

WRITER'S DIGEST

Steven Hartov: On Shocking Truths in Historical Fiction

New York Times bestselling author Steven Hartov discusses the surprising truths he discovered when writing his new historical fiction novel, *The Last of the Seven*.

ROBERT LEE BREWER - SAUG 8, 2022

Steven Hartov was born in New London, Connecticut, attended public schools in New England and earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Boston University. In 1973 he joined the U.S. Merchant Marine Military Sealift Command, beginning a series of adventures that would later inspire his nonfiction and literary works.

In 1977, he volunteered for the Israel Defense Forces, serving first as a paratrooper and later in a Special Operations branch of Israeli Military Intelligence. He subsequently served 13 more years as an IDF reservist and 17 years as an officer and task force commander in the New York Guard.

Hartov's writing career began in the 1990s with a series of espionage novels based in the Middle East. His trilogy, *The Heat of Ramadan*, *The Nylon Hand of God*, and *The Devil's Shepherd*, earned nominations for national book awards, top ten placements in the Book of the Month Club, translations into six foreign languages and a feature film. In 2003 he co-authored the *New York Times* bestseller *In the Company of Heroes*, followed by *The Night Stalkers*, *Afghanistan on the Bounce*, and the first two books in his new historical fiction series about World War II, *The Soul of a Thief* and *The Last of the Seven*.

He is the former Editor-In-Chief of the professional military journal, *Special Operations Report*. His works are recommended readings by the U.S. Army War College. Follow him on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).



In this post, Steven discusses the surprising truths he discovered when writing his new historical fiction novel, *The Last of the Seven*, what he hopes readers get from the experience, and more!

Name: Steven Hartov

Literary agent: John Talbot, The Talbot-Fortune Agency

Book title: *The Last of the Seven*

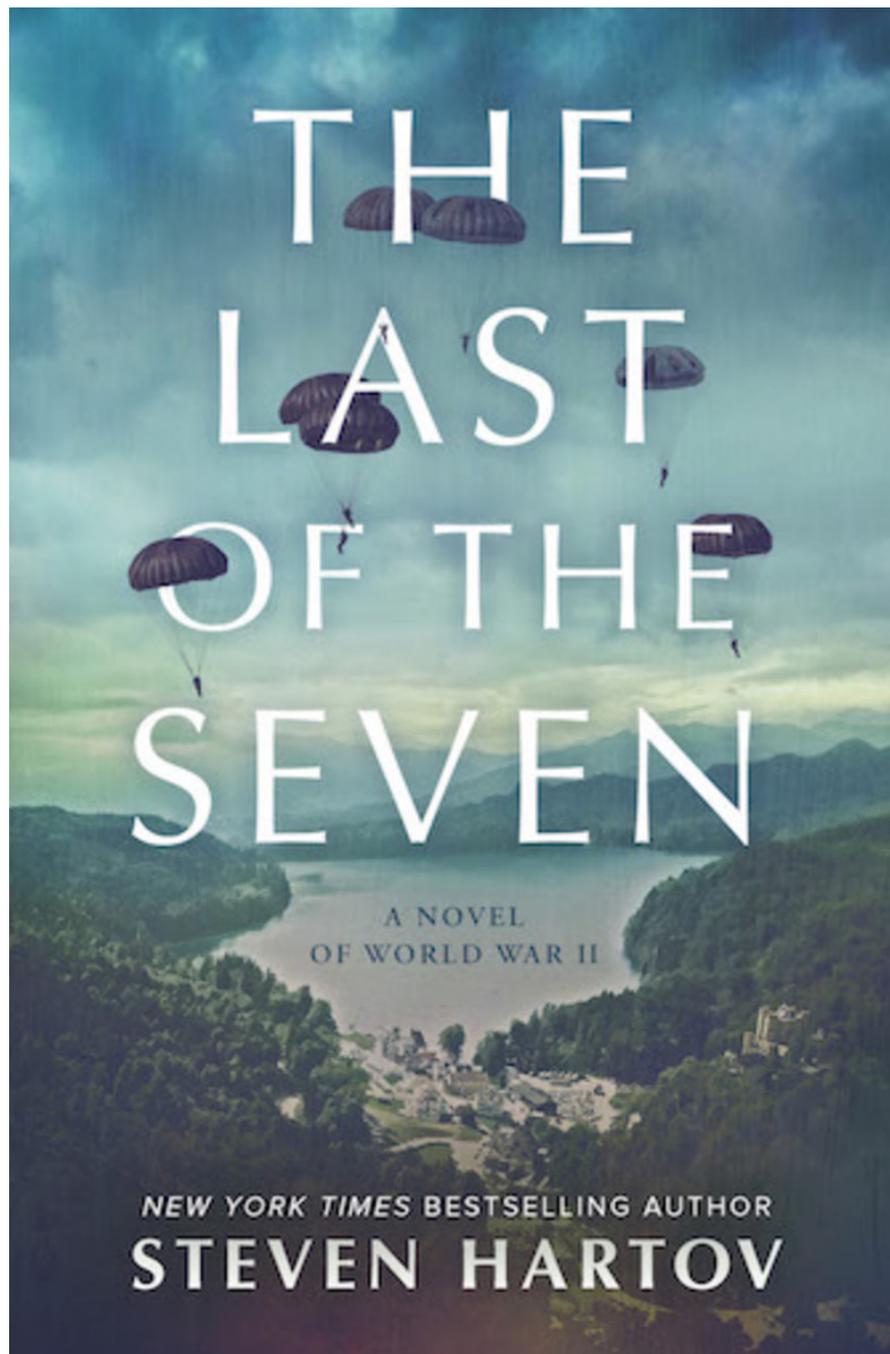
Publisher: Hanover Square Press (Harper Collins)

Release date: August 9, 2022

Genre/category: Historical Fiction, World War II

Previous titles: *The Heat of Ramadan*, *The Nylon Hand of God*, *The Devil's Shepherd*, *In the Company of Heroes*, *The Night Stalkers*, *The Soul of a Thief*

Elevator pitch for the book: *The Last of the Seven* is a classic World War II raid story, based on historical fact, about a group of German-speaking European Jews recruited to take on the Nazis behind enemy lines. It's *The Guns of Navarone* with a Jewish crew, combined with *The English Patient* and *Catch-22*.



What prompted you to write this book?

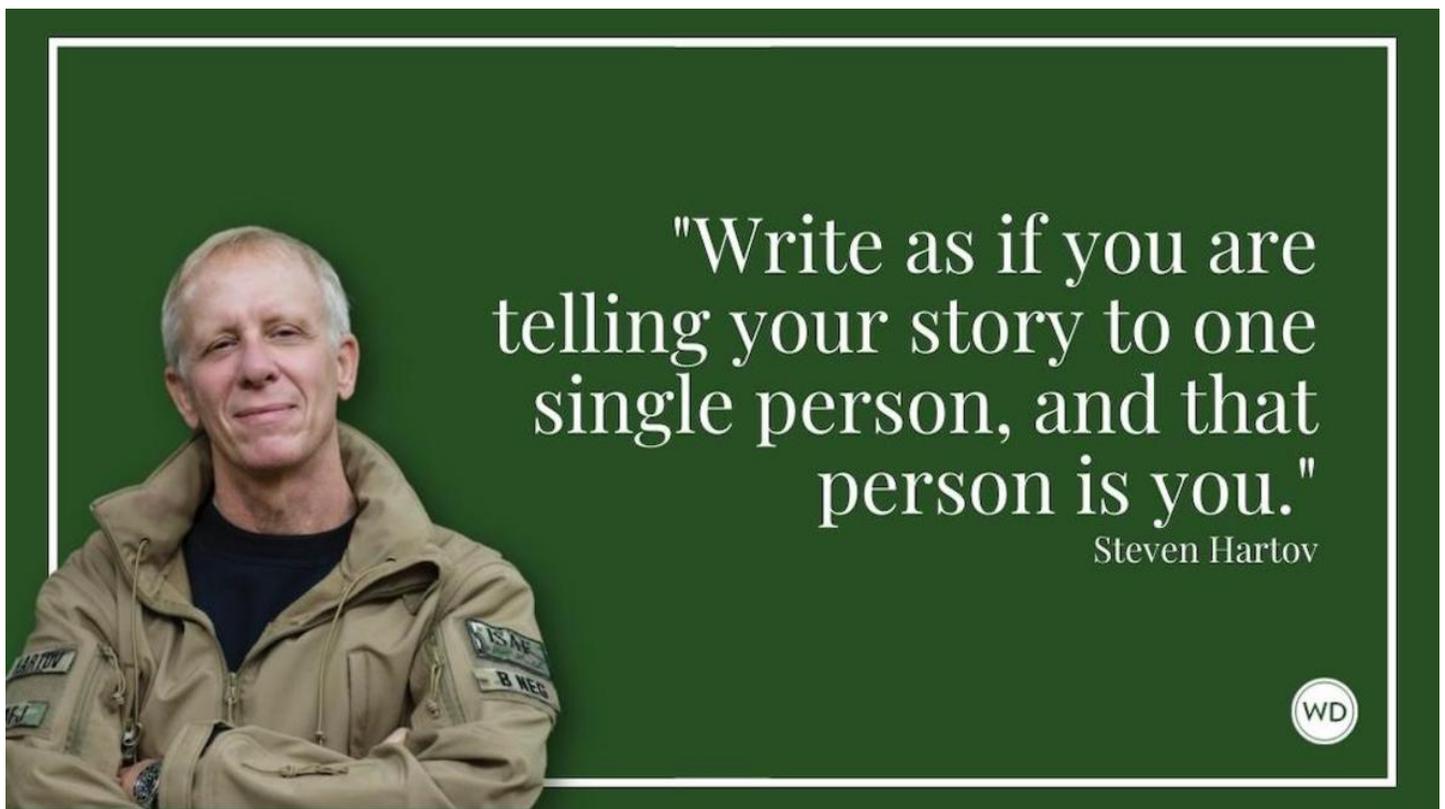
I have been fascinated by the true stories of the Special Interrogation Group and X-Troop for many years. However, when these seven commandos suddenly made a cameo appearance at the end of my last novel, *The Soul of a Thief*, I realized that they deserved their own book.

How long did it take to go from idea to publication?
And did the idea change during the process?

The idea came to me at the end of 2018. I wrote the novel over the course of the next three years, and it is now being published four years from inception. The idea did not change significantly during the process, though I traveled extensively throughout the Middle East, Sicily, and Germany during the research phase, which influenced some aspects of the novel's central romantic theme, as well as the climax.

Were there any surprises or learning moments in the publishing process for this title?

The greatest learning moments for me came during the research phase, when I was frequently stunned to discover true events that occurred during World War II, yet seemed nearly impossible to believe. The publishing process itself, and how that process of editing, copy editing, confirming research details and being engaged in the cover design and packaging process is always fascinating to me, especially in the way such things "sculpt" a book into its final form.



Were there any surprises in the writing process for this book?

The most stunning surprise was a bit “other worldly.” I devised, wholly from my imagination, a monastery in Sicily that would become an Allied field hospital and the focal point of the book’s middle section. I then chose an actual monastery in Agrigento, Sicily, and used its name. I then visited that very monastery, and to my shock, discovered that it had in fact been an Allied field hospital during that period, exactly as I’d imagined it!

What do you hope readers will get out of your book?

I am hoping that readers will find themselves wholly engrossed in the major character’s struggles, as well as those of his comrades and the young Sicilian girl with whom he falls in love. I am hoping as well that my readers will feel as if they’ve learned something new, and that I’ve been able to draw the environment so well that they feel they’ve been to all those places during World War II.

If you could share one piece of advice with other writers, what would it be?

One of my favorite pieces of writing advice is to write as if you are telling your story to one single person, and that person is you. Make yourself feel it, touch it, hear it, smell it, fear it, laugh and weep with it, and your readers will too.