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Thomas C. Sanger

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“You’re right on schedule,” he said to the image in his eyepiece.

Lemp’s pulse quickened with the knowledge that his war was about to begin . . .

On September 1, 1939, the passenger liner Athenia set sail from Glasgow for Montreal by way of Belfast and Liverpool. She carried 1,100 passengers, nearly three-quarters of whom were women and children. On September 3, Athenia was torpedoed by a German submarine. In *Without Warning*, author Thomas C. Sanger tells the harrowing story of the sinking of the Athenia from the perspective of eight people: six passengers, Athenia’s chief officer, and the commander of the German U-boat.

Based on accounts written by passengers, personal interviews with survivors and descendants of survivors, books, newspaper stories, and original documents, *Without Warning* honors the memory of Athenia’s passengers, both living and dead.

Without Warning Details

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Author : Thomas C. Sanger

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From Reader Review Without Warning for online ebook

Dave says

Think about watching the Titanic without the movie stars and Celine Dion's soundtrack and you have a taste of what this book is about. Only the Athenia didn't run into a giant iceberg. It was sunk by a German U-Boat as Germany marched into Poland and the world plunged into war. Without Warning is a fictionalized account of a real tragedy based on interviews with survivors and extensive research.

Although it is historical fiction, Sanger made it eminently readable and easy to approach. He traces the journeys of the various passengers on the Athenia who ranged from Poles fleeing the Germans advance to Americans on holiday and British traveling to the US and Canada to pursue acting careers, a very diverse lot. For some, they were just going about their lives. For others, the War was coming and they hoped they were heading for safety.

Sanger does another interesting turn in that he also gives us the point of view of the German U-Boat (submarine) captain and how anxious he was to make a good impression and how concerned he was about British merchant ships pressed into military service. They gave no warning, but even with all the other atrocities it was not an intentional torpedoing of a passenger liner.

The actual hit on the Athenia took place quickly, and there is no doubt the anxious desperate escape onto the liferafts is vividly portrayed. It is hard to imagine how desperate these people were and how ill-prepared for the frigid waters.

This is a fascinating true story well worth reading.

Richard Wolf says

Sanger manages to capture the feel of the era and the individual temperaments of the people he profiles in this, his first novel.

The underlying story is true - the sinking of the first ship in WWII. Sanger has added great depth to the story with his well-conceived dialogs. He convinced this reader that these dialogs actually happened.

His choice of following several characters greatly enhanced the reading enjoyment. For me, this book was a page turner.

The book is meticulously researched, giving details about everything from the interior of a German U boat to the architecture of the many buildings in which various parts of the story take place.

I was most appreciative of the Afterword, which filled in the characters' lives after their horrific experience in the first days of September, 1939.

Patricia Ann says

WITHOUT WARNING BY THOMAS C. SANGER--It's been a while since I'VE BEEN OVERWHELMED , TOTALLY engrossed in a book, captivated, felt like " YOU Are There". This is one of those books. I love history, the human aspects that shape and destroy lives. Without Warning is a gripping very real tale of the PASSENGER ship Athenia which was sunk by a Nazi U Boat immediately after war was declared on England by Hitler. The passenger ship was protected by law. Of the over 1000 passengers, 3/4 were women and children. Yet the Nazi Oberlieutenant Lemp attacked, without warning and snuck away leaving those passengers to struggle for survival. The story is not well known; the Nazis even spread propaganda that the destruction of the Aethenia was an explosive planted by Churchill so that America would enter into the war as England's Ally. The people in the book are real passengers; the details of the attack, the sinking, the lifeboats, the calamities, their survival and deaths, are real. Mr. Sanger's research and his writing are ===== oh my, I can't find an adjective== it's enthralling. The thoughts and conversations are the work of Mr. Sanger and breathe life into the history that these people lived. Additionally, in the Afterword, he tells us briefly of their lives after rescue. You can also learn more and see pictures on his web site ThmasCSanger.com

Let me share just one lovely line with you that Mr. Sanger's grandmother Rhoda (a passenger on the Athenia) says " God gives us so much beauty to appreciate and yet all we can see are the differences the divide us. You'd think we could find a better way than war to resolve our differences."

That alone would have made this book worth reading for me. The rest ... well, the rest of the book was a Wow experience.

Tom says

This is the story of the 1939 sinking of the British passenger ship Athenia, the first casualty of WWII, an almost forgotten piece of history, in contrast to WWI's parallel but infamous Lusitania disaster. The author played with history by adding a bit of embellishment, not necessarily something that I look for in a book. However, after hearing the author speak of his particular interest in the story and his personal connection to one of the survivors I took a chance. I found the story dramatic and touching. The author did a remarkable job of research to fill out the characters. It is a good story, if the conversations were invented by the author the real ones would likely have been quite similar.

PacaLipstick Gramma says

I won a copy of this book through a Goodreads Giveaway.

I find I am drawn to books about World War II. The author did an excellent job with research and incorporating facts into a well woven story. I was aware of the sinking of the ship Althenia, and this book offered a powerful insight into that fateful night.

I was not aware until the end of the book that all of the characters were actual people who had lived through the experience of the sinking of the Althenia. I was thoroughly impressed! Granted, the dialog was probably fictitious, but what a powerful book when you realized all of these people had survived an unimaginable horror.

I highly recommend this book.

Because I received a finished copy of this book, I will be donating it to my local library for their shelves, in hopes that others find this as enjoyable.

Thomas Sanger says

Ooops! When I first joined Goodreads I was unfamiliar with the site and made the mistake of posting my own book to read. I couldn't figure out how to remove it so I decided to simply show the book as having been read. I think Without Warning is a good book, but you should probably discount this review because I'm the (non-tech savvy) author.

Dodie Williams says

A very, very good read.

Bonnye Reed says

GNAB I received a free electronic copy of this historical novel based on fact from Netgalley, Thomas C. Sanger and Greenleaf Book Group, River Grove Books, in exchange for an honest review. Thank you all for sharing your hard work with me.

There is obviously a massive amount of work involved in researching the background of this based on fact historical novel. His grandmother Rhoda Thomas, a passenger and survivor of the Athenia torpedoing, wrote of her experiences - I am grateful that Thomas C. Sanger was compelled to flesh out her work and write this novel, to add to our knowledge the personalities of both the lost and rescued victims in these British and American, Canadian and Polish travelers on the Athenia. The torpedoing of the British Passenger Liner Athenia by the German Submarine U-30 happened within hours of England's Declaration of War with Germany, announced at 11:00 am September 3, 1939. The passengers and crew of the Athenia were in lifeboats before midnight.

We follow the experience through actual persons onboard the ship - seven passengers and the chief officer and second in command, Barnet Copland, as passengers arrive and board the Athenia, and travel from Saturday September 2, 1939, through the rescues and recoveries on September 4, 1939 and beyond. Thomas Sanger brings these people to life in his prose. These folks are now firmly peopled in my mind and heart.

Although the first British ship sunk in WWII, lose of life was limited to about 10% and was a contributing factor the the lack of widespread knowledge about the tragedy of the Athenia. Sanger fills in the post-catastrophe lives of the these folks we follow through the sinking of Athenia, however, rounding out nicely their life stories.

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Sharon says

Great historical fiction novel.

this was a goodreads giveaway

Peter Jones says

ABOUT THIS BOOK: Fritz-Julius Lemp tracked the approaching ship in his submarine's periscope. It had become a silhouette barely distinguishable against the darkening twilight sky, but Lemp was close enough to see the foaming white wave thrown up by its bow. He smiled when the spray arched higher, signaling the ship had begun changing course again.

“You’re right on schedule,” he said to the image in his eyepiece.

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On September 1, 1939, the passenger liner Athenia set sail from Glasgow for Montreal by way of Belfast and Liverpool. She carried 1,100 passengers, nearly three-quarters of whom were women and children. On September 3, Athenia was torpedoed by a German submarine. In *Without Warning*, author Thomas C. Sanger tells the harrowing story of the sinking of the Athenia from the perspective of eight people: six passengers, Athenia’s chief officer, and the commander of the German U-boat.

Based on accounts written by passengers, personal interviews with survivors and descendants of survivors, books, newspaper stories, and original documents, *Without Warning* honors the memory of Athenia’s passengers, both living and dead.

MY REVIEW: There is a lot of really good historical fiction currently being published, and *Without Warning* by Thomas C. Sanger can be added to the list. I have to highly commend the author on his meticulous research in this compelling blend of fact and fiction.

Not only is his research meticulous, but so is his characterisation. The sinking of the Athenia is told from several points of view, from the commander of the attacking submarine, to passengers and crew of the Athenia. His writing flows smoothly and he depicts the action so that the reader feels like he is right there amongst it.

I see that this is Sanger’s one and only novel. I sincerely hope that he is working on another.

Thank you to Greenleaf Book Group, River Grove Books for providing a digital copy of *Without Warning* by Thomas C. Sanger for review. All opinions expressed in this review are entirely my own personal opinions.

Joyce says

5 stars

This remarkable tale is told from several points of view, from the commander of the submarine named the U-30 that sunk the Athenia to some of the passengers and crew of the ill-fated ship on her way from Glasgow by way of Belfast and Liverpool to Canada.

We meet the passengers and crew of the Athenia as they make their way to their various ports to take the journey to Canada. Oberleutnant Lemp has already left Germany with his submarine and is sailing a zig-zag course to the North Sea. After all the passengers are boarded the ship sets out for Canada. They have been ordered to sail a zig-zag pattern for safety.

It's September 3, 1939 and Oberleutnant Fritz-Julius Lemp has a ship in his periscope's sights. Believing it to be a merchant ship, he fired upon it, his first attack in the new war.

We follow the survivors through the harrowing boarding of the lifeboats, children separated from their mothers, wives separated from their husbands, and those brave souls who helped the others to board while they waited behind. We learn their stories about surviving in their lifeboats in a pitching sea for eleven hours, becoming separated from the other boats, the accidents that occurred and the lives lost.

When they board the five rescue ships they are cold, exhausted and some without their family members. Some are injured and some have lost their lives in the water. The rescue ships sail to different ports, exacerbating the problem in contacting their loved ones.

I didn't have any knowledge of the sinking of the Athenia until I read this book. The novel is a complete marvel. This book is extremely well written and plotted. The research into the sinking of the ship must have been exhaustive and extensive. The book tells the story of the sinking of the Athenia and the aftermath of that sinking. It tells of the indomitable human spirit and the will to survive. It tells of the instinct to help one another in times of disaster; the everyday simple generosity of people everywhere.

This is my first Thomas Sanger novel, but I can guarantee it won't be my last. I sincerely hope he writes more.

I want to thank NetGalley and Greenleaf Book Group/River Grove Books for forwarding to me a copy of this most enlightening and wonderful book to read and enjoy.

Paul Falk says

This ARC was provided complements of NetGalley. My gratitude sent to River Grove Books for making this edition available.

The author compiled mountains of research that traced the tragic events that led to the sinking of the British merchant ship *Athenia*. The narrative also took an up-close-and-personal look at the lives of several passengers aboard the doomed vessel. It helped provide heartfelt meaning to this horrific event. This historical fiction was bursting at the seams in rich detail. The added personal quality made it difficult to put down. My kind of problem.

The British passenger liner Athenia with eleven hundred passengers and crew aboard had the dubious distinction of being the first ship sunk by a German U-Boat. This act of terrorism jump-started World War II. The date - September 3rd, 1939.

While scanning the horizon at periscope depth, German submarine officer Captain Fritz Lemp spotted an ocean-going vessel in the distant horizon. He had no way of knowing with certainty if it was friend or foe. If non-threatening, it was protected by International Maritime treaties in times of War. Accordingly, if friendly, a warning would first be issued if intercepted by an enemy state. Lemp, however, was eager to be the first submarine Commander of the Reich to sink an enemy vessel. To have his name in lights. Had his reasoning been blinded by his overzealous ambition? Did he see only what he wanted to see?

Not wasting any time, he calculated the proper trajectory for the Athenia's date with death. A missile that carried a 600 pound payload. He gave the order. Fire one! A torpedo was underway. At precisely 7:39 p.m. on September 3rd, it found its easy target. The first strike of World War II had made its mark. The war was now officially underway.

Everyone on board the Athenia felt the powerful mind splitting blast and vibration that violently shook the ship. Where struck, the hull of the ship had been breached. Seawater was pouring in. The ship went black. Everyone was cast into total darkness. Confusion and terror ran rampant through the ship. A living nightmare had been unleashed.

The piercing emergency signal for "Abandon Ship" had sounded . Eight short, one long. The passengers had been drilled shortly after getting underway. To everyone's fright, no one expected to ever hear that calamitous sound ever again. Could this really be happening?

On board the submarine, a second torpedo had been fired. Luckily, for the Athena, it got stuck in the tube. One was already bad enough. There was a chance it could detonate in the U-boat . The men worked feverishly to rid vessel of it. Their lives hung in the balance. They were successful. It was a close call. Captain Lemp congratulated his men for a job well done.

On the sinking Athenia, everyone was in a state of confusion. Picking their way through darkness, they found their muster for their assigned lifeboats. In not so orderly a fashion. So much for the controlled drill. "Women and children first!", echoed from the crew. It was all so surreal. Totally unprepared for this emergency, many of the passengers were clad in only in their thin evening wear or pajamas. Many did not even have possession of their life jackets. No way to make the acquaintance with the freezing waters of the Atlantic. Misery was just around the corner.

The submarine surfaced to survey the damage. Through binoculars, the Captain was able to see crowded lifeboats being lowered over the side. He noted that the stricken ship was listing to the port side. Ominous shape. But for what it was worth, it was still afloat. Not sinking fast enough for his satisfaction. From the surface, he gave the order to fire another torpedo. Finish her off. Somehow it missed or was a dud. Either way, the captain wasn't done. He ordered his gun crew to prepare the eighty-eight millimeter deck cannon for firing. That would do the trick. Just moments before shelling the Athenia, he realized that he had attacked a passenger ship. A grave mistake had been committed. He acted in haste. WITHOUT WARNING!

Kristin says

Without Warning is a gripping story about what happened surrounding the sinking of the Athenia at the start of World War II. The tale follows several people and their experiences as the events leading up to the sinking unfold, as well as how each person's life was forever changed after what they went through. Most books that cover World War II do so from a military perspective, but this account is mostly experienced by civilians and

how they endured a tragic event out of their control. Each character is based on a real person who was on the ship which makes this account all the more remarkable. By telling the story this way, it is easier to get a feel for what was going on in Europe at the time, and how the declaration of war impacted people of different nationalities in a variety of ways.

I found this book to be a quick read because I could not put it down. By the final pages, I felt like I had experienced this sinking along side these characters and I felt for them and what they just endured. This book was well researched and I highly recommend it.
