

TURNING PAGES

~ book reviews of interest to the aviation professional

Shot Down:

The true story of pilot Howard Snyder and the crew of the B-17 Susan Ruth

By Steve Snyder. Sea Breeze Publishing, LLC, Seal Beach, CA, 2015. Hardcover, and Kindle formats available.

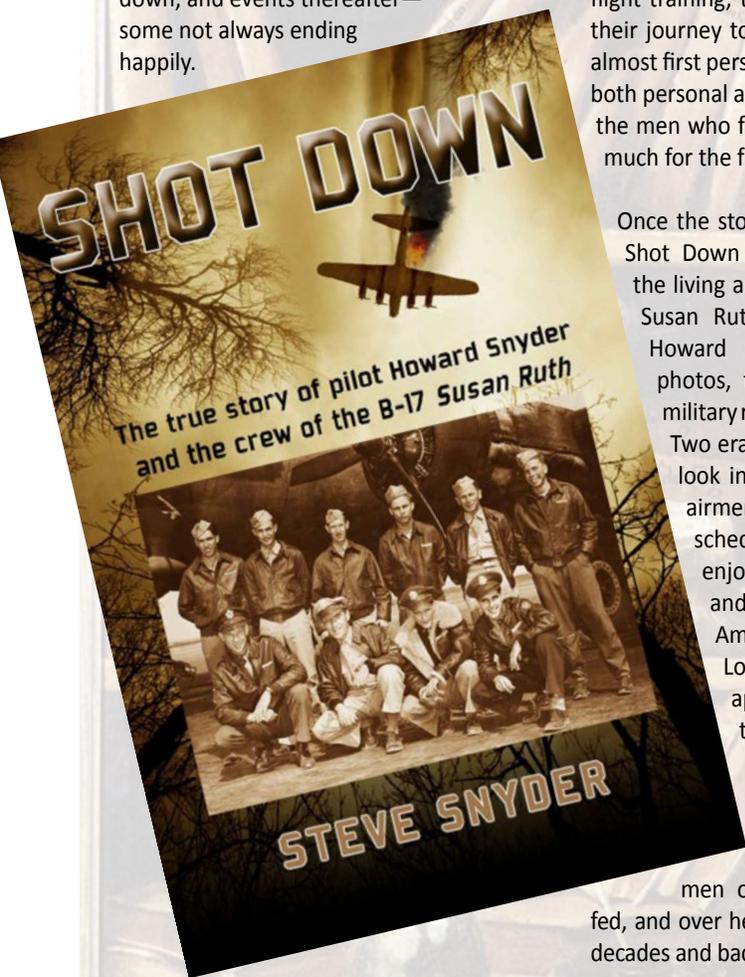
A book review by MAJ Eric S. Comette

"It's Our Duty To Remember — Never Forget."

A true privilege to read, *Shot Down*, by Steve Snyder shares the author's father's World War Two B-17 Flying Fortress experience, sacrifice, and ultimate victory in the war-torn skies over Europe. Mr. Snyder's research, including his parents' war correspondence, yields a book chronicling Howard Snyder's and his B-17 crew's prewar life, enlistment, training, fighting, shoot down, and events thereafter—some not always ending happily.

Shot Down begins with a peek at Howard Snyder's shoot down in February 1944 in the flame filled B-17 named after his daughter Susan Ruth. The reader cannot help but wonder how anyone made it out of the aircraft alive. Thence, it is arranged chronologically beginning with the early life of Howard Snyder, the Susan Ruth's pilot. As it progresses through chapters describing flight training, the B-17 itself, her crew and their journey to England, one is granted an almost first person view of the times, trials—both personal and professional—and lives of the men who flew, fought and sacrificed so much for the free world during the war.

a brief glimpse of the German pilot that would ultimately shoot down the Susan Ruth sending her crew to prisoner of war camps, on months of successful evasion of capture, and even death at the hands of the enemy. Having been shot down, the story continues underscoring the importance of this book with Steve Snyder telling of the people that helped his father, and many other downed airmen, avoid capture by the Germans and local collaborators. It is also a wonderful look into the lives of the civilians without which some of our heroes would have never made it back home to us.



Once the story is established in England, *Shot Down* covers in interesting detail the living and training conditions of the Susan Ruth's Crew. Illustrated with Howard Snyder's actual war time photos, this part of the book gives military readers of the post-World War Two era an intimate and contrasting look into the everyday lives of the airmen living around the combat schedule. Additionally, readers enjoy descriptions of the country and community with which the American airmen interacted. Local opinions ranging from appreciative townspeople and the young English women's delight to having so many "Yanks" to dance with, to the local young English men's adage about the American men of, "They're over paid, over fed, and over here" are brought through the decades and back to life for the reader.

As the book nears its end, the Allies close in on the Third Reich, sweeping through Europe and destroying the German war machine. In what is almost unbelievable by today's standards, Howard Snyder, not contented continuing to evade capture, actually continues fighting the Nazis! While the war in Europe ends, Steve Snyder also gives the reader, through letters back home, a feel for life on the home front. A far reach from today's communication speed, the agonizing pace of letters and telegrams from the war, whittled away at the hearts of those left back home. The author shows how the family members of the Susan Ruth's crew stick together as they learn the fates of their husbands and sons.

Shot Down is a rewarding and enlightening look into the air war and the lives of the Americans and Europeans that not only endured, but overcame it. Taking the reader almost firsthand through the lives and struggles of the crew and family of a B-17 name for an American daughter of the war, *Shot Down* is the important story of American strength, ability and tenacity in war as exemplified by her patriots both in the war and back home told by a proud son. It is a story worth reading and remembering.

It brings the war and the lives it touched and altered to the eyes, minds, and hearts of those who remember as well as to those who need to be reminded that, "It's Our Duty To Remember—Never Forget."

As the book progresses and combat missions mount, the reader is witness to Howard Snyder's family and crew coping with changing technology, increasing mission tempo, combat losses and is also given

