



Germany's
COMBAT
HELMETS
1933-1945

A Modern Study

by Ken Niewiarowicz

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*This book is dedicated to members of
“the greatest generation” who gave their
all in the struggle against Nazi Germany
1941-1945. Particularly the following:*

*My Father; Leonard Niewiarowicz who
entered the battle of Normandy and
fought through to the Elbe; one of
28 survivors of the original 250 men
of G Company, 137th Infantry Regiment,
35th Infantry Division, US Army*

*My Uncle; Edward Niewiarowicz who
helped to liberate Dachau with the
45th Infantry Division, US Army*

*My Uncle; William Randles; grievously
wounded by machine gun fire while
serving with the British 1st Army
group, northwest Europe 1945.*

*And my mother:
Mayme Randles who'd dreamed
of joining the fight.*



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Foreword

Throughout the 1970s and on occasion in the 1980s while home on leave from the military, I would patrol the wide and bountiful aisles of the Ohio Gun Collectors' Association show, which was one of the greatest gun shows of the old era. It was a superb source for military items as well as weapons, because so many gun collectors at that time were erstwhile militaria buffs. Most were also WWII veterans, and they sometimes brought their own "souvenirs" to sell. It was common to purchase quality original German helmets there, and the favorite thing to do was get there as early as possible and zoom up and down the aisles hoping to find a jewel for the collection. I recall from that era a few faces of the competition—other young collectors who pursued the same prizes; one of them being Ken Niewiarowicz.

The reason I tell this story is to provide the reader some indication of how long Ken has been a student of German helmets. Not only the length of time, but the originality of the specimens he was obtaining, are important factors here. Ken learned originality, learned what he liked, and stuck with it, building upon his knowledge over the years. The fruits of his efforts include a world-class website featuring fine original helmets and now, a superbly researched and authoritative work on German helmets—arguably the new standard for all authors on the subject.

Delving into the chapters, one can see evidence of exhaustive effort in seeking out original helmets from some of the best US and international collections, the finest examples of which are presented here accompanied by a text composed of facts and observations layed out in a direct and cohesive manner. Myself having trod this path, I can attest to the patience which it requires. But Ken has gotten the job done and the quality and value of this effort are evident.

In terms of enhancing the modern study of original German WWII helmets, Ken's methodical approach in analyzing finishes, lot numbers, and corresponding decals of so many fine examples constitutes an important building block of updated forensic study that will benefit all collectors into the future. Therefore, it is my view that this book is the most definitive and complete work available on Third Reich helmets, and will quickly become the cornerstone of helmet collecting literature.

*Kelly Hicks
LTC, US Army (Ret.)*

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No project of this scope could have been contemplated without the assistance and contributions of advanced and dedicated fellow-collectors.

A great deal of encouragement was given by many long time friends and associates. Many superb specimens of original helmets were provided for illustration here from some of the most advanced collections world-wide.

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The first 300 copies of the First Edition are serial numbered.
This collector's volume is No. _____.

Introduction

Over the past three decades the subject of German combat helmets has been written about in a number of reference works. The first work by Floyd Tubbs in the early 70s was a groundbreaking effort; supplying early collectors with information which had not before been available. The two volumes of *“German Helmets; 1933-1945”* by Goodapple et al, published in 1981-1983, were excellent photo references and provided the best known understanding of shell types, configurations and time-lines of production.

Just a few years later; Ludwig Baer’s comprehensive *“History of the German Steel Helmet 1916-1945”* gave perhaps the best possible insight on technical data, dates of orders and production changes based on original documentation; it remains a text which probably can never be expanded upon.

The works of Kelly Hicks culminating in the 2004 book *“SS-Steel”* and the 2006 book *“SS Helmets”* with the late Mike Beaver, provide the best understanding of steel helmets utilized by that elite branch of Hitler’s armed forces. Mr. Hicks writes from experience of the handling and study of original specimens; arriving at practical conclusions based on observations of correlative features.

In writing this book I have used a similar approach, for I feel that therein lays the most productive source of practical information. The number of original examples existing today can probably be assumed to be a fair cross-section of helmets produced and used during the twelve years of the Third Reich. The examination of and comparison to other known original helmets produces the clearest understanding of the subject, most particularly the aspects of shell production, components as well as finishes and applied insignias.

When certain characteristics such as painted finish are common to all examples of a certain make/model of helmet which was produced in a certain time frame, or when a specific style of decal is found applied to helmets similarly alike, it becomes a logical assumption that this correlation is a result of design rather than chance.

The main purpose of this book is the examination, description and illustration of such correlations; how these correlations are observed by cross reference of model, manufacturer and branch of service as well as chronology of production.

Hitler’s war machine was bombed to ruins sixty years ago. This has left a hole in many of the specifics related to helmets produced between 1933 and 1945. Specific archival production records were eradicated either by wartime destruction or post-war neglect. Persons who possessed first-hand knowledge regarding the production and assembly of Third Reich era steel helmets or components are either dead or untraceable. Therefore, no supportive testimony or documentation is

able to draw on in the following pages. For this reason, some conjecture must play an occasional role in the conclusions which the reader will find here. Points of consideration have been made, and theories have been put forth to hypothesize in these cases.

Exceptions to the proven rule often arise in the pursuit of definitive conclusion. The subject of this study is not without such exceptions. Moreover, the expectation of exception is logical considering the element of wartime expediency, the occasion of necessary modifications within reasonably short time intervals and the exactness to which contemporary standards were upheld. Added to this are the normal variations expected as a result of industrial production in separate privately owned factories each dealing with individual contractors of components and materials. Taking the aforementioned factors into account, it may be surprising that enough similarities and correlative features exist to arrive at the conclusions found here. However, I believe that the presentation of these conclusions in an objective manner will suffice to give some aid to those seeking a better understanding of the subject and when the conclusions are found to arise from explained conjecture, the reader is left to decide for himself the validity of what, in the end, can only be considered as the opinion of the author.

I have more often attempted to answer the “what” and not the “why.” I point to the differences in certain manufacturing methods but in most cases steer clear of an attempt to explain why they are so. I illustrate the common features of an insignia applied to a certain type or manufacture of helmet but often leave open the reason behind it. Not being a specialist in industrial manufacture or procurement, such conjecture is beyond me and would serve no useful purpose here. Notwithstanding, I feel that what follows has come furthest, so far, to being a definitive study on the subject of the Third Reich steel helmet. I say this in the expectation and hope that future study and possible discovery by either myself or others may add yet more to the completeness of what is known of this fascinating subject.

*Ken Niewiarowicz
Lapeer, Michigan, August 2009*