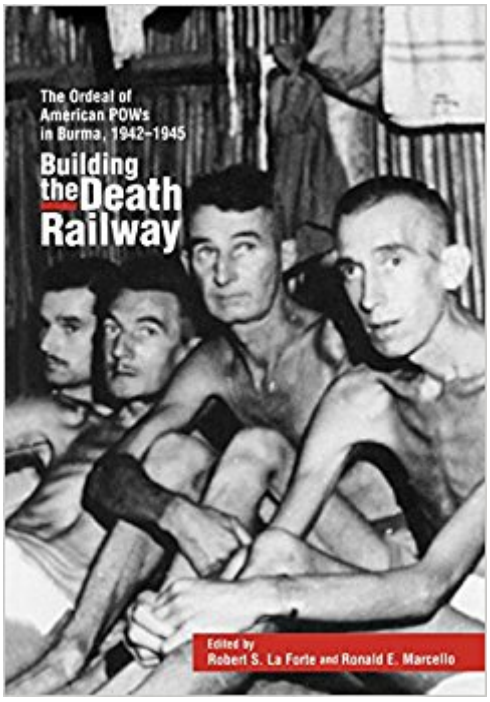
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Building The Death Railway: The Ordeal Of American Pows In Burma, 1942-1945 (48)



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Synopsis

The Oscar-winning movie 'Bridge Over the River Kwai' dramatized to millions the building of the infamous Japanese 'Death Railway' - the supply line for Japan's planned invasion of India during World War II. But the movie told only part of the story, giving the impression that all men working on the line were British. In fact, 668 Americans - serving on the USS Houston and with the Texas National Guard's Second Battalion - worked alongside the other Allied troops in the jungle camps. In 'Building the Death Railway', their story is told for the first time. In 22 interviews with American survivors, we learn the details of their lengthy ordeal. Disease, punishment, camaraderie, work conditions and attempts to escape are described by the men who were there. The story begins with their capture and ends with their liberation 42 months later. The Burma-Thailand 'Death Railway' was one of the most horrible sentences a prisoner of war could endure. Thousands died in the jungles of Burma. More than 130 Americans - one man in five - never returned home, victims of neglect, abuse, starvation and disease. 'Building the Death Railway' gives the American perspective on events that shocked the world.

Book Information

Series: 48

Hardcover: 328 pages

Publisher: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; First Edition edition (January 1, 1993)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 084202428X

ISBN-13: 978-0842024280

Product Dimensions: 6.5 x 1.1 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.5 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,044,490 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #98 inÃ Â Books > History > Military > Prisoners of War #1527 inÃ Â Books > History > Asia > Japan #8952 inÃ Â Books > History > Military > World War II

Customer Reviews

The 22 survivors of Japanese prisoner-of-war camps represented here are either former crewmen aboard the U.S.S. Houston or members of the 133rd Field Artillery Battalion. All were incarcerated in the same camps throughout most of WW II. Tough, Depression-bred men, they recount their wartime experiences with fierce emotion but no self-pity despite extreme suffering. With virtually no

medical care available, most contracted malaria, dysentery and tropical ulcers. All suffered prolonged starvation (one in five of the 688 Americans in the group portrayed died in captivity). Each survivor recounts the details of his capture, the claustrophobic voyage from the collection point in Java to the infamous Chagi Prison in Singapore, the slave-labor toil on the Burma-Thailand Railroad (an ordeal dramatized in the 1957 film Bridge on the River Kwai), and their eventual liberation in 1945. The editors, who both teach history at the University of North Texas, offer enlightening speculation as to the reasons for Japanese cruelty toward POWs, and also on the relationship between the survival of these particular men and their Texas upbringing. Copyright 1992 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

"Our camp was built in a mudhole. You're in mud and filth all the time, and in the jungle everything is decaying vegetation. So any scratch you'd get would become infected by nightfall". -Charley L. Pryor USMC, USS Houston. The Oscar-winning movie The Bridge on The River Kwai dramatized to millions the building of the infamous Japanese "Death Railway" - the supply line for Japan's planned invasion of India during World War II. But the movie only told us part of the story, giving the impression that all the men working on the line were British. Actually, 668 Americans-serving on the USS Houston and with the Texas National Guard's Second Battalion - worked along side the other Allied troops in the jungle camps. In Building The Death Railway their story is told for the first time. As only they can tell it. In 22 interviews with American survivors we learn the details of their lengthy ordeal. Disease, punishment, camaraderie, work conditions, and attempts to escape are described by the men who were there. Beginning with their capture and ending with their liberation 42 months later, the men remember how it was. The Burma-Thailand "Death Railway" was one of the most horrible sentences that a prisoner of war could endure. Thousands died in the jungles of Burma. More than 130 Americans - one man in five - never returned home, victims of neglect, abuse, starvation, and disease. A story of human generosity amid the greatest cruelty, Building the Death Railway gives the American perspective on events that shocked the world.

This book is especially interesting if you want true knowledge of what happened to the men that were held captive 3 1/2 years by the Japanese. The horrific stories and the ability to survive is phenominal.

Having read a number of books (memoirs) of Japanese pow experiences, I found this one surprisingly unique. It documents the exact words of prisoners, as transcribed from their personal

oral interviews. Indeed, the "author" notes that he did not write the book, but merely edited it.

A must read for anyone wanting to keep alive the sacrifices so many made for us at a time when democrats weren't cowards.

I was privileged to know, albeit briefly, one of the American men cited in this book -- a fellow Texan I am proud to say.This fascinating and revolting book fully illuminates why it was absolutely necessary to vaporize two cities in the society which produced the monsters responsible for the "Greater Southeast Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere." They all deserve to rest not in peace, but in the Bad Place... forever and ever Amen.

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