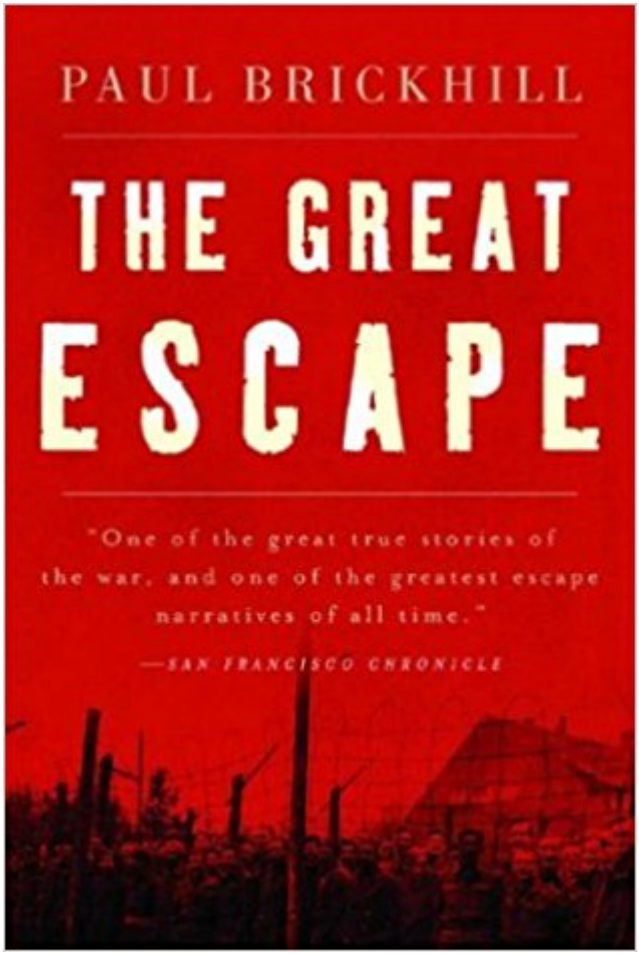
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The Great Escape



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Synopsis

"A tense, thrilling, fabulous tale."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Philadelphia Inquirer They were American and British air force officers in a German prison camp. With only their bare hands and the crudest of homemade tools, they sank shafts, forged passports, faked weapons, and tailored German uniforms and civilian clothes. They developed a fantastic security system to protect themselves from German surveillance. It was a split-second operation as delicate and as deadly as a time bomb. It demanded the concentrated devotion and vigilance of more than six hundred menÃ¢â ¬â ¢every one of them, every minute, every hour, every day and night for more than a year. Made into the classic movie starring Steve McQueen. 16 pages of photographs

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“One of the great true stories of the war, and one of the greatest escape narratives of all time.Ã¢â ¬Â• - San Francisco ChronicleÃ¢â ¬Å“Absorbing... spine-tingling... puts the average war book so far in the shadow it’s not even funny.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Dallas Times-HeraldÃ¢â ¬Å“For sheer suspense, puts the fictioneers to shame.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Boston Globe

With only their bare hands and the crudest of homemade tools, they sank shafts, built underground railroads, forged passports, drew maps, faked weapons, and tailored German uniforms and civilian clothes.They developed a fantastic security system to protect themselves from the German "ferrets" who prowled the compounds with nerve-racking tenacity and suspicion.It was a split-second operation as delicate and as deadly as a time bomb. It demanded the concentrated devotion and

vigilance of more than six hundred men -- every single one of them, every minute, every hour, every day, and every night for more than a year. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Mr. Brickhill doesn’t know how to write very well, but he doesn’t really need to because the subject stands up pretty well on its own. The book has a "sameness" about it all throughout because every chapter sounds exactly like the last one. Brickhill can’t write dialogue and literary description fails him so it’s too bad they didn’t get a ghostwriter to help him out because like I said, he does have quite a story to tell. There was one aspect to the story that I found curious. Brickhill along with the other prisoners was shocked that many of the escapees were shot. He blathers on about the Geneva Convention and how this is in violation of that, but really, what in &^%&& did he/they expect? The Germans were murdering civilians and Slavic soldiers right and left. Brickhill knew this b/c he mentions how a Czech family who hid Roger Bushell in Prague was summarily executed when the Gestapo found out. That doesn’t seem to phase him. But killing Brits does. The German high command was psychotic and it was just a matter of time before the Allied POWs felt the brunt of it. I found his reaction and the reaction of his compatriots to the mass shooting disingenuous and extremely naive.

Australian Paul Brickhill, a Spitfire pilot who flew in World War Ii in RAF’s 92 Squadron, and that was shot down and taken prisoner in Tunisia in 1943, wrote three famous books in his career after the war: REACH FOR THE SKY (the Douglas Bader history), THE DAM BUSTERS (about RAF’s 617 Squadron and the raids against the German dams in the Ruhr), and THE GREAT ESCAPE (about the famous escape from a German Air Force personnel prisoner camp in Sagan).Although all three were made into movies, THE GREAT ESCAPE is by far the most well known, basically due to the fact that it received the "full Hollywwod treatment" (for better or for worse), in the film of the same name released in 1963. And also, of course, because of the sheer atrocity committed by the Nazis against the fugitives.Brickhill is a fact teller. You will not find much about specific characters, deep emotions, despair or whatever. It’s basically a description about what the almost 600 hundred people involved in any manner with the escape attempt worked. There were the "stooges" (security), the forgers, the compass makers, the tailors, the planners, the bribers, of course, the diggers!The book goes all the way until the day of the escape, which was doomed since the beginning: terrifying cold outside; not being capable to find the railway access to buy train tickets, in the night; the exit hole being outside the forest surrounding the camp; frozen ground delaying the

opening of the exiting hole by one hour and a half; some sand falls in the tunnel...The result is that Roger Bushell (the master planner) and other leaders (Group Captain Massey, Wings Day) knew before hand that almost everybody would get caught, mainly the 'hardarsers" (people that eould try to escape by foot and that did not speak German). Their main aim was simply to act according to the officers code, trying to escape and harrassing the enemy anyway they could.The trouble is that, even in their worst dreams, the fugitives never thought they were going to be shot. Maybe Roger Bushell knew he COULD be executed, but all the others don't. Roger was such a Tasmanian devil, that the Germans had had enough. He was considered almost a saboteur. Caught in civilian clothes trying to escape, it was all they needed to shot him.Only three men managed to escape: two Norwegian flghter pilots made the ultimate perfect escape, and in a couple dyas were already in England. The other man took longer, going through Spain, and reached England intact.Then, the book goes about the hunt for the executioners, vile Gestapo men most of them. Mostly, it was not the case of "receiving orders". Most of them received the orders and did the killings wih gusto. "Heroically" shooting people in the back of the dead.... Fifteen men were executed in 1948. Other men were found guilty in later years, but their death sentences were comuted to life imprisonment. Hard feelings were already going low...As for the movie, it is what is: Hollywood. A classic, yes, but once you read the book, you will get a little bit angry about the movie. Firts: there were no Americans amongst the 76 fugitives (and the movie inlcude two main American characters, McQueen and James Garner); there were no runaways with motorcycle or planes (two of the most important moments of the movie); the 50 men executed were not shot at once, in the same place (it was in pairs or four at the most, in different places); there is no German character other than the commandat, and in the book there are at least two strong German guards (Rubberneck, for example). However, I understand they had to create dialogues and and composite characters, because, other than Roger Bushell's single mindedness, Brickhill gives the reader almost nothing in terms of character traits.A very good book, deservedly placed among the classics of World War II literature.

So the wife was out of town for awhile and I saw the movie was going to be on TCM. Excellent. Settled in, fire in the fireplace, munchies close at hand, and watched it. Even watched the credits. And that's when I found it was based on the book. If I ever knew that, I had forgotten about it. So how cool is it that we've had things like around for the last 20 years and we can easily look up and order the book? And then supplement it with pictures and other information from the actual location?Anyway, this is supposed to be about the book. It isn't that big, it probably never won any

awards for great writing style, but what it does do is tell the story clearly and succinctly the series of events surrounding the conception, planning and execution of the escape as well as the aftermath. The book fills in a lot more details left out of the movie, such as the document forgeries and tunnel construction, as well as tunnel collapses. It also goes into the personal details of the people involved. Basically, it accomplishes what it set out to do: relate the story of a group of people who, even though they were imprisoned, continued to fight the war despite the consequences.

The movie "The Great Escape" is based on this book.....after watching the movie off and on over the past 45 years I thought it was time to actually read about the actual events from a survivor and the author of the book the movie is based on!!! Awesome is all I can say!!!

Interesting. Good background

We loved this book. It kept us on the edge of our seats, needing to know what happened next. Fascinating story, but, considering how many actually escaped and survived, I think the title is far too "enthusiastic". I had to keep reminding myself that it wasn't fiction, that it really and truly happened. Amazing story.

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