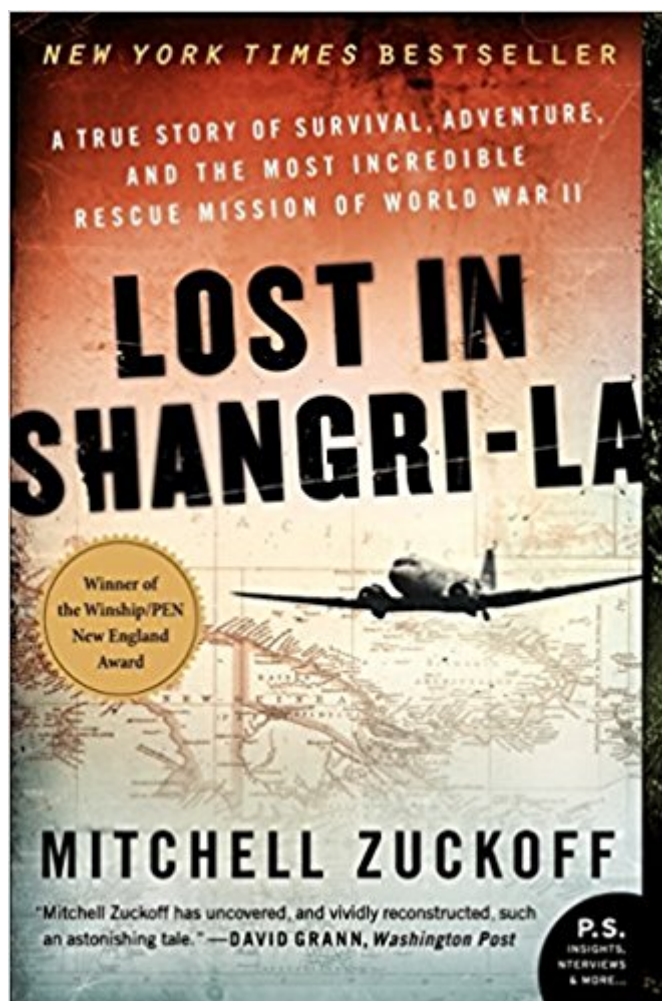


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# Lost In Shangri-La



## Synopsis

A New York Times bestseller, the extraordinary World War II mission to rescue survivors of a U.S. military plane crash in an isolated corner of the South Pacific, and the ancient indigenous tribe members that aided those stranded on the ground in this "Shangri-La." An Award-winning former Boston Globe reporter Mitchell Zuckoff unleashes the exhilarating, untold story of an extraordinary World War II rescue mission, where a plane crash in the South Pacific plunged a trio of U.S. military personnel into a land that time forgot. Fans of Hampton Sides's *Ghost Soldiers*, Marcus Luttrell's *Lone Survivor*, and David Grann's *The Lost City of Z* will be captivated by Zuckoff's masterfully recounted, all-true story of danger, daring, determination, and discovery in jungle-clad New Guinea during the final days of WWII.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Best Books of the Month, May 2011: Near the end of World War II, a plane carrying 24 members of the United States military, including nine Women's Army Corps (WAC) members, crashed into the New Guinea jungle during a sightseeing excursion. 21 men and women were killed. The three survivors--a beautiful WAC, a young lieutenant who lost his twin brother in the crash, and a severely injured sergeant--were stranded deep in a jungle valley notorious for its cannibalistic tribes. They had no food, little water, and no way to contact their military base. The story of their survival and the stunning efforts undertaken to save them are the crux of *Lost in Shangri-La*, Mitchell Zuckoff's remarkable and inspiring narrative. Faced with the potential brutality of the Dani tribe, known throughout the valley for its violence, the trio's lives were dependent on an

unprecedented rescue mission--a dedicated group of paratroopers jumped into the jungle to provide aid and medical care, consequently leaving the survivors and paratroopers alike trapped on the jungle floor. A perilous rescue by plane became their only possible route to freedom. A riveting story of deliverance under the most unlikely circumstances, *Lost in Shangri-La* deserves its place among the great survival stories of World War II. --Lynette Mong Exclusive: Hampton Sides Reviews *Lost in Shangri-La*

Hampton Sides is the editor-at-large for *Outside* magazine and the author of the international bestseller *Ghost Soldiers*, which won the 2002 PEN USA Award for nonfiction and the 2002 Discover Award from Barnes & Noble, and also served as the basis for the 2005 Miramax film *The Great Raid*. Although World War II was the greatest conflict in the history of this planet, many a jaded reader has come to the reluctant conclusion that there aren't any more World War II stories left to tell. At least not good ones--not tales of the "ripping good yarn" variety. Yet remarkably, in his new book *Lost in Shangri-La*, Mitchell Zuckoff has found one, and he's told it with reportorial verve, narrative skill, and exquisite pacing. What makes this World War II story all the more fascinating is that it isn't really a war story--not in a strict military sense. It's more of an exotic adventure tale with rich anthropological shadings. In 1945, near the end of the war, an American plane crashes in a hidden jungle valley in New Guinea inhabited by Stone Age cannibals. 21 Americans die in the crash, but three injured survivors soon find themselves stumbling through the jungle without food, nursing terrible wounds and trying to elude Japanese snipers known to be holding out in the mountains. The first contact between the three Americans and the valley's Dani tribesmen is both poignant and comical. The Americans, Zuckoff writes, have "crash-landed in a world that time didn't forget. Time never knew it existed." The tribesmen, who have never encountered metal and have yet to master the concept of the wheel, think the American interlopers are white spirits who've descended on a vine from heaven, fulfilling an ancient legend. They're puzzled and fascinated by the layers of "removable skin" in which these alien visitors are wrapped; the natives, who smear their bodies in pig grease and cover their genitals with gourds, have never seen clothes before. The Americans, in turn, are pretty sure their boartusk-bestudded hosts want to skewer them for dinner. What ensues in Zuckoff's fine telling is not so much a cultural collision as a pleasing and sometimes hilarious mutual unraveling of assumptions. Though the differences in the two societies are chasmic, the Americans and the Dani become in a guarded, tentative sort of way friends. But when armed American airmen arrive via parachute to rescue the survivors, relations become more tense. The Americans make their camp right in the middle of a no-man's land between warring Dani

tribes — a no-man's land where for centuries they have fought the battles that are central to their daily culture. Here, Zuckoff notes, the ironies are profoundly rich. The Dani, untouched by and indeed utterly unaware of the great war that's been raging all across the globe, become thoroughly discombobulated when their own war is temporarily disrupted. Yes, there are still a few good World War II stories left to tell. And yes, this one meets all the requirements of a ripping good yarn. Zuckoff, who teaches journalism at Boston University, is a first-rate reporter who has spared no expense to rescue this tale from obscurity. His story has it all: Tragedy, survival, comedy, an incredibly dangerous eleventh-hour rescue, and an immensely attractive heroine to boot. It's extraordinary that Hollywood hasn't already taken this tale and run wild with it. If it did, the resulting movie would be equal parts *Alive*, *Cast Away*, and *The Gods Must Be Crazy*. It's as though the Americans have arrived in the Stone Age through a wormhole in the space-time continuum. The Dani don't know what to do with themselves — and life, as any of us know it, will never be the same. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

“A truly incredible adventure.” (New York Times Book Review) “[A] grippingly cinematic account. A remarkable cast of characters.” (Entertainment Weekly) “This is an absorbing adventure right out of the Saturday-morning serials. *Lost in Shangri-La* deserves a spot on the shelf of Greatest Generation nonfiction. It puts the reader smack into the jungle.” (Cleveland Plain Dealer) “Zuckoff transforms impressive research into a deft narrative that brings the saga of the survivors to life.” (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) “Zuckoff delivers a remarkable survival story. . . . In this well-crafted book, Zuckoff turns the long-forgotten episode into an unusually exciting narrative. . . . Polished, fast-paced and immensely readable — ready for the big screen.” (Kirkus Reviews (starred review)) “[An] engaging story. . . . This excellent book will be enjoyed by anyone who loves true adventure stories.” (Library Journal (starred review)) “A riveting tale in the hands of a good storyteller. . . . *LOST IN SHANGRI-LA* is the most thrilling book, fiction or nonfiction, that I have read since I can remember when.” (Seattle Times) “Mitchell Zuckoff has uncovered, and vividly reconstructed, such an astonishing tale. . . . Zuckoff skillfully builds narrative tension and deft character portraits. . . . He has pulled off a remarkable feat — and held the reader firmly in the grip.” (David Grann, Washington Post)

What a fascinating story! This is one of those hidden pearls that opens readers to a tale most don't know. That alone makes it a five-star work in my world. The descriptions of how a hidden valley, unknown to 99.9% of the world during World War Two is fascinating on its own level. This area is smack dab in the middle of Papua/New Guinea. While the world is being laid to waste, there is a hidden society under the noses of the Japanese and Allies. The original, modern day explorer, Richard Archbold would be the first in the twentieth century to travel to the interior of this lost country. Colonel Ray Elsmore would follow up in 1944, one year before the ill-fated crash of the Gremlin Special. What should have been a normal sight-seeing tour turned into anything but. The plane, for whatever reason, plowed into a cliff killing nineteen of the twenty-four passengers in a fiery crash. John McCollum, Ken Decker, Margaret Hastings, Earl Walter Jr. became the only three to walk away. Two other passengers survived yet hung on for only a short time from massive burns and internal bleeding. Enter Captain Earl Walter Jr. His father was becoming a hero in his own right as he stayed behind after the Philippine Islands fell and organized a guerilla force to fight the Japanese. Jr. wanted nothing more than to get into the fray. Yet circumstances and the progress of the war were keeping him in the rear. When he was approached about the crash site and the difficulties of getting to the survivors with no feasible exit plan, he jumped at the opportunity. For most of us who have read countless World War Two accounts, this seems trivial and almost unbelievable. How could an area be this isolated in the twentieth century? There were no roads. The closest lake is thirty miles away. The jungle terrain is virgin territory and the inhabitants are known or thought to be cannibalistic. Now, how many volunteers do we have? Top that off, two of the survivors have debilitating injuries. Margaret has third degree burns on her calves and face. Decker has a terrible head gash. Both of their wounds become gangrenous. An excellent tale of survival, ingenuity and the fighting spirit. I highly recommend this work to any World War Two buff! Five Stars

This offering is filled with drama, the characters of this book HAD to live! Each scene, every chapter was a part of their lives, written on their souls! Now we, living in the 21st century get to vicariously experience a small portion, of what it must have been like for them! I found myself reading when I should have been asleep. I haven't done that since I was a child, hiding under the covers, reading by the dull glow of the flashlight, praying my mom wouldn't catch me, at least not until I finished the next chapter! She usually caught me! Anyway, there's much to admire about these people, native and military, and the writer gives each person a complete fleshing out. Even the smallest detail, culled from old records, or a personal recollection was given its own liveliness. It took true grit to

survive the incredible ordeal that was thrust upon them. They not only survived, they triumphed! The most poignant of all the scenes portrayed, is the solemn funeral service held in air. Not only did I thoroughly enjoy this book, I liked it so much, I sent it to a loved one as a present.

Living history at its greatest. This is an incredible story, a tribute to all those involved, and a fascinating study in the cultural collision between Western Civilization and a tribe of South Pacific islanders not very far removed from the Stone Age. Well written and obviously well researched, this is an account of a little known tempest in a remote corner of the proverbial teapot that was WWII in the Pacific. Perhaps the author's most significant achievement is his ability to tell this story in a relaxed and easily understood way while bringing to the fore in vivid mental images, the lush and unforgiving landscape, the nature and culture of the Dani people, as well as all the danger, fear, loss, uncertainty, courage, determination, and strength of will evidenced in this remarkable story.

Both my husband & I read Shangri-La & loved the enhanced edition. We've bragged about the miracle of the rescue, the courage of the survivors, the overcoming of impossibilities, & recommended it to several friends. Great book! We love TRUE stories.

I absolutely love books that tell me something I didn't know. Lost In Shangri-La is full of new information... From the roles of women in the armed services during WW2, to the base on New Guinea, to the episode that this book centers on~ I didn't know any of it. I'm awed by the intrepid men and women who served our country during that war (and all others), but this story...! I just couldn't believe I had never heard it before, but apparently the end of the war, the atom bomb, and so much else going on in the world overshadowed it to a degree; and the heroine was a reluctant famous person who soon put it all behind her. I got this book at a bargain price and got so much more than I bargained for. My only regret is that I hadn't finished it when we took a trip to Washington DC and stopped briefly at the Air and Space Museum. If I had finished the book, I would have gone straight to the WW2 era section, and looked for...well...read the book, and when you get near the end, you'll know exactly what aircraft I would have looked for. I am so grateful to Mitchell Zuckoff for writing it. It'll be my next book club selection.

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