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1345 8th Street • Berkeley, CA 94710-1306
tel 510-558-1666 • fax 510-558-1696 • 800-443-7227

Final Flight: The Mystery of a WWII Plane Crash and the Frozen Airmen in the High Sierra

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Contact: Roslyn Bullas

(510) 558-1666

publicity@wildernesspress.com

New Book Explores True-Life Mystery of Mummified WWII Airmen

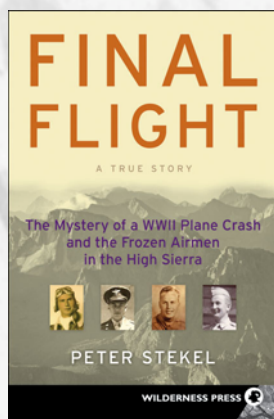
In 2005, two mountaineers climbing above Mendel Glacier in the High Sierra found the mummified remains of a uniformed WWII US Airman frozen in the ice. The ensuing media storm surrounding the man in the ice immediately gripped the attention of the nation. Who was the Frozen Airman? Where did he come from and how did he get there? How had he remained so well preserved? The mystery drew writer and Sierra devotee Peter Stekel deeper and deeper as he investigated: A navigation training flight missing since 1942 with its four-man crew. An airplane crash 150 miles off-course from its reported destination. Early attempts at recovery thwarted. Empty graves and botched records. Bad weather, bad luck, bad timing. Families waiting, long forgotten.

Then, in 2007, the unimaginable happened again: Stekel himself discovered a second body in the glacier and became part of the story. Another young man would finally be coming home.

Through years of archival research, interviews with experts, and his own mountaineering trips to the crash site, Stekel uncovered who these four young men were who had lost their lives in service to their country. *Final Flight* explores the story of the ill-fated flight, and the bad leads and misinformation surrounding it for nearly 70 years. It's also author Peter Stekel's personal quest to investigate the many threads of the story, from the crew's disappearance to the discovery of the two airmen.

Along the way Stekel became convinced that the accepted facts of how these soldiers went missing did not give the whole story. The only way to find out for sure what happened was to discover all he could about these young men and their times, the war-era military they enlisted in, their training and experience, their Beech 18 aircraft, the state of navigation and weather science at midcentury, and their icy tomb. *Final Flight* deftly weaves these threads into a gripping account that's part mystery, part history, and a personal journey to uncover the truth of what happened on November 18, 1942. In the process Stekel rewrites the young aviators' last days, and takes us on their final flight.

PETER STEKEL is a writer specializing in feature articles and photography of the Sierra Nevada. Stekel grew up in Southern California and has hiked and backpacked in the Sierra since he was twelve years old. He makes his home in Seattle, WA.



Final Flight: The Mystery of a WWII Plane Crash and the Frozen Airmen in the High Sierra

by Peter Stekel

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