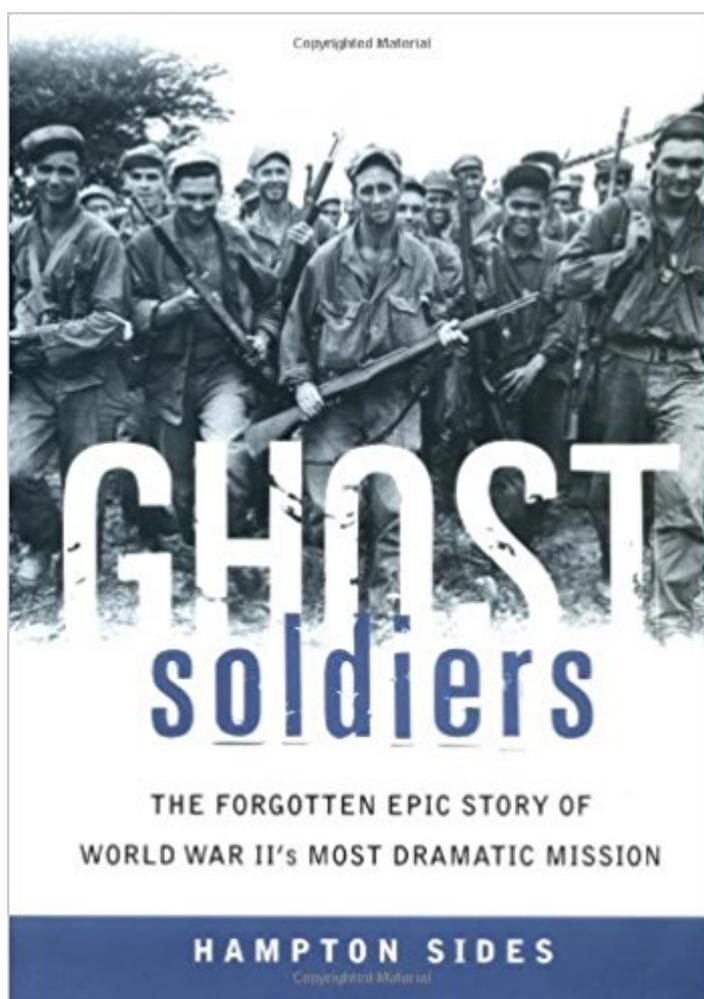


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# Ghost Soldiers: The Forgotten Epic Story Of World War II's Most Dramatic Mission



## Synopsis

A tense, powerful, grand account of one of the most daring exploits of World War II. On January 28, 1945, 121 hand-selected troops from the elite U.S. Army 6th Ranger Battalion slipped behind enemy lines in the Philippines. Their mission: March thirty miles in an attempt to rescue 513 American and British POWs who had spent three years in a surreally hellish camp near the city of Cabanatuan. The prisoners included the last survivors of the Bataan Death March left in the camp, and their extraordinary will to live might soon count for nothing elsewhere in the Philippines, the Japanese Army had already executed American prisoners as it retreated from the advancing U.S. Army. As the Rangers stealthily moved through enemy-occupied territory, they learned that Cabanatuan had become a major transshipment point for the Japanese retreat, and instead of facing the few dozen prison guards, they could possibly confront as many as 8,000 battle-hardened enemy troops. Hampton Sides's vivid minute-by-minute narration of the raid and his chronicle of the prisoners' wrenching experiences are masterful. But *Ghost Soldiers* is far more than a thrilling battle saga. Hampton Sides explores the mystery of human behavior under extreme duress—the resilience of the prisoners, who defied the Japanese authorities even as they endured starvation, tropical diseases, and unspeakable tortures; the violent cultural clashes with Japanese guards and soldiers steeped in the warrior ethic of Bushido; the remarkable heroism of the Rangers and Filipino guerrillas; the complex motivations of the U.S. high command, some of whom could justly be charged with abandoning the men of Bataan in 1942; and the nearly suicidal bravado of several spies, including priests and a cabaret owner, who risked their lives to help the prisoners during their long ordeal. At once a gripping depiction of men at war and a compelling story of redemption, *Ghost Soldiers* joins such landmark books as *Flags of Our Fathers*, *The Greatest Generation*, *The Rape of Nanking*, and *D-Day* in preserving the legacy of World War II for future generations.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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

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. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

*Ghost Soldiers* is a remarkable book by a remarkable author. Hampton Sides brings to life the courage and strength of the POWs from the U.S. and other countries in the face of shocking atrocities by the Japanese in the Philippines during WWII. Sides describes the daring rescue of more than 500 POWs at Cabanatuan prison camp in such detail that you almost feel that you are part of it. I couldn't put the book down.

A TALE OF DARING DO AND AMERICAN COURAGE. AN AMERICAN COMMANDO FORCE SEEKS TO SAVE 500 ALLIED POW'S FROM THE MUDEROUS RAGE OF THEIR JAPANESE CAPTORS. A STORY THAT MUST BE READ AND APPRECIATED BY ALL AMERICANS. THE MOVIE WAS AND IS ONE OF MY FAVORITES. THE RAID STARING BENJAMIN BRAT AND JAMES FRANCO IS A MUST SEE.

I'm an American living in Philippines now, and I have visited the site of and memorial to the Cabanatuan POW camp that was liberated by brave US Rangers, supported by fearless Filipino soldiers. Around 500 already sick and dying American prisoners were freed from their brutal Japanese captors as the US began the re-taking of the Islands in Jan. 1945. With good reason, the US believed the Japanese would execute the prisoners, rather than allow for their liberation. They had slaughtered 150 Americans just a few weeks previous to this rescue mission, down on the island of Palawan. When MacArthur's command learned of this, it acted, and moved decisively. So, this daring plan was pulled together in two short days, and successfully executed. Dozens of things COULD have gone wrong, as these brave men slipped into enemy territory to save their tortured brothers. It is a story that needs to be more widely known and honored, so I urge readers to get this book!

I read this on the heels of "My Hitch in Hell," by Lester Tenney. It is kind of a companion piece to that book, telling what finally happened to some of the men from the Bataan Death March. The author is very good at describing the various soldiers in the camp and we can see their various personalities to understand that people reacted differently to the same stressful situations, and they all survived in spite of - or because of - their individual characteristics. It made me realize that there is not a stereotypical prisoner of war out there, and sometimes the seemingly most frail, most damaged prisoners just simply survive by persevering, by just slogging onward, sometimes literally asleep on their feet as they march along. It was also a good depiction of the early Army Ranger corps, which the emaciated, sickly, crushed POWs saw as giants and he-men. It is a good telling of the Hell of war and well worth reading. I also liked how the officers were portrayed as normal men with feelings and misgivings, struggling under the pressure of leadership. They were human beings, too, and they also survived the long march out of hell with the souls they rescued. I liked this book very much. It was hard to "love" it, I think more to the subject matter than the writing, but I may end up loving it more as time goes on. It's a good story. You'll like it.

An amazing story. The lives and deaths of these men is made so real. Stories of real people, not just "a soldier" but a particular individual with a name, friends and a family.

Well written account of The Ghost Soldiers. These men should not be forgotten. Can be uncomfortable to read at times but these men never stopped supporting each other. The Rangers who lead the rescue were very heroic men. Bravo Zulu !!

I learned a great deal about the men who had to stay behind after MacArthur left the Phillipines. These deeply unfortunate U.S. as well as other countries' soldiers suffered greatly for years while in POW camps, one of which was Cabanatuan. The soldiers who lived through all kinds of diseases, starvation, torture and squalor are indeed some of the greatest heroes of that war. Their will to live was phenomenal. The army rangers and filipino soldiers who set them free from the POW camp were dramatically brave, self-sacrificing, and compassionate to these POWs. The book was well written and chose just two of the many living conditions and eventual escapes from the POW camps to highlight. Americans need to hear more from the Filipino men, women, and children who aided, sheltered, and fought with the U.S. soldiers during their occupation by the Japanese. Food, clothing and safety were indeed scarce for all concerned during the timeframe of 1941 to 1945 in this area of

the earth.

Spoiler! I wished this account had been more about the Rangers and their rescue mission. The story bounces back and forth between the prisoners and the Rangers. I have already read stories about the March and POW camps in the Philippines, so I found that half of this book to be a little redundant. Don't get me wrong this a good book, and if you haven't read much about this chapter of the war, the part I had an issue with will probably be excellent background for you.

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