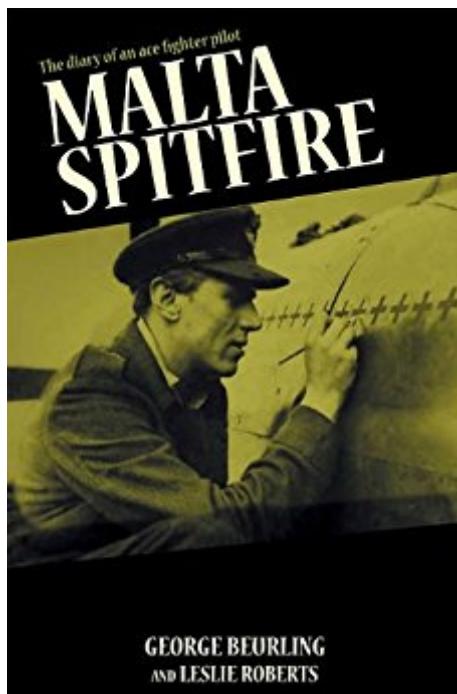


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Malta Spitfire: The Diary Of An Ace Fighter Pilot



Synopsis

Twenty-five thousand feet above Malta — that is where the Spitfires intercepted the Messerschmitts, Macchis and Reggianes as they swept eastwards in their droves, screening the big Junkers with their bomb loads as they pummeled the island beneath — the most bombed patch of ground in the world. One of those Spitfire pilots was George Beurling, nicknamed "Screwball", who in fourteen flying days destroyed twenty-seven German and Italian aircraft and damaged many more. Hailing originally from Canada, after hard training and combat across the Channel, Beurling finally made it to Malta in the summer of 1942. Malta Spitfire tells his story and that of the gallant Spitfire squadron, 249, which day after day climbed to the top of the hill to meet the enemy against overwhelming odds. The reader has almost the sensation of being in the cockpit with him, climbing to meet the planes driving in from Sicily, diving down through the fighter screen at the bombers, dodging the bullets coming out of the sun, or whipping up under the belly of an Me for a deflection shot at the engine. This is war without sentiment or romance, told in terms of human courage, skill and heroism. A classic, first published in 1943.

Book Information

File Size: 10709 KB

Print Length: 256 pages

Publisher: Grub Street Publishing; Reprint edition (July 14, 2011)

Publication Date: October 6, 2013

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00FOGFZU0

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #621,173 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #32

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Canada #116

in Books > History > Americas > Canada > 20th Century #168 in Books > Biographies &

Customer Reviews

Canadian George Beurling was a phenomenally courageous and expert combat pilot for the RAF during the Second World War. He started out flying missions over Nazi occupied France but wound up in Malta in 1942 at the height of the air siege of that fortress island by Italian and German bombers and fighters. Beurling became a famous air combat ace, shooting down four Nazi aircraft over Western Europe and 27 German and Italian planes demolished, eight damaged, and three more scored as probably destroyed in only 14 days of fighting over Malta. In addition, he won four decorations (including the prestigious Distinguished Service Order, the Distinguished Flying Medal with Bar, and the Distinguished Flying Cross) for bravery and an officer's commission from Britain in less than two months during the Malta conflict. Beurling in collaboration with Leslie Roberts wrote a book entitled *Malta Spitfire: The Diary of an Ace Fighter Pilot* about his life and his experiences as a combat pilot and published it in June 1943, when he was in Canada recuperating from war wounds. If you want to learn what it is like to have been in Malta in World War II and fought in raging aerial dogfights overhead, then this is the book for you. It is comparable in tone and descriptive accounts about the details of combat and pilot camaraderie with the book *First Light* by Geoff Wellum, a similarly excellent book about the Battle of Britain. The story delves into Beurling's love of flying from the time he was a kid and his obsessive ambition to become the best pilot and ultimately the best combat pilot there ever was. Once you read this book, you may be convinced that indeed he became that. But there is also a very human element that is sometimes overlooked when others discuss Beurling because he was hard to live with and someone who did not suffer inefficient or bureaucratic systems gladly. But that was because he had seen what the Nazis had done to children during the Blitz, and he wanted to avenge that in the most effective way possible. The siege of Malta offered him that chance, and he succeeded valiantly. Beurling explains why Malta was important and why Britain and the Maltese had to fight like hell to defend her even as it was horrific seeing your buddies get shot out of the sky: "You would do a lot of wondering about the why of it, particularly after some sidekick [fellow pilot] you thought a lot of had gone down and hit the deck [crashed]. Why would anybody in his senses want to hang on to a hunk of rock [Malta], so exposed that not even the navy could use it? Why didn't we just get the hell out of there and let Jerry [the Nazis] have the damned place if he wanted it? Why didn't we just tell the Malties to keep it and go home? After a while, you knew why, but you didn't get it at first, and

sometimes you were convinced it was all screwy. Then you realized that just so long as the fighter pilots could hang on and keep knocking the Me 109s [Nazi Messerschmitt fighters] and the Macchis [Italian fighters] and the Ju 88s [Nazi bombers] into the sea, we still had a toehold in the Mediterranean and an advance base close to the African coast that the other fellows couldn't use as a jumping off place. And when you lay back on the hospital pillows, thousands of miles away from Malta, when Montgomery and the Eighth Army came rolling up the coast from Egypt, chasing Rommel and the Afrika Korps back to Tripoli and beyond, you realized at last that not one of those grand guys you'd lived and fought with from Kalfrana Bay to the Sicily coast had spun down in vain. Malta had played a superhuman role in keeping the stage set for the Big Show! and the lads who went west in the Spits [Spitfire aircraft] had done a great part of the job. The pilot also extends enormous respect to the Maltese people for their resilience and courage: "The Maltese, in other words, could take it" and they did. This was no Singapore. This was one tough island, inhabited by tough people. Not one of them had the slightest idea how long the grub [food] would hold out. No one knew when the Hun might try a landing. Lord knows he'd done his best to soften us up for it! But everybody on the island was hanging on by his teeth and the hell with the Huns and Mussolini. A great show! This is a highly recommended book for its honest telling of an ace pilot's account of what it took to defeat the Axis in the Mediterranean during World War II.

If you are into Spitfires and WW2 aviation history get this for sure! It is a good reminder too of the fragile situation the island of Malta found itself in with the German war machine relentlessly pounding them and all the ships trying to relieve them!

George "Screwball" Beurling, the "Falcon of Malta", in his own words! A boy who lived just for one thing - to fly - and did everything to become a fighter pilot, and what a fighter pilot he was! I loved reading it!

If one is interested in facts re 2nd If you are interested in stories from the war 1939 1945 this must be one of the most incredible stories ever. If you on top are really interested aviation this is the book to read.

Highly recommended. An excellent read with some very interesting comments and observations.

His truth is far more interesting than the War Hero of the Skies documentary. The lengths he went to, to join up are extraordinary as are the events upon his evacuation from Malta to Gibraltar.

Loved the story really makes you feel great to know the greatest generation did it all no complaints just guts

A great read and helped me realise again what an amazing job the pilots of Malta did and helped the Malta Effort

A good read you get a good feel for the action over Malta

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