

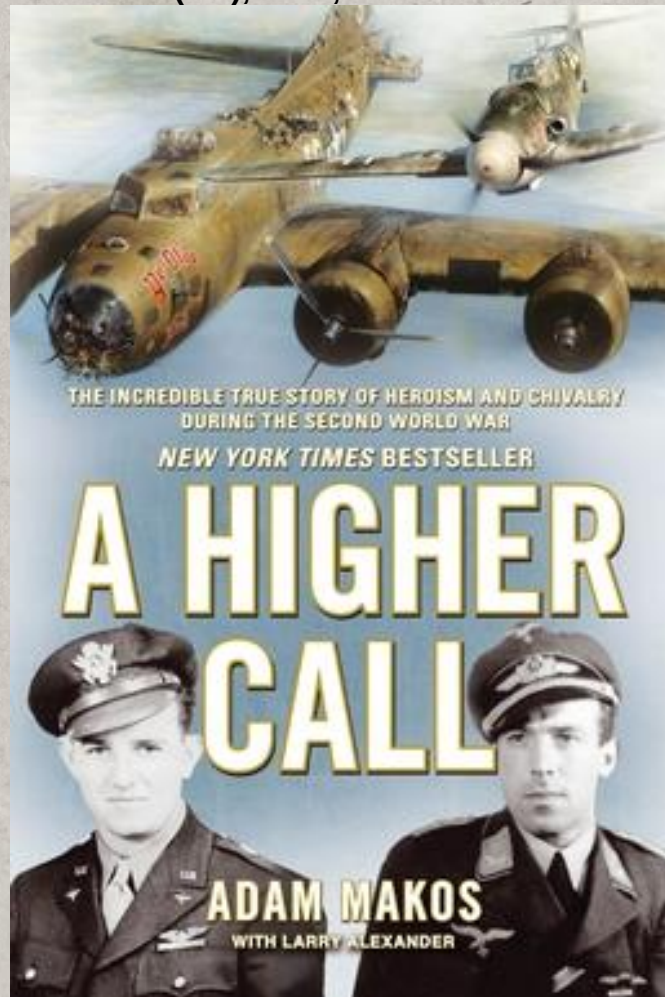


A Higher Call

Adam Makos with Larry Alexander

Berkley Books (USA), 2012; ISBN 978-0-425-25286-4

Atlantic Books (UK), 2013; ISBN 978-1-782-39256-9



A Higher Call is an offering of inspiration. It brings to the forefront the dictum by the renowned German military surgeon Bernhard von Langenbeck (1810 - 1887), that "A wounded enemy is no more an enemy, but a comrade needing our help". [1]

Adam Makos and Larry Alexander, two experienced military authors, team up to produce just such a stimulus. In this book, the story is depicted boldly on the front cover.

A Messerschmitt Bf 109, a German World War II fighter aircraft, is in the sky flying in formation with an American Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress. On close inspection, the US aircraft is severely damaged. One of the propellers is not functioning. Most of the aircraft weapons have been knocked out and some of the crew are badly injured. The nose cone is gone, half the tail is missing, the rudder is shot to pieces, and one can only imagine the damage to crucial internal aircraft parts. What must have been going through the mind of





the American pilot when he sees the Luftwaffe fighter approach and, instead of shooting him down on his first pass, then fly in formation at his wing?

However, it leaves us with too many questions on detail, that are answered only in the words and chapters inside the cover. The two pilots, Franz Stigler and Charlie Brown, both survived the war, they met some 40 years later, and became the best of friends. Makos, the main author, approached Brown first, but was surprised to be instructed to interview Stigler in detail at the outset. Makos says himself, he would never interview the enemy, but he did. Affected by his own life-changing events, and already experienced in writing on military issues, he proves his ability in this publication.

Stigler's biography is laid out in detail, from his early life, flight school and surveying flight routes for Lufthansa, to becoming an ace and teaching future pilots. But Stigler is a Nazi...OR is he? Here one might need to reflect on his mentor Gustav Rödel, who taught him never to shoot a man in a parachute. Brown's life story follows and how they came together is recounted in this memorably inspiring true story of chivalry in war.

Anjna Harrar
December 2021

Reference:

Platt, Walter B. (May 1894). ["Bernhard von Langenbeck"](#) (PDF). The Johns Hopkins Bulletin (40). P.4

- Notes from the Friends of Millbank Chairman below





Chairman's Notes

I first learned of Bernhard von Langenbeck and his endorsement of humanitarian principles at the first Geneva International Conference when I was a young doctor newly embarking on a career in military surgery. I was attending the Post Graduate Medical Officers course at the Royal Army Medical College, Millbank at the time. I have been inspired by Langenbeck ever since, and his words have been at the forefront of my mind on every operational deployment when caring for the wounded, remembering this dictum personally as

'A wounded enemy is no longer an enemy, but a wounded human being in need of help'.

These were the words which came to my mind as soon as I started reading *A Higher Call*, recommended to me by a Friend of Millbank. I in turn recommended it to Anjna Harrar, President of the Osler Club of London, and Honorary Secretary of the British Society for the History of Medicine, who has kindly reviewed it for us. Anjna was also moved to write the Wikipedia article about [A Higher Call](#). I now highly recommend it to you, especially at this time of Christmas, when we particularly pray for peace on earth and goodwill to all men.

And think of Langenbeck and Franz Stigler if ever you are privileged to care for enemy wounded.

