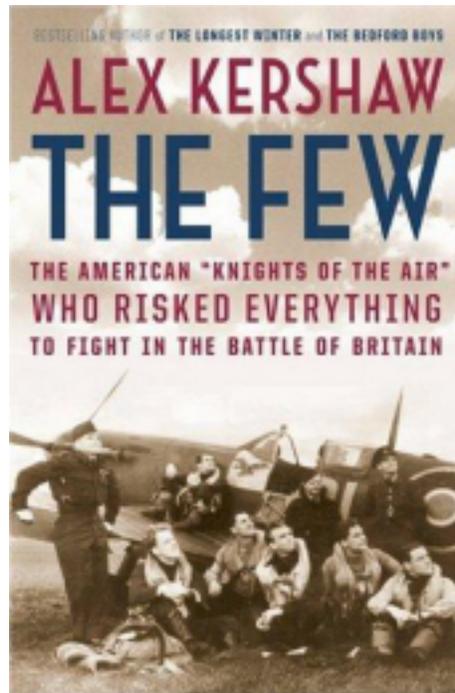
The story begins in the United States at the very beginning of World War II. We look at the lives of three young men, all very much enthused with aviation. There's a war on, and all want to fly in it, not just to defeat the Germans, but for the love of flying itself. Quite a few pages are devoted to the wherewithal of these young men getting out of the US, and going through Canada to get to England. After much to do, they finally get into France, but due to the chaotic conditions there, do not get to fly, but have to high tail it out before France falls to the invading Germans. Eventually, they get to England again, and finally get into Hurricanes just in time to fight in the Battle of Britain. It must be remembered that at that time, it was illegal for Americans to join up with any belligerent due to our neutrality laws, and these men gave up their US citizenship to do so.

A further young man, William Fiske, a champion bobsledder, joins them, as they are assigned to different RAF squadrons. The author does a good job of placing the reader into the cockpit of the Hurris and Spitfires. He also tells us quite a bit about the Luftwaffe pilots that the RAF is fighting daily aerial duels with. He goes to some length to describe the competition between Werner Molders, Adolf Galland, Helmut Wick, and Hans-Karl Mayer

He also has his Luftwaffe Jagdgeschwaderen straight, assigning each of the above named Experten to the units to which they belonged. Hermann Goering is also prominently mentioned, as well as his opulent country home, Karinhall. Various other Luftwaffe personalities get mentioned in their own turn. Don't think that only the enemy gets mention, as you meet Sholto Douglas, Johnny Johnson, and Sailor Malan to mention a few. Winston Churchill receives

attention, and several well known phrases from his most notable wartime speeches are covered.

hatred of the enemy. In any case, *The Few* is a well-researched book, and easy to read through. I can heartily recommend it.



Toward the end of the BoB, the Eagle squadron of American fliers in the RAF was formed, and most of the Americans transferred to it. Remember, once we were in the war, these same fellows formed the nucleus of the USAAF's 4th Fighter Group. (The only well known American 4th FG pilot named is Chesley Peterson) Eventually, 244 US citizens flew in the Eagle squadrons, but only seven took part in the Battle of Britain. Of those 244 Americans, one-fourth of them lost their lives.

Alex Kershaw's writing is somewhat florid with such comments as "Hermann Goering sat in his personal train, Asia, relaxing after being injected by a Luftwaffe flunky, Herr Doktor Onzara" and "Goering stepped out of Asia to be greeted by a sycophantic Kesselring and lackeys carrying picnic baskets". Such commentary brought me back to my youth, when I used to read the wartime novels about Dave Dawson in Europe, and Red Randall in the Pacific, all penned by R. Sydney Bowen, and calculated to excite the teenaged boy's mind about military aviation, and a not so subtle