



# **Spearhead: An American Tank Gunner, His Enemy, and a Collision of Lives In World War II**

*Adam Makos*

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**NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • “A band of brothers in an American tank . . . Makos drops the reader back into the Pershing’s turret and dials up a battle scene to rival the peak moments of *Fury*.”—*The Wall Street Journal***

From the New York Times bestselling author of *A Higher Call* comes the riveting World War II story of an American tank gunner’s journey into the heart of the Third Reich, where he will meet destiny in an iconic armor duel—and forge an enduring bond with his enemy.

When Clarence Smoyer is assigned to the gunner’s seat of his Sherman tank, his crewmates discover that the gentle giant from Pennsylvania has a hidden talent: He’s a natural-born shooter.

At first, Clarence and his fellow crews in the legendary 3rd Armored Division—“Spearhead”—thought their tanks were invincible. Then they met the German Panther, with a gun so murderous it could shoot through one Sherman and into the next. Soon a pattern emerged: The lead tank always gets hit.

After Clarence sees his friends cut down breaching the West Wall and holding the line in the Battle of the Bulge, he and his crew are given a weapon with the power to avenge their fallen brothers: the Pershing, a state-of-the-art “super tank,” one of twenty in the European theater.

But with it comes a harrowing new responsibility: Now they will spearhead every attack. That’s how Clarence, the corporal from coal country, finds himself leading the U.S. Army into its largest urban battle of the European war, the fight for Cologne, the “Fortress City” of Germany.

Battling through the ruins, Clarence will engage the fearsome Panther in a duel immortalized by an army cameraman. And he will square off with Gustav Schaefer, a teenager behind the trigger in a Panzer IV tank, whose crew has been sent on a suicide mission to stop the Americans.

As Clarence and Gustav trade fire down a long boulevard, they are taken by surprise by a tragic mistake of war. What happens next will haunt Clarence to the modern day, drawing him back to Cologne to do the unthinkable: to face his enemy, one last time.

## **Praise for *Spearhead***

**“A band of brothers in an American tank . . . Makos drops the reader back into the Pershing’s turret and dials up a battle scene to rival the peak moments of *Fury* . . . a thoroughly enjoyable battle story, and a tribute to the every man warrior.” —*The Wall Street Journal***

**“A detailed, gripping account...the remarkable story of two tank crewmen, from opposite sides of the conflict, who endure the grisly nature of tank warfare.” —*USA Today* (four out of four stars)**

**“A compelling, exciting adventure . . . An in-the-moment re-creation of the Allied breakthrough of the**

**West Wall into Nazi Germany by a remarkable cadre of tank crewmen of the 3rd Armored Division.”**  
—Kirkus Reviews

**“An engaging story of blood, sweat and tears . . . a wonderful homage to the Greatest Generation.”**  
—Providence Journal

**“The tension, death, and courage that were every day experiences for American tankers fill the pages of Makos’s book. This moving story of bravery and comradeship is an important contribution to WWII history that will inform and fascinate both the general reader and the military historian.”**  
—Publishers Weekly (starred review)

## **Spearhead: An American Tank Gunner, His Enemy, and a Collision of Lives In World War II Details**

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# **From Reader Review Spearhead: An American Tank Gunner, His Enemy, and a Collision of Lives In World War II for online ebook**

## **Tony Hedrick says**

Overall this is a well-researched book that makes good on the author's promise of making the reader feel as if they are almost there in the turret. The thing that makes this a great book that deserves five stars is that Mr. Makos included the final two chapters. Living and dealing with the mental wounds from war is the greatest battle for many combat veterans and is, unfortunately, often left out. I will highly recommend this book to my brother and sisters in arms.

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## **Glenn Coltharp says**

I received a complimentary ARC copy of this book from Random House Publishing Group - Ballantine through NetGalley. Opinions expressed in this review are completely my own.

5\* easy!

This is a true story of WWII tankers and doughboys involved in the Spearhead assaults against the German war machine and it is riveting! The book also takes into account the perspective from a German tanker that brings the book full circle as the soldiers' lives become forever intertwined! If you enjoy reading WWII books that follow the lives of real soldiers and real battles, this book is for you! In fact, there's video documentary film about some of the battles the author describes on his website that you can view after reading!

The book is very well written for the reader to draw a picture in their minds of the battles. The suspense pulls you in and you can almost feel yourself there thanks to the writer's descriptions.

Here's an example of a passage that characterizes the authors talent that really stuck out to me:

"Without a fuss, DeRiggi switched to an HE shell and Clarence sent the projectile flying toward the clock. The 23-pound shell landed smack in the middle of the clock's face. The tower ruptured with a sidelong blast as bits of clock and brick came tumbling down, generating a massive cloud of dust. The crew roared in approval as Clarence smirked at the sight of the truncated tower. He had been half hoping to hear a giant chime. In the opening shot of the battle for Cologne, time stood still."

Another few things that really stood out to me are:

- 1) The amount of research it must have taken to bring this book together! It's quite Herculean the energy that had to be put into this. It's so well done you can tell the author didn't cut corners in getting his info!
- 2) The afterword and the story about how some of the people from the book reunite is wonderful!
- 3) The maps included in the book to help describe battles were extremely helpful.

I want to point out for the author/publisher that there was an error in my copy of the book that looks to be a

misprint. Hopefully, this is just in the ARC version I received by email but as hard as the author worked on this book I'm sure he wants it right! It's listed below.

1) location 2490 "The HE shell blasted the German soldier straight through the through the house he was standing in."

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### **Ron says**

Tank versus tank! Pershing versus Panther! And caught on film? No, this is not a war movie, rather this is a World War II tale worth making into a movie. Adam Makos met with Clarence Smoyer in 2012 and that launched a journey that led to this book.

Clarence Smoyer was a tank gunner in the 3rd Armored Division lead by General Rose. He came ashore in France 3 weeks after D-Day as a loader and was promoted to gunner in a Sherman tank in August. As the book opens, the 3rd Armored Division was laying an ambush for the German army trying to escape France at Mons, Belgium. A German tank pulled in next to Clarence's tank during the night and the fight was on. The fight continued through the Battle of the Bulge, receiving a Pershing, the conquest of Cologne which included a one on one between a Panther and a Pershing, and the attack at Paderborn against the German Panzer Training Cadre.

But this is not just the tale of Clarence and his exploits. It is also the tale of Gustav Schaefer (German tank crewman), Buck Marsh (infantry scout in 3rd Armored Division), and Chuck Miller (officer from 3rd Armored Division). Their stories are entwined with Clarence during the war and afterwards when in 2013 all four met in Cologne, Germany, to discuss what happened there and the influence that had on their lives since.

In Spearhead, Adam Markos delivers a well written World War II account of action from the 3rd Armored Division illustrated with pictures of the participants and maps of the battles. the author also researched the details given by the individuals to verify details. A very interesting read!

Thanks Netgalley for the opportunity to read this title!

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### **Jaime says**

Incredible story - Despite being a history major, I had never read much about the experience of the men fighting in tanks during World War 2. This books gives excellent insight into their (harrowing) experience while telling one man's story of bravery, regret, and redemption.

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### **Lydia says**

I am convinced Adam Makos has another blockbuster on his hands!!! It was simply spectacular! I am also really glad I had the opportunity to see the trailer before the book arrived ... I felt as if I knew Clarence already. The author made this frightening time of history so easy to follow and understand ... which will make it all the more readable to those of us (and I know there will be many) who know nothing of tank

warfare (and never really thought it would ever be anything that could possibly be interesting about it)! I was fascinated from beginning to end. I do not know how Adam Makos is able to come up with not just one (Higher Call), then two (Devotion), now THREE (Spearhead) incredible pieces of history that have and will continue to fascinate everyone! I can't wait until "Spearhead" is published so that I can hand-sell it to my customers ... it will not be difficult, given his reputation!

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### **Tim Yearneau says**

Exceptional book. I read it in like 4 days. I couldn't put it down. What I liked is Makos sticks to the story, keeps it rolling, and doesn't slow down the story with too many details. Enough details to keep the story relevant and interesting, but doesn't slow it down. An emotional connection is made with the main characters. And the hell that is war comes through loud and clear. An exceptional read.

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### **Grant Masson says**

Spearhead honors an unsung hero of World War II, Clarence Smoyers, who deplored violence but became the gunner of one of the first Pershing tanks in the European Theater, spearheading the American invasion of Germany. Smoyers's story is a powerful evocation of the lives and challenges of the 'tankers', so critical to the war effort, as well as of German civilians caught up in the conflict. The book leaves nothing to the imagination and tells the details of horrible injuries and deaths that our American tankers experienced! The book is a riveting read and is a cross between a novel and actual military historical text. I love the book SO much and was very happy to receive this as a Goodreads giveaway winner. As an American History teacher in high school the details and research in the book give me new ideas for projects in the classroom and new knowledge of armor, vehicles, places, and how life was for a soldier and tanker during this war. We owe so much to these men who sacrificed so that we can all sit back safe in our homes and read this superbly written book. I highly recommend this book for history buffs, it is wonderful!

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### **Dianne Castelli says**

I received an advanced copy in exchange for an unbiased review.

International bestselling author, Adam Makos has delivered another blockbuster: Another true World War II story, that is sure to be a bestseller. We meet Clarence Smoyer, a Pennsylvania boy, in the US Army's 3rd Armored Division nicknamed "Spearhead", who was the deadly accurate tank gunner of his Sherman tank, and later the tank gunner of the army's new top secret M-26 Pershing tank. We follow Clarence, and the men he served with, through the battlefields of Europe, and we really get to know them -- their backgrounds, their friendships, the hardships they endured, their fears, their hopes for the future, and their courage in battle. The 1945 battle for Cologne, between Clarence's M-26 Pershing, and the enemy, Gustav Schafer's, Panther tank, just happened to be caught on film by a US Army cameraman. That film, when discovered years later, led Clarence back to Cologne, 70 years after that battle, to meet the enemy, Gustav Schafer, and to learn the truth of what really happened that fateful day.

I am pleased to give "Spearhead" a five star rating -- Buy the book!! It's a great read!!

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## **'Aussie Rick' says**

Having just finished Adam Mako's latest WW2 book; *Spearhead* I wanted a bit of time to collect my thoughts before trying to write a review. This is an excellent book of soldiers at war, a tankers eye-view of the conflict through his periscope or his gun sight. Adam Makos has decided to tell the story from the perspective of one US Army tank crew that fought it's way through France and into Germany at war's end.

Not only do we follow the deadly combat of this tank crew but we also get to follow their buddies in the legendary 3rd Armored Division —“Spearhead”. Not only crews that manned the M4 Sherman tanks but also the armoured infantrymen attached to the Division and also their opponents, the German soldiers who crewed their deadliest foe, the German Panther and Tiger tanks.

At the same time we get to follow the story of the introduction of the American tank designed to combat the superior German tanks in the European theatre, the M 26 Pershing tank. This tank performed so well that it and its crew ended up spearheading every advance into the heart of Nazi Germany.

What amazed me when reading this book was the every-day courage of the American crews in mounting their M4 Sherman tanks in the knowledge not only were they usually outgunned by the German high velocity 75mm and 88mm guns, but their own 75mm gun lacked the penetrating power to destroy their adversaries in most cases.

The book highlights the bravery of these men as they clambered into their tanks, closed down their hatches and advanced into combat only to be knocked out by their German counterparts. If they survived being ‘brewed’ up they were usually allocated to another crew or provided another tank and off they went again, only for their tank to hit and destroyed again. Some men did this not once or twice, but three, four or even fives times till their luck finally ran out.

The accounts of the combats fought by 3rd Armored Division in its drive into Germany were gripping and fast paced and I was really hooked on the narrative. I couldn’t drag myself away from the story and I really felt saddened on reading about the death of a crewmember or infantry soldier that I had been following through the story.

This is a great book of soldiers at war and how they tried to cope during combat and after, when peace finally settled on the world. It takes you down to the pit of war and away from the abstract and faceless strategic accounts with pins on maps and arrows showing advance and retreat. This is a story that should be read to remind us again what these men endured and suffered on behalf of their country.

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## **Rick says**

First off - full disclosure - I received this book in a GR Giveaway and am grateful for the chance to review it. In sum, I liked this book - not as much as his "A Higher Call" - but liked it just the same. Makos' schtick seems to be to tell a very engaging war story and to tie together characters from both sides of the conflict at some point. He weaved that tale wonderfully in "A Higher Call," but falls a bit short here.

For my taste, the first half of "Spearhead" has a bit too much made-up dialogue, but the author stopped that after awhile so the distraction ended. I feel the tale would have worked just fine without the forced re-connection of the opposing characters at the end - it just seemed a bit too contrived. As a pure and straightforward tank story, this tale was very interesting ... it is a bit like Brad Pitt's movie FURY.

Makos sure knows how to tell a story and he does that very nicely here. We learn a bit about tanks and the prevailing tank situation in WWII, and we learn a bit about the characters in this particular tank. All-in-all this was a nice tale, and a well-told one.

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### **Elaine says**

Thank you net galley for the advance read copy of this novel. This was an excellent job fiction account of tank warfare towards the end of WWII. This is not my typical genre but I very much enjoyed this book. It read like an action film rather than just facts and figures of who did what when. I highly recommend this for history buffs and for my fellow historical fiction readers. Well written, face paced and emotionally rewarding!

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### **Donna Davis says**

I read this historical gem free and early, thanks to Net Galley and Random House Ballantine; it's among the top ten percent of the military histories I have read, and it's one of the few that I have recommended to friends and relatives. Makos's introduction tells us what he has done to lay his groundwork, and it's impressive:

"We traversed the battlefields of the Third Reich—with the men who made history...in 2013. Clarence Smoyer and three other veterans traveled to Germany and allowed us to tag along, to interview them on the grounds where they had once fought. We recorded their stories. We recorded what they remembered saying and hearing others say. Then we verified their accounts with deep research. We drew from four archives in America and one in England. We even traveled to the German Bundesarchiv in the Black Forest in search of answers. And what we found was staggering. Original orders. Rare interviews between our heroes and war reporters, conducted while the battle was raging. Radio logs of our tank commanders' chatter, allowing us to time their actions to the minute... Is the world ready for a book about tanks? There's one way to find out. Shut the hatches. Tighten your chin strap. It's time to roll out."

Spearhead is equal parts memoir and history, and Makos is known for using a "You are there" writing style, though he is new to me. He writes about the most riveting parts of their service there, and though each of these four men starts the war in a different place, at the end they are joined together when they reach Cologne.

The congenial narrative is enhanced with photographs of the men then and now, along with pictures of other men they served with, some of whom made it out alive as well as many that didn't, or who survived the war but emerged crippled. There is a great deal of comfort, when reading a tale that must include so much carnage, in knowing from the get-go that Clarence Smoyers, Buck Marsh, Gustav Schaefer, Chuck Miller, and Frank Audifred will survive. There are a lot of names and faces, and here I was grateful to be reading digitally on Kindle, because I could use the "search book" feature to help me keep track of the many people



featured.

There are some poignant moments; after all, they were really just kids. Sometimes they made it through battle because their commanders made wise decisions; sometimes they lived on in spite of incompetent or negligent commanders; and sometimes they found themselves in command.

I never knew much about how tanks are operated. I believed that the guy whose head sometimes pokes up out of the hatch was the driver; that's not so. And I had never given any thought to where the tankers sleep at night, or where they go to the bathroom. And the scandalous lack of safety for the men in Sherman tanks wasn't clear to me till I read that the British called the Sherman the "Tommy cooker," the free Poles named it a "burning grave," and Americans called it a "crematorium on wheels." Ultimately this made it into the press when journalist Ann Stringer reprinted the comment that "Our tanks are not worth a drop of water on a hot stove." The Pershing tank would be a tremendous improvement, and would be largely responsible for keeping our veterans alive to tell about it.

There are some amazing high-tech photographs and diagrams that were unavailable during this conflict; I went back to them several times as I became more acquainted with the lives of the men inside them. The maps could be better, but then you can't have everything.

For those interested in World War II military history, or for those that read war memoirs, *Spearhead* is hard to beat. You can also visit the author's website at [AdamMakos.com](http://AdamMakos.com). This book will be available to the public February 12, 2019. Highly recommended.

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## **JD says**

Another great book by Adam Makos (the best story-teller of the last few years). The story follows the young men from both American and German armored units across the European battlefields, culminating in the battle of Cologne where their stories meet. Makos introduces each character nicely into the story. and each one brings richness to the story. The author's description of everything is vivid and he really takes you along for the ride in the armored wagons of the Spearhead Division. Great story and I cannot wait for his next book!!

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## **James says**

First, I was provided a copy of the book in exchange for my honest review. This review is 100% my opinion and has not been unduly influenced in any way.

Summary:

The description provided by the publisher states that *Spearhead* is "the riveting World War II story of an American tank gunner's journey into the heart of the Third Reich, where he will meet destiny in an iconic armor duel—and forge an enduring bond with his enemy."

They could not be more accurate and succinct.

Initial Thoughts: I like Adam. I have read two of his other works and must admit that seeing his name as the author was enough for me to get excited. If you have read and enjoyed any of his previous works, you will enjoy Spearhead. With that disclosure of a minor man-crush, I must admit that I had little desire to read about a tank gunner, even with my strong fascination with world war 2.

Review: Clarence, the gunner we follow, is an amazing character and Adam does an excellent job of bringing the realities of the situations faced by Clarence to life. The fear, the loss of friends, the cold and the suffering were all well presented. The story and the other characters, the men Clarence served with, were equally fascinating and by the time the book was over I was invested enough that I wanted to know what happened to those who survived.

I probably should have paid more attention to the full description from the publisher before I read the book because when the war ends in the book there is still a fair amount of reading left to do. When I got to the end of the war, I thought to myself "what a great war story, why are there so many pages left?". Little did I know that the most powerful part of the story was yet to come.

The heart of the story and what really makes this book special is what happened after the war. I won't spoil it for you, but I am always amazed at how great the greatest generation is and was. And I am grateful for authors like Adam who do their best to bring history and humanity to life.

I don't want to tell you about the story, I want you to read the words as written by Adam. It will be worth it.

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## **Peter Tillman says**

Rave review @ WSJ: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/spearhea...> As always, I'm happy to email you a copy if you don't subscribe.

"The story's everyman is Clarence Smoyer, a 21-year-old gun loader assigned to the Third Armored Division's Easy Company. The mild-mannered Pennsylvanian seems destined to become a name, rank and serial number on a soon-forgotten casualty list, but Mr. Smoyer (whom Mr. Makos interviewed extensively for the book) discovers an unusual gift: He is a crack shot with a tank cannon. Promoted to gunner, though never formally trained as one, he also has a knack for unorthodox gun tactics when his crew faces steep odds."

"The tank battle at Paderborn's [a city in eastern North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany] rail yard, Mr. Smoyer's "Horatio at the Bridge" moment, is a fast-paced, compelling scene written in cinematic fashion. This is where "Spearhead" pays off. Having diverged from the main story arc in preceding chapters, Mr. Makos drops the reader back into the Pershing's turret and dials up a battle scene to rival the peak moments of "Fury." In two brilliant chapters, flames spit and shells fly in a "High Noon" firefight where men and machines die together in one tangled mess."

Sounds like my kind of book! But, long line for a library copy at the moment, & I'm out of room on my library card.... ?

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