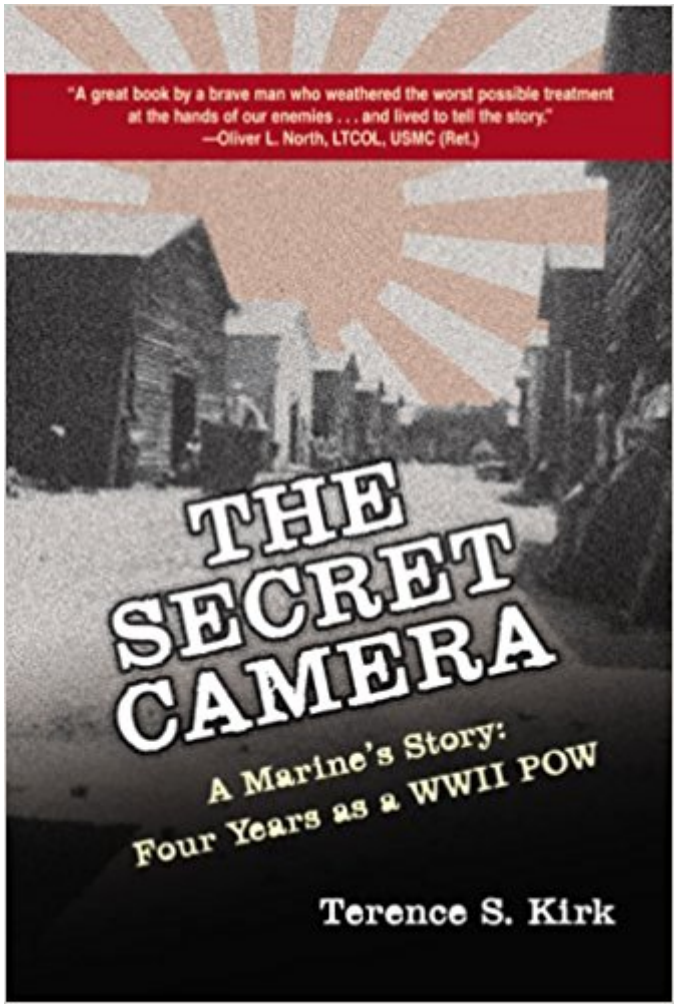
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The Secret Camera: A Marine's Story: Four Years As A POW



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Synopsis

"They may be the only images in existence of American prisoners in Japanese prisoner camps. And they sat unpublished for more than fifty years, apparently ignored by a U.S. government that seemed indifferent to the atrocities the images documented."--Fort Worth WeeklyOn the day the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, the twenty-three marines stationed in North China were at the peak of physical condition. They were young, brave men who were willing to die to defend their country. But on that day, they were forced to surrender to the Japanese and spent the rest of the war-all 1,355 days-as POWs. They didn't know the statistic that stated a marine was 17.5 times more likely to die in a Japanese prison camp than in battle-or that 38 percent of all Americans captured by the Japanese died in labor camps. But they were soon to find out on their own. The Secret Camera is the true story of how one North China marine struggled for survival. From his capture on Pearl Harbor Day, through the bombing of Nagasaki, Corporal Terence S. Kirk spent years as slave labor for the Japanese war machine. Watching himself and his fellow marines wither from strapping young men to mere skeletons, ravaged by starvation, abuse, and disease, he decided to make a difference-by recording the atrocities they all endured. With the help of a Japanese interpreter and a handful of other brave marines, Kirk managed to build a pinhole camera from scraps of cardboard, take a handful of photos, and then hide them away until the end of the war. These are the only photos ever taken inside a Japanese POW camp. A record of courage, faith, and ingenuity, his is a story of heroism, unimaginable adversity, and the will to survive.His photos sat unpublished for more than fifty years, ignored by a U.S. government that seemed indifferent to the atrocities the images documented. But Kirk would not let them languish, and this book is his legacy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"They may be the only images in existence of American prisoners in Japanese prisoner camps. And they sat unpublished for more than fifty years, apparently ignored by a U.S. government that seemed indifferent to the atrocities the images documented."--Fort Worth Weekly

Terence Kirk, a retired master gunnery sergeant, served thirty years in the U.S. Marine Corps, nearly four years of which were in a Japanese POW camp. He lives in Walnut Springs, Texas.

It was a gross miscarriage of justice for the U.S. government to "order" these men not to talk about their experiences immediately after the war. In Guam on the way back to the U.S., Kirk and other POW’s were made to sign a "governnent-issued gag order" under threat of punishment and prosecution. (Kirk’s photos should have been used at the Tokyo War Crimes trials.) The official silencing played into these men being ignored and brushed aside in the Treaty of Japan in 1952, too, when the Occupation ended. Corporal Kirk, for example, had been made to do slave labor for Seitetsu Steel, which is now Nippon Steel. There should have been the opportunity for claims to be made as a part of the Treaty, and proper redress by the many private Japanese companies that profited, including Mitsubishi, Mitsui, and Sumitomo, among many others. These men were sold out by the U.S. government, while other governments treated their former POW’s with more respect. The Dutch government, for example, worked out a separate agreement for Japanese compensation.Kirk was with a small detachment of only 23 marines in Chinwangtao, China, who were surrounded by an overwhelming force of thousands of Japanese and forced to surrender immediately in the hours after Pearl Harbor, without the opportunity even of entering the fight. Like the Wake Islanders -- some of whom he met and names -- he was transported to Japan very early in the war. Kirk’s memory for details and even specific conversations is excellent, indicating that these experiences were undoubtedly burned into his memory.Though not quite as graphic as, for example, "DEVIL AT MY HEELS" and some other POW accounts, there is great drama throughout the ordeal of daily survival in this book. The photos are amazing. The flow and narrative are terrific for the reader; it’s "better than a movie!" You may not want to put this book down after you start reading. The way that he pulls off finding suitable darkroom conditions within a prison camp, in order to both cut plates (they were the wrong size for his camera!) and change plates between exposures,

is an incredible story of personal bravery. Doing this right under the nose of the Japanese sentries, he came razor's edge close to being caught in the act and would have undoubtedly been shot or beheaded.As if that were not enough of cheating death, Kirk very nearly got nuked! His POW camp in Japan was the initial target for the second A-bomb on August 9! The B-29 was overhead with the bomb, ready to go. I will leave it to the reader to find out the whole string of miraculous errors, fate, human decisions, and luck that saved Corporal Kirk and the men with him there in those last days.Highly, highly recommended, with deep appreciation for all of the Allied POW's who made the effort to write and leave their accounts of their time in Japanese POW camps. This really should be made into an accurate movie and shown in every high school in the U.S.

A book worth reading, great insight to what soldiers went through for us to have the freedom we have today. At a time when most people are giving away their freedom...sometimes even unknowingly...this is sobering reminder of what we could face if our freedom is lost or given away.

This book is a realistic view of living in a Japanese prison camp during WWII. It also is a man's very creative way to document what happened during his four years as a POW.I served with this man at Camp Pendleton,after the war, and he was an exceptional person. He was a living lesson to all of us that man can survive man's inhumanity to man.

Good read

Its OK

Good book. Fairly well written, and holds your attention.This compliments the book titled "Unbroken" which is even a better book to read.

Wow, what an exciting read.

It was an interesting first hand account of how prisoner's were handled during WWII. The camera was actually a small part of the story. I would recommend reading this book.

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