

Book Review

Sacramento

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Call Sign, White Lily

By M.G. Crisci
Orca Publishing Company, 19.95, 391 pages



Despite Crisci's unorthodox method of employing unverifiable dialogue throughout the narrative, the compelling story of Russia's female flying ace, Lilia Litvyak, sweeps us into the war-torn skies she defended. In this case, Crisci's writing style works, not because of any particular literary eloquence, but because he captures the essence of the folklore surrounding this fallen heroine.

Shot down in a dogfight, and left in an unmarked grave for decades while the official Soviet records declared her simply missing, Lilia's memory remained alive in the hearts of the people she fought so hard to save. Valentina Vaschenko, the curator of the Lilia Litvyak Museum, and Yelena Sivolap, a Ukrainian teacher and translator, have devoted the better part of their lives gathering photographs, letters, and other memorabilia honoring Lilia's brief life.

In 1967, Valentina was granted permission by the government to charter a group known as The Scouts of War Glory, who eventually discovered Lilia's remains and her downed plane. In 1990, after diligent petitions by soviet citizens, Lilia was posthumously awarded Hero of the Soviet Union. Crisci weaves the myths and the hard evidence together to produce this romantic story of a truly amazing woman.

