



The Great Raid: Rescuing the Doomed Ghosts of Bataan and Corregidor

William B. Breuer

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Before General Douglas MacArthur could fulfill his stirring promise of "I shall return" and re-take the Philippines from Japanese control, a remarkable rescue mission would have to take place. Captured American soldiers had been held at the notorious Cabanatuan prison camp for more than 33 months. Emaciated and ill from brutal mistreatment, a mere 511 POWs remained from the 25,000-strong force that MacArthur had been ordered to abandon on February 23, 1942.

On the morning of January 28, 1945, a small band of Army Rangers set out on an audacious and daring rescue effort: to penetrate 30 miles into Japanese controlled territory, storm the camp, and escape with the POWs, carrying them if necessary.

William B. Breuer recounts in searing, meticulous detail based largely on interviews with survivors the hellish battles of Bataan and Corregidor; the horrors of the Bataan death march; and the harrowing efforts of guerilla fighters. A classic of its kind, *The Great Raid* tells the full story of this episode with a breadth and depth of detail that goes far beyond other accounts including Hampton Sides's best-selling *Ghost Soldiers*.

The Great Raid is a thrilling true-life adventure story and an inspiring testament to American heroism and grit. And as retired four-star General Barry McCaffrey asserts in his introduction, *The Great Raid* is an "important book for our current military and political leaders to read."

The Great Raid: Rescuing the Doomed Ghosts of Bataan and Corregidor Details

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From Reader Review The Great Raid: Rescuing the Doomed Ghosts of Bataan and Corregidor for online ebook

Kathleen Anderson says

I learned so much about WWII in the Philippines, and read this book while we were living in Cebu. Also enjoyed the movie, but the book has a lot more info.

Lynn Demsky says

This book is truly an outstanding history of what happened at Bataan and Corregidor and is 1000% better than the movie. At times the truth just stressed me out so very much that I had to put the book down --- well written, told, plotted and made me cry --- but it needs to be read in honor of all our service people!

Jennefer says

If you've seen the movie you should read the book. There are important parts missing in the movie. You will have a better understanding of what the nurse does in the book. She is/was an amazing woman.

Rhianna Schoonover says

One of my great grandfather's was rescued in the raid on Cabanatuan. I never got the chance to meet him, but through this book I learned a lot about the character of the men who fought to save him and hundreds of other mistreated, starved, abused POWs. From the Alamo Scouts to the Army Rangers to the Philippine Guerrillas, each and every man and woman and child that helped save those 300+ lives deserves to have their story known to the world. I'm grateful to Mr. Breuer for having written this book, to have told this story when all too often it is a forgotten part of WWII Pacific history.

Steve says

Besides Hampton Side's Ghost Soldiers, To me this is the second best book I have read about the POW rescue at Cabanatuan by the United States Army 6th Ranger division. I like how the events were broken down in a sequence of events. Many of the POW's in the camp were beaten, tortured, or were put to death by the Japanese. Lt. Col. Henry Mucci led the Rangers on the raid to rescue the POW's.

Erik Ronningen says

Great book, incredible story. I was inspired by the way the Filipino natives readily gave up their most valued

possessions to help the POWs, rather like what the church is supposed to do for each other.

Andrea says

Amazing story. Probably needed to focus in more on the individual lives involved in the raid, rather than telling the whole story of WWII in the Phillipines.

Jennifer Worry says

This book is based upon the true events of one of the worst moments in military history. There are parts of this book that are quite disturbing and graphic, so if you cannot handle something like that then I suggest that you do not read this book. However it is an amazing story to read. It is simply an amazing story in itself. Breuer did an excellent job of capturing the emotions and the impact of what these POWs were forced to endure. If you like military history then this is most definitely a book for you.

Elliott Bagg says

What an amazing story, what happened to Americans and Filipinos during WW2 at the hands of the Japanese is truly horrifying, and something that should be more well taught in school history classes. From the downfall of the Phillipines as the Japanese overtook it, to the resistance tactics and horrendous conditions of those suffering in POW camps or rounded up by the Japanese police, to the raid itself, is one of those slices of history that feels closer to fantastical fiction, the fact that it happened is insane. This is a book for history fans and EVERYONE else!

Silvana says

Although not as amazing as Band of Brothers (Stephen Ambrose), this book still has its own greatness. Yes, I think one or two years ago, there was a movie released that was based on this book (there's Benjamin Bratt, Joseph Fiennes in it), but the movie really sucked.

Anyway, this is compulsory for all you military history buffs. It tells about the greatest rescue mission in the history of US Army: the rescue of 511 POWs by US Rangers, Alamo Scout and Phillipine guerillas from the horrible Camp Cabanatuan during the World War II. That's not all, this book also tells about the horror of the Bataan Death March after the US surrender to Japan in Corregidor & Bataan. I'm sure everybody knows about MacArthur's famous words: I shall return. He escaped to Australia while waiting in vain for the US government's decision to reinforce his troops (which was neglected eventually because they wanted to concentrate to demolish Hitler).

One thing interesting is that although the US finally won the Pacific War, the natives, in this case the Phillipines who suffered and fought hand in hand with the US troops was taken for granted in the end. Do you know that the US provided more than US\$ 30 million of post-war fund for Yugoslavia (soon to be an ally of US' Cold War nemesis) while the Phillipines only received US\$ 3 million? Geez...

Richard Bunaskavich says

Interesting book

David says

A detailed and well-documented account of events leading up to the mission and of the rescue. I always learn so much about our history from reading accounts such as this one. I gave it four stars because it is a little dry and filled with references from individuals involved. Not that the references make it bad, they just make reading it less engulging. I'm still glad I read this book!

Drew Davis says

If you are a fan of military history read this book. This true story is about the greatest generation's bravery, ingenuity, and courage in the rescuing of POW's held captive in the Philippines during World War II. The way in which the rescue operation was organized and executed is still used as the model for current special forces teams around the world. Not only does this book talk about the rescue of the POW's it delves into the lives of the POW's during their captivity and before and after their capture. Overall a great read.

Sylvia Andersen says

Excellent account of the war in the Pacific and the horrors of internment camps run by the Japanese.

Realini says

The Great Raid, based on books by William Breuer and Hampton Sides

This film has a promising tagline and a few superlatives for the real story on which the screenplay is based- "the most daring rescue mission of our time", after the worst defeat in the history of American interventions and a cast with appreciated actors and a few very good actresses.

The attack on Pearl Harbor is well known and has been presented in a number of motion pictures, but the events leading to this narrative and the tale in this film have been ignored before and it is a pity that this production does not make a better retelling of what is a compelling episode.

In the introduction to The Great Raid, we learn that the advancing Japanese in the Philippines, without support, have pushed American soldiers back until they had the sea at the back and the enemy in front and General Douglas MacArthur had to sail to Australia, vowing to come back.

The Japanese have been very cruel with their prisoners of war, in the Philippines and elsewhere, in large part because they were very harsh on themselves and in battle they would inflict upon themselves the ultimate penalty, if caught they would commit seppuku aka hara-kiri.

Therefore, they did not regard with any respect enemy troops that surrendered and exposed them to humiliation, starvation, torture and execution in incredibly large numbers, many dying on the way to the Cabanatuan Camp.

Another explanation would add light to this behavior and we can find it in a psychology classic called *Influence*, written by the outstanding Robert Cialdini, who lists the principles of determining people to act- one of them is respect for authority that leads participants in tests to inflict pain on innocents, just because a figure with authority says so.

The Great Raid reminds one of *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, because in that much better, acclaimed masterpiece, we also have the Japanese imposing various cruelties on Prisoners of War, British in *The Bridge* and with a plot that is somewhat explained in the title- it is not about freeing POWs, but about cutting an important piece of infrastructure off the transportation grid.

In 1945, about five hundred American prisoners have been interned and maltreated for three years, under terrible conditions, after many of their comrades have died on the way to this infamous camp.

Many are sick and dying, medicine is unavailable and this means slow death for a good number, including Major Gibson aka Ralph Fiennes, who is kept alive only through the efforts of the resistance and the beautiful Margaret Utinsky, who smuggle some desperately needed pills in the camp.

All this comes to a near final end, when the Japanese find an informant who points out the members of the underground operation, all of them taken out and shot with the exception of Margaret, who has some time left before she is also taken into custody, first pressed to talk and receive some advantages and then, as she does not give in, she is tortured and made to see all the bodies of her dead comrades.

The enemy military police turn to Major Gibson, whose photograph they had found in the bible owned by Margaret Utinsky, trying to convince him to give all the information he has, in exchange for the release of the beautiful woman and the medicine he so badly needs, without which he will die soon.

The dying officer is proud, brave, resilient, loyal, and strong- in spite of the weakness of the decaying body, his spirit is still fearsome and formidable- and he refuses the offer to collaborate and send others to death, saying that his fate does not depend on the man who tries to push him to lose his soul.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Mucci aka Benjamin Bratt and Captain Robert Prince aka James Franco are making plans for their 6th Ranger Battalion to push behind enemy lines and rescue the prisoners of war kept for the last three years in awful conditions in the Japanese camp.

They have the cooperation and support of the Philippine resistance forces that are first assigned a rather less important role in the plans, but faced with superior forces, more enemy soldiers and tanks that were not expected, the locals are given crucial roles and indeed, they prove quintessential in the fight.

The Japanese have had a superior, arrogant and racist attitude in occupied territories, including on these islands, where the commander of the local forces is smart and uses this attitude of inconsideration to his advantage and he would eliminate many enemy combatants and their heavy equipment, near a vital bridge.

Long scenes are dedicated to the preliminary moves and then the attack itself, which is well organized, but it involves fierce clashes, the Americans and their Philippine allies do not have tanks and they are exposed in their attack, while the enemies benefit from some cover, in their admittedly vulnerable, light structured buildings.

You can imagine a lot of machine gun fire, some anti-tank, and hand held bazookas, light bombardment, battle scenes that are fought hand to hand, with knives and fists used to kill opponents, explosions and the heroic extraction of wounded, unable to walk prisoners, some of whom have to be carried away.

The reasons why this motion picture has passed rather unnoticed could be listed, ranging from unexceptional acting, in spite of the presence of talented artists, to the lackluster adaptation for the screen and, perhaps, the familiarity of the subject, even if this particular operation had been unrelated, we have all seen quite a few war movies and the feeling can be that they resemble each other, from a certain point on.

Lauren says

Fascinating read for those interested in WW2 and/or history.

Kim says

The fighting on Luzon in the Philippines from a slightly different perspective from Tears in the Darkness (TitD). It does represent a much kinder view of General MacArthur. It also describes the establishment of the Army Rangers and Alamo Scout companies of the war. I'm glad I read TitD first because it was more personal and made it easier to then expand out a little and understand the wheres and whos of this story. Nice read.

Cody Bushee says

this is a great books..lot of information

Matthew says

Great informative book, full of tales of courage, determination and bravery.
It is a real same how the POW were treated by the American government after returning.

Nancy says

This book had special meaning as an aunt was held as a civilian POW at Bilbao prison with survivors of the death march.
