

K.E. Pottie, the award winning author of Code Name Sonny, continues the thrilling story of Henri, Madeline, Charlene and the French partisans as Jack and Emily uncover a plot to attack New York City with a dirty bomb.

Mountains of Fire

By K.E. Pottie

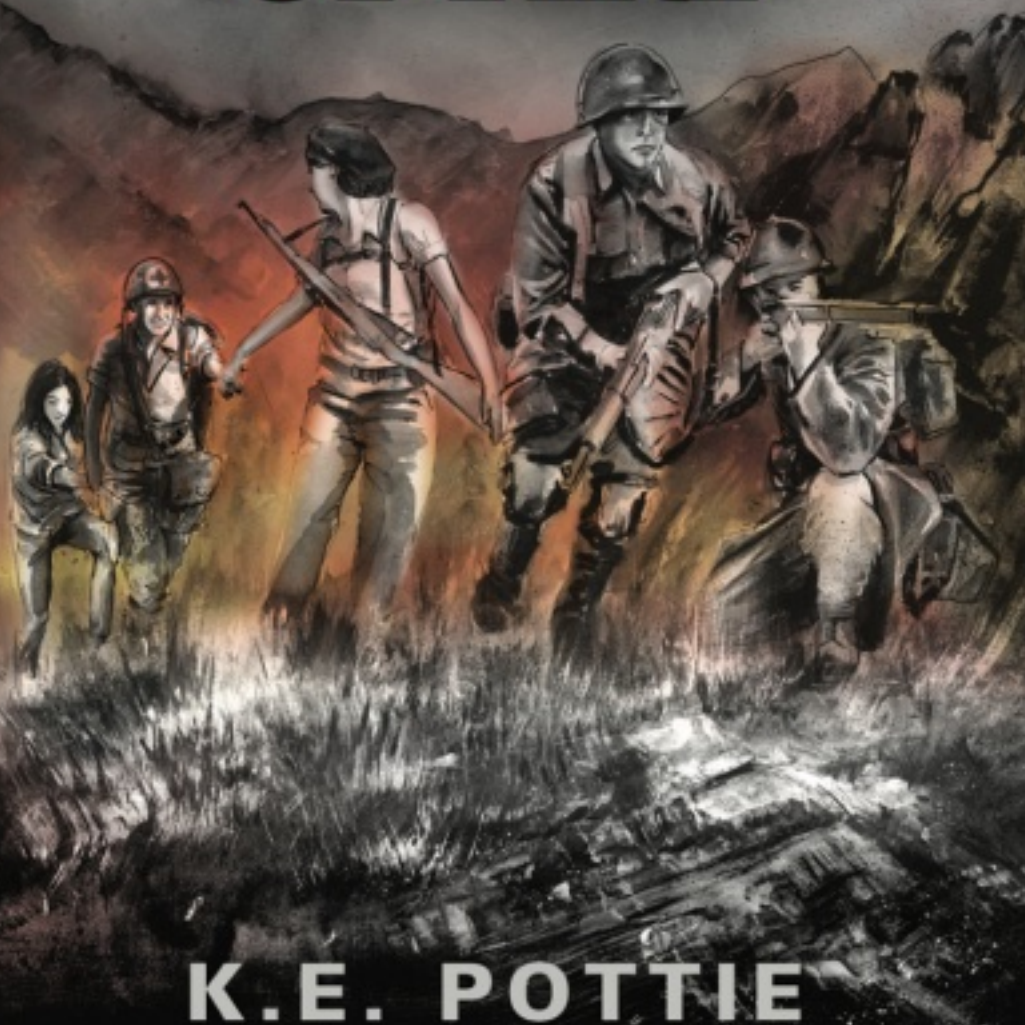
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BOOK TWO OF THE CODE NAME SERIES

MOUNTAINS OF FIRE



K.E. POTTIE

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INFINITY TITLES BY K.E. POTTIE

CODE NAME SONNY

Honorable mention—2012 Hollywood Book Festival.

Code Name Sonny is a brilliantly written story of World War II and the valor of people in the French Resistance. The suspense is first-rate as the plot unfolds to the story's end and will have the readers on the edge of their seats. *Code Name Sonny* should be on everyone's reading list as it is a remarkable, memorable book that will stay in people's minds for a long, long time.

—Alice D., Readers Favorite

Honorable mention—2012 Beach Book Awards.

The book, an engrossing spy thriller, masterfully interweaves past and present with the story of “Sonny” who idealistically joins up in 1944, the experiences he encounters and the fictional story of Sonny's son Jack who discovers surprises and pursuer's from his father's past almost too late to save himself and his family.

—Stacy Trevenon, *Half Moon Bay Review*

Excellent! The plot is rife with duplicity, action, and an ironic twist at the conclusion. The author has woven an intriguing story that will keep you looking forward to every chapter,

K.E. Pottie

whether it is behind enemy lines in France or on the quiet streets of this small American town.

—Bookreview.com

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INTRODUCTION

BY SCOTT GOODALL

AUTHOR OF

THE FREEDOM TRAIL

Let's face it, apart from a few gray-haired crag-rats like myself, the Second World War means very little to our modern generation of happy hikers. Dimly remembered pages in a school history book perhaps, or *The Guns of Navarone* belching flame and smoke for the umpteenth time on television. All something from Grandpa's era, a succession of noble deeds embedded in a savage past, annual ceremonial events to be remembered and paraded on certain specific dates such as Memorial Day and Veterans Day.

But to walk Le Chemin de la Liberté, or "the Freedom Trail," from beginning to end is to bring part of that school history book to life and to experience in a very personal way at least some of the dangers and hardships faced by those men and women who used this high mountain escape route during the last war.

More than sixty years have passed since those far-off days, and sixty years is a helluva long time. To understand how and why Le Chemin came into being, it is important to know certain

historical facts, so for those who came in late, the scenario went something like this...

In the late summer of 1939, a small but particularly nasty German Nazi by the name of Adolf Hitler set out to conquer Europe. Like all megalomaniacs, Hitler was not only bold and ruthless but also extremely efficient. In less than a year, his armies had overrun and occupied Poland, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, and France. By June 1940, the German swastika was flying on every flagpole from the Pyrénées to the Arctic Circle and from the English Channel eastward to the Russian border.

After the invasion of Great Britain (which was expected to take place in a matter of weeks), and a later invasion of Russia, which the German generals were already plotting in secret, Hitler intended to draw up what he called a “New Order” for the ruling and governing of his vast Nazi-dominated empire.

The blueprint was diabolically simple. All Jews and the Slavic races of Eastern Europe were considered by the führer to be the *Untermenschen*, or subhumans, and therefore had no right to live. They would be exterminated. Other conquered peoples, such as the Dutch, Belgians, and French (and eventually the British), would be employed as slave labor for the benefit of the German master race and shipped out to work in factories, mines, and farms.

In France, however, during the early days of occupation, the Germans decided at first to try a velvet-glove approach to their forced labor plans. Using the Vichy French collaborators and public officials as front men, they began by asking for young,

able-bodied volunteers to leave home and work in the German-run factories of Eastern Europe. *La relève* (which means literally a changing or taking over from someone or something) was a deal in which one prisoner of war would be set free in exchange for every hale and hearty volunteer workman who traveled east. Official, long-term contracts were offered, plus good food, wages, and accommodation.

Although the vast majority of Frenchmen refused point-blank, a few did rise to the German bait, tempted no doubt by the prospect of earning enough to feed their starving wives, children, and families back home. But soon the real truth about working conditions began to filter back.

Although all mail between Germany and France was heavily censored, one unemployed tradesman from Toulouse who traveled east to work in a Berlin factory made a special arrangement with his wife. "If," he said, "you receive a letter from me written in black ink, you can believe every word I say. If, however, I write the letter in red ink, you will know I'm lying, and that everything is exactly the opposite of what I have said."

A few weeks later, the man's wife received a letter written in black ink. Her husband, it seemed, was fit, well, and happy. In glowing details, he told his wife how pleased he was to be in Germany. The food was excellent, the pay was good, his overseers were kind, considerate, and helpful, and the work stimulating and not too hard. He had plenty of time off for leisure and shopping. "Here in Berlin," he added as a footnote, "one can buy everything one needs... except red ink."

But in February 1943, off came the velvet glove and down came the iron fist. Infuriated by the near total failure of their volunteer scheme, the Nazi authorities introduced their infamous STO (Service du Travail Obligatoire) decree—in other words, the deportation to German labor camps of all able-bodied males over the age of twenty.

Two million prisoners of war were already toiling for the Third Reich, and the STO decree added millions more. Husbands were separated from their wives and children from their parents, all rounded up by force and shipped out in railway wagons, usually with very little food or water and certainly no sanitary facilities.

Conditions in the labor camps were appalling. Food was desperately short, winter clothing nonexistent, and the hours of work long and hard. Doctors and other medical staff and supplies were rarely, if ever, made available, and as a consequence, disease was rife. It was against this background of hate, misery, and despair that *Le Chemin de la Liberté* came into being.

All over France, thousands of young men were thinking only of escape. Britain had still not been invaded and was carrying on the fight alone. Although its army had been crushed and humiliated, France still retained the will and the courage to resist its hated German masters. *Le tricolore* continued to fly with the Free French Forces in North Africa, and in London, General Charles de Gaulle was doing all in his power to urge his fellow countrymen to join him in a new fight for freedom.

The direction for the vast majority of would-be escapees was south to neutral Spain. Once across the Pyrénées, there was the possibility of easy access to London or North Africa via British-held Gibraltar. After the fall of France, a network of escape lines had sprung up all over Europe. These were designed to help not only escaping civilians but also the ever-increasing number of Allied airmen being shot down during missions over Nazi-occupied Europe.

Several of these major lines were in operation throughout the war (the Comete Line, the Pat O'Leary Line, and the Marie-Claire Line, to name but three), and in each case the procedure was the same: evading aircrew were passed from link to link in the chain by a succession of local "helpers," who clothed, fed, and hid them, usually at great personal risk to themselves.

Having reached the mountains, the men were then hidden in secret collecting areas and formed into groups ready for the final night ascent to the Spanish frontier. Official statistics tell us that during the wartime years and along the entire length of the Pyrenean chain, there were 33,000 successful escapes by Frenchmen alone. Of these, 3,000 never returned home. Approximately 6,000 Allied servicemen (mainly aircrew) also made successful escapes.

Although the main evasion routes used by the Pat O'Leary Line were centered on the Mediterranean coast at Marseille, and the Comete Line concentrated on the Atlantic coast near Bayonne, many other evaders were filtered down through central France to Agen and Toulouse and then on to the central Pyrénées and the starting point of Le Chemin de la Liberté, in

the small town of Saint-Girons. Naturally enough, as the war progressed, many other escape trails sprang up in this part of the Ariège, each one known only to its particular guide or *passeur*. Neighboring towns and villages like Foix, Tarascon, Aulus-les-Bains, Massat, Castillon, Seix, and Seintein all had a network of invisible mountain routes leading upward to the Spanish frontier. Of the 33,000 French *évadés* during the war, 782 of them escaped over the mountains of the Ariège, the high point being in June 1943, when there were 113 successful evasions.

But at the beginning of 1943, due to increased German surveillance and often betrayal by Frenchmen who worked for the feared and hated Vichy-run paramilitary force known as La Milice, ambushes along many of these trails became more and more common. In all, more than a hundred *passeurs* were arrested and deported or shot out of hand as they tried to flee across the mountain slopes.

But even during the years of high surveillance, our Saint-Girons–Esterri escape route via the soaring massif of Mont Valier, stayed operational and remained so until the end of the war.

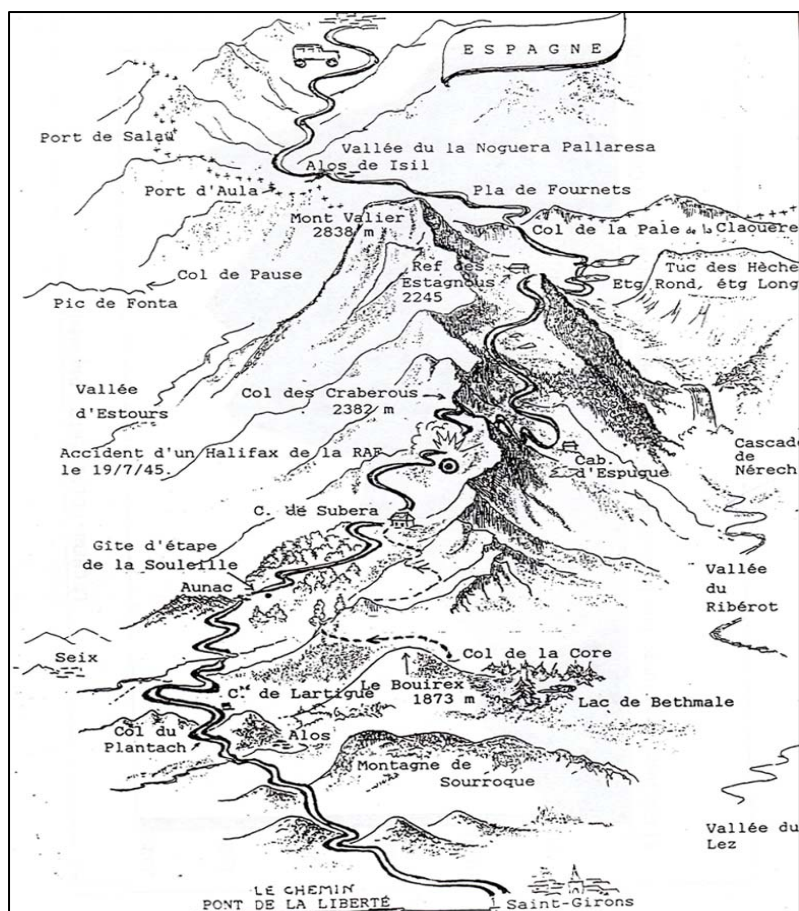
It was reopened and inaugurated in 1994 as an official way-marked hike with a difficulty rating of grade 3 (British equivalent, grade 5).

Bonne chance, bon courage, et bon voyage!

Mountains of Fire

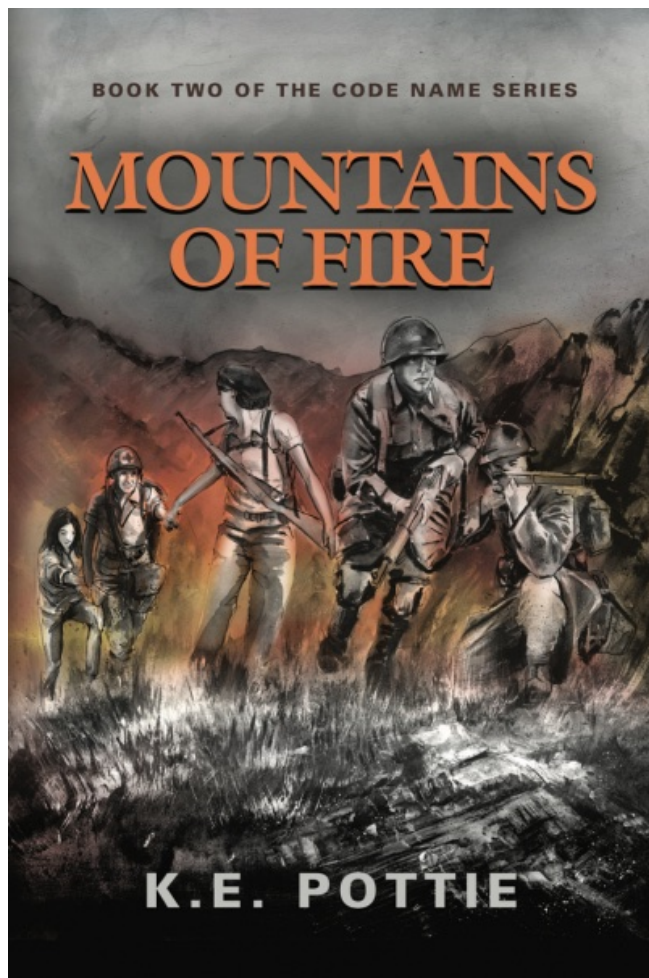


Scott Goodall
Saint-Girons, Ariège, France



IRISH BLESSING

*May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
The rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.*



K.E. Pottie, the award winning author of Code Name Sonny, continues the thrilling story of Henri, Madeline, Charlene and the French partisans as Jack and Emily uncover a plot to attack New York City with a dirty bomb.

Mountains of Fire

By K.E. Pottie

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