



The General's Niece: The Little-Known de Gaulle Who Fought to Free Occupied France

Paige Bowers

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“My dear Uncle Charles,” twenty-two-year-old Genevieve de Gaulle wrote on May 6, 1943. “Maybe you have already heard about the different events affecting the family.” The general’s brother Pierre had been taken by the Gestapo; his brother Xavier, Genevieve’s father, had escaped to Switzerland. Genevieve asked her uncle where she could be most useful—France? England? A French territory? When no response came immediately, she decided to stay in France to help carry out his call to resist the Nazis.

Based on interviews with family members, former associates, prominent historians, and never-before-seen papers written by Genevieve de Gaulle, *The General’s Niece* is the first English-language biography of Charles de Gaulle’s niece, confidante, and daughter figure, Genevieve, to whom the legendary French general and president dedicated his war memoirs.

Journalist Paige Bowers leads readers through the remarkable life of this young woman who risked death to become one of the most devoted foot soldiers of the French resistance. Beginning with small acts of defiance such as tearing down swastikas and pro-Vichy posters, she eventually ferried arms and false letters of transit to fellow *resistants* and edited and distributed the nation’s largest underground newspaper, until she was arrested and sent to the infamous Ravensbrück concentration camp. *The General’s Niece* reveals the horrors the young de Gaulle witnessed and endured there that could have broken her spirit but instead inspired her many remaining years of activism on behalf of former prisoners and of France’s neediest citizens.

Finally emerging from the shadow of her famous uncle, the life of this little-known de Gaulle adds a fascinating layer to the history of the second world war, including the French resistance, the horrors of and unshakeable bonds formed at Ravensbrück, and the issues facing postwar France and its leaders.

The General's Niece: The Little-Known de Gaulle Who Fought to Free Occupied France Details

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From Reader Review *The General's Niece: The Little-Known de Gaulle Who Fought to Free Occupied France* for online ebook

Katie Newingham says

Bowers brings Genevieve De Gaulle to life as a relatable heroine who has hopes and dreams of family but puts them aside, risking her comfort and her life, for her country. She is aware of her privilege of name and education and knows she must act because she can, though it's her faith that enables her to move. Her place in life becomes her vehicle to resist the Nazi regime in France.

The urgency of Genevieve's plight is felt by the reader, as well as her genuine love for others. Bowers is masterful at bringing to light the women all around Genevieve--mothers, grandmothers, teenagers--who were instrumental in the resistance. Two months later and I'm still thinking about this book, about how hero hearts exist all around us, but often don't beat faster until history makes them, and even when their beat becomes a roar in their chest, they don't lash out, they go to work. More books like this please!

Michelle says

The author did so much personal research in the writing of this book, and it really shows in the narrative. Rather than just facts and foot notes, it has a flowing tone that reads like a novel. It helps that Genevieve de Gaulle had such a life story to tell! From her brave work with the Resistance during the Nazi occupation of France, to the horrors she lived through in Ravensbruck concentration camp and all of the wonderful work she did afterward for women and the poor of France. de Gaulle was a truly amazing woman whose story needed to be told. This is an excellent telling of it.

Diana Skelton says

Too little attention has been paid to the young women who risked their lives in the World War II Resistance. This book shines a spotlight on one such determined and inspiring person.

Carolyn Porter says

While the DeGaulle name is well known, I'll confess I had never heard of Genevieve before picking up this enlightening book. What bravery she showed at a young age, and what compassion and tenacity she showed throughout her life. I am so glad to have learned about the life and service of Genevieve DeGaulle!

Becca-Rae Weidel says

actual rating 3.5 stars

I received a free copy of this book from a giveaway for an honest review

This book reads very similar to a textbook. It makes sense after you read about the author's credentials as a journalist and the knowledge that she now works as a history professor. It's not a "bad" book but I would say it requires that the reader likes history and it being presented more as facts than a narrative. I personally really enjoy reading about history and found myself getting excited when I read about certain people I've read about in the past. Having said that though, there were also sections that I got bored of the facts. I think overall it was an interesting read and I'm glad I read it. I wish it was a little longer so that it could give a little more depth (especially her later years), but there was a lot of good information included as well.

Elizabeth Rynecki says

I enjoyed the General's Niece by Paige Bowers. It's the story of Genevieve de Gaulle Anthoinoz, the niece to Charles de Gaulle, and her experiences as a French resistance fighter and her time spent interned at Ravensbrück, the German Nazi concentration camp exclusively for women. Bowers tells the story with clarity and gives readers important insight into her subject's life and passion for France, justice, and humanity.

WendyLikesBooks says

The General's Niece taught me an incredible amount of knowledge about Genevieve de Gaulle and her uncle, Charles de Gaulle. It's obvious how much work, time and effort Paige Bowers put into this amazing account of Genevieve.

The admirable qualities I found in Genevieve, based on this book, were her tenacity, persistence and unbelievable ability to stay positive through rough times.

Her focus on fighting for her family and her country were heartbreaking at times. Beginning with plastering flyers across towns, writing for the newspapers (being outspoken when others weren't), being captured for her resistance, living through the horrors of a concentration camp, staying loyal to her country even afterwards and finally working to help others for the next 30 years of her life - Genevieve never gave up.

Paige's words made this complicated history easy to understand. I would recommend this book for the hard-core history buffs as well as those (like me) who have a harder time grasping history timelines.

Robyn says

What a delight! Any biography that isn't drier than toast is a triumph of the genre. She has a great writing style and a fascinating, if serious, subject.

Alison Law says

Listen to my interview with Paige Bowers in Episode 5 of the Literary Atlanta podcast, released August 31, 2017.

Caroline Duffy says

Enjoyed this story about a real-life shero I had never heard about.
