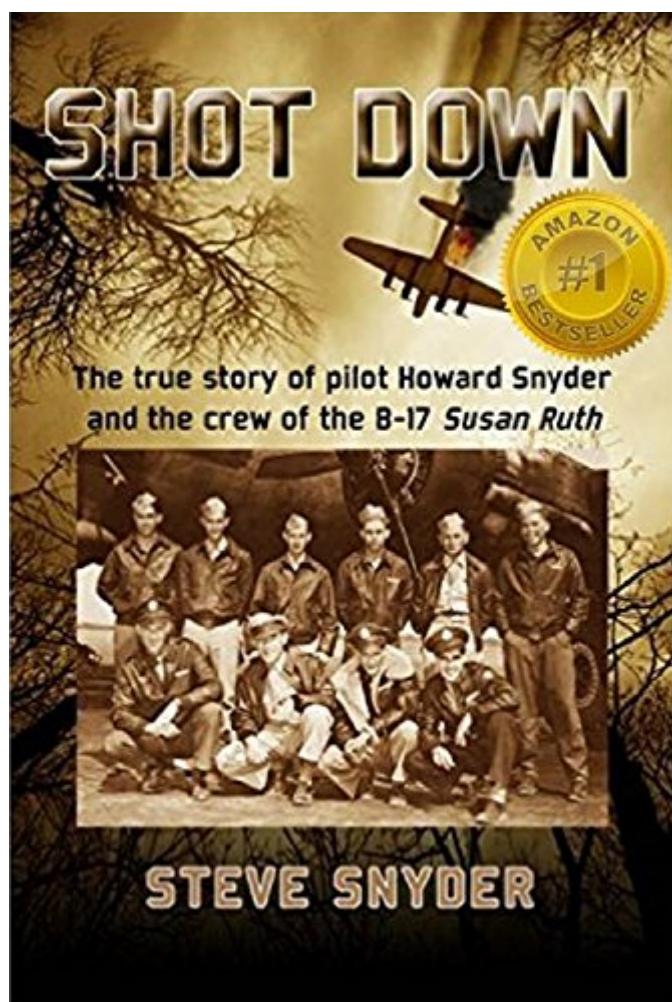


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# **SHOT DOWN: The True Story Of Pilot Howard Snyder And The Crew Of The B-17 Susan Ruth**



## **Synopsis**

Belgium ... February 8, 1944 ... Shot Down and AliveFor the first time, the full and complete story of the B-17 Flying Fortress Susan Ruth is shared in unbelievable detail. Author Steve Snyder's story of his father, Lieutenant Howard Snyder, and the Susan Ruth crew, provides in-depth details about many aspects of World War II few understand or know about including the: separation for young families as men went off to war; training before heading to foreign soil; military combat operations; underground and resistance and what Lt. Snyder did when he joined it; German atrocities toward captured crew and civilians; behind-the-scenes stories of the Belgium civilians who risked all to save American flyers who were in the air one moment, spiraling down in flames the next; creation and dedication of the monument to the Susan Ruth and its crew located in Macquenoise, Belgium in 1989 Shot Down was created from the vast number of letters and journals of Howard Snyder; diaries of men and women on the ground who rescued, sheltered and hid the crew; and interviews conducted by historians. Centered around the 306th Bomb Group in Thurleigh, England, it is informative, insightful and captivating. For most, 70 years is a long time ago. World War II fades in importance as each year goes by. Shot Down moves history out of the footnotes into reality, keeping the stories of real people alive as they experience being shot down. You are there, almost holding your breath as Lt. Snyder gets his crew out of his B-17 when bailing out over Nazi occupied Europe.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

I read a lot of WWII history - mostly Veterans' accounts. I am not an historian or an expert - I just appreciate these men and women so much. Mr. Snyder's book about his father and what he and his crew experienced as USAAF fighters in Europe is just so good. Mr. Snyder has written this book in such a manner that anyone can understand the workings of the Armed Forces without being over simplistic or condescending. The story of these men is so worth reading. What they went through as fliers against the Luftwaffe was unimaginable, to me. The losses they suffered yet carried on shows how dedicated they were. What they went through as downed fliers was more so. Mr. Snyder conveys the conditions inside the B-17 and the fear and professionalism of these men so well - you almost feel like you're in that plane with them. Intermixed with the story of these men are letters to and from home which gives the reader a good idea of how it must have been to have your husband/brother/son/sweetheart overseas not knowing whether or not he'd come back - truly the Greatest Generation. Read it - you won't regret it.

Author Steve Snyder was the only one who could write this book; he put his heart and soul into it, and it shows! As a published aviation historian and researcher, I was amazed at the depth of his research and the lengths he went to uncover the facts! The book is actually a collection of stories about the men of the B-17 crew SUSAN RUTH. We learn about their varied backgrounds, their training, entry into war over the skies of Europe, and what it was like to fly missions in the Flying Forts. I was amazed that the author left no stone unturned in his quest for historical accuracy, right down to locating the actual Luftwaffe pilot who shot down his dad's plane and getting his recollections! If Steve's goal was to elicit an emotional reaction from his readers, he certainly succeeded with me! That's an example of mighty fine writing! After putting down the book, I was grateful and relieved that I never had to endure what the crew went through. Steve and his father Howard pay tribute to the many sympathetic villagers in occupied Belgium and France who risked their lives to rescue and provide aid to our shot down airmen. Some of the survivors of SUSAN

RUTH went back to personally thank the families. I thoroughly enjoyed seeing their smiling faces and the houses and farms where they hid from the Germans and their collaborators. CONGRATULATIONS STEVE!

Having just completed a book about the air war in the Pacific during WWII, I thought it would be a good idea to read (and listen) about what was going on over the skies of Europe. In this case, the story centers on the fate of a B-17 crew shot down over Belgium. The captain of the B-17 in question, Howard Snyder, also happens to be the father of author Steve Snyder. While the story of the shoot down and the efforts of the various crew members to evade capture takes up a sizeable portion of the book, the author has jam-packed his story with numerous references to other battles and historical events during this period. In most cases, the background material is interesting. In other instances, however, the author goes overboard with the amount of detail he provides. One example involves the crew of the B-17. You couldn't tell this story without giving some background on the individuals and the training they received. But do we need to know the serial numbers on the dog tags for each of them? There are too many instances where technical details, such as the specific designation of the engines on the B-17, would have been better suited for an end note. As written text, it's easy to skip over what is obviously unnecessary detail. The narrator of the audio version, as well as the listener, didn't have this luxury. The B-17, also known as the flying fortress, has always interested me. The reality, however, of having to fly in an unpressurized aircraft, poorly heated, while wearing an oxygen mask, and then getting shot at, has taken away the romance. As much as I disagreed with many of the details the author decided to include in his story, I did find the slew of statistics the author cites at the end of the book concerning aircraft (how many were built, how many were shot down, how many survived) and a similar accounting of the flight crews, very informative. I was given a copy of the audio version in exchange for a review. I purchased the eBook version.

"Shot Down" chronicles the story of the B-17 "Susan Ruth" and its crew. Written by the son of the pilot, Howard Snyder, this book gives the reader an inside look at the Eighth Air Force as it grew from a small force to the greatest air armada of World War II. Snyder and his crew went through training in the United States before being sent overseas. Once in Great Britain, they were attached to the 369th squadron of the 306th bomb group. Missions over Germany soon followed. In February, 1944, the Susan Ruth was shot down by enemy fighters. This was the beginning of a seven month odyssey for Howard, who jumped from the burning plane along with eight others of the crew.

Howard eventually joined the Belgian resistance to fight back against the Germans. With the help of numerous Belgian civilians, Howard managed to make it out alive."Shot Down" is a fine book. Not only does author Steve Snyder tell his father's story, he also tells the story of the build-up of the Eighth Air Force. The reader not only learns about the bombing missions, but other ares, including flying in combat, training, and the problems faced while trying to return to base. I've read several books about the Eighth Air Force, and "Shot Down" is a worthy addition to its history. Highly recommended.

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