



Ghost Soldiers: The Epic Account of World War II's Greatest Rescue Mission

By Hampton Sides

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“The greatest World War II story never told” (*Esquire*)—an enthralling account of the heroic mission to rescue the last survivors of the Bataan Death March.

On January 28, 1945, 121 hand-selected U.S. troops slipped behind enemy lines in the Philippines. Their mission: March thirty rugged miles to rescue 513 POWs languishing in a hellish camp, among them the last survivors of the infamous Bataan Death March. A recent prison massacre by Japanese soldiers elsewhere in the Philippines made the stakes impossibly high and left little time to plan the complex operation.

In **Ghost Soldiers** Hampton Sides vividly re-creates this daring raid, offering a minute-by-minute narration that unfolds alongside intimate portraits of the prisoners and their lives in the camp. Sides shows how the POWs banded together to survive, defying the Japanese authorities even as they endured starvation, tropical diseases, and torture. Harrowing, poignant, and inspiring, **Ghost Soldiers** is the mesmerizing story of a remarkable mission. It is also a testament to the human spirit, an account of enormous bravery and self-sacrifice amid the most trying conditions.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

The Bataan Death March was just the beginning of the woes American soldiers captured by the Japanese army in the Philippines had to endure. The survivors of the march faced not only their captors' regular brutality (having surrendered, they were considered to be less than honorable foes), but also a host of illnesses such as dysentery and malaria. For three years these "ghost soldiers" lived in misery, suffering terrible losses.

When Army Rangers among Douglas MacArthur's forces arrived in the Philippines, they hatched a daring plan to liberate their captured comrades, a mission that, if successful, would prove to be a tremendous morale booster at the front and at home. Led by a young officer named Henry Mucci (called "Little MacArthur" for his constant pipe as well as his brilliance as a strategist), a combined Ranger and Filipino guerrilla force penetrated far behind enemy lines, attacked Japanese forces guarding Allied prisoners at a jungle outpost called Cabanatuan, and shepherded hundreds of prisoners to safety, with an angry Japanese army in hot pursuit. Amazingly, they suffered only light casualties.

In *Ghost Soldiers*, journalist Hampton Sides recounts that daring rescue, once known to every American schoolchild but now long forgotten. A gifted storyteller, Sides packs his narrative with detailed descriptions of the principal actors on both sides of the struggle and with moments of danger and exhilaration. Thrilling from start to finish, his book celebrates the heroism of hundreds of warriors and brings renewed attention to one of the Rangers' finest hours. --*Gregory McNamee*

From Publishers Weekly

Popular writer and *Outside* columnist Sides (*Stomping Grounds*) interviewed participants in one of WWII's little-known exploits: the rescue of 500 American and Allied POWs from Cabanatuan prison camp on the Philippine island of Luzon. This gripping account intertwines the tale of these prisoners, who were survivors of the horrible Bataan Death March in 1942, and 121 officers and men of the army's Sixth Ranger Battalion. Led by Colonel Henry Mucci and Captain Robert Prince, these Rangers, who had yet to taste active combat, trekked 30 miles behind Japanese lines to effect the rescue, haunted all the while by the knowledge that if their secret mission was leaked, the POWs would probably be massacred by their captors. Sides includes the heroic efforts of Claire Phillips and other resistance fighters to keep the Americans supplied with accurate intelligence, and the scores of villagers who helped the POWs to safety. Some Alamo Scouts and two Filipino guerrilla groups provided no small assistance to Mucci and his men. The raid itself was almost anticlimactic as the Rangers burst into the POW compound, eliminating the garrison and bringing out the inmates in less than half an hour. It's a tale worthy of a Hollywood movie (and film rights have been optioned by Universal). The author's excellent grasp of human emotions and bravery makes this compelling book hard to put down. (May 15) Forecast: This is for fans of *Flags of Our Fathers* who have been waiting for another installment. First serial rights have been sold to Esquire, and the author is booked on the Today Show. With more exposure like that, and with blurbs coming from the likes of David Halberstam and Jon Krakauer, this should sell hugely.

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From Library Journal

Reports by survivors of a massacre of prisoners in the Palawan, Phillipines, prisoner-of-war stockade prompted U.S. Army leaders to send a small mobile force to another prisoner-of-war camp and liberate the inmates before their Japanese Army guards could repeat the action. The Cabantuan prisoners were the remnants of the benighted force left on Bataan three years before and forced to march without provisions and endure atrocities along the way to their encampment a brutal trek later known as the Bataan Death March. Highly motivated, fit, well provisioned, and trained for this kind of action, the 6th Ranger Battalion had orders to bring out the camp inmates, "even if you have to carry them on your backs." Reinforced with local guerillas, the detachment executed a forced march of 30 miles behind enemy lines in just a day, then organized the attack and-. Since this story is written in a voice that makes us continually guess the outcome, it would seem unfair to continue with a story outline. Outside contributor Sides (Stomping Grounds) gives us insight into the hardships of such a venture, and with recollections from the participants and historical background this becomes a richly written document of the last year of World War II.

- *Mel D. Lane, Sacramento, CA*

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