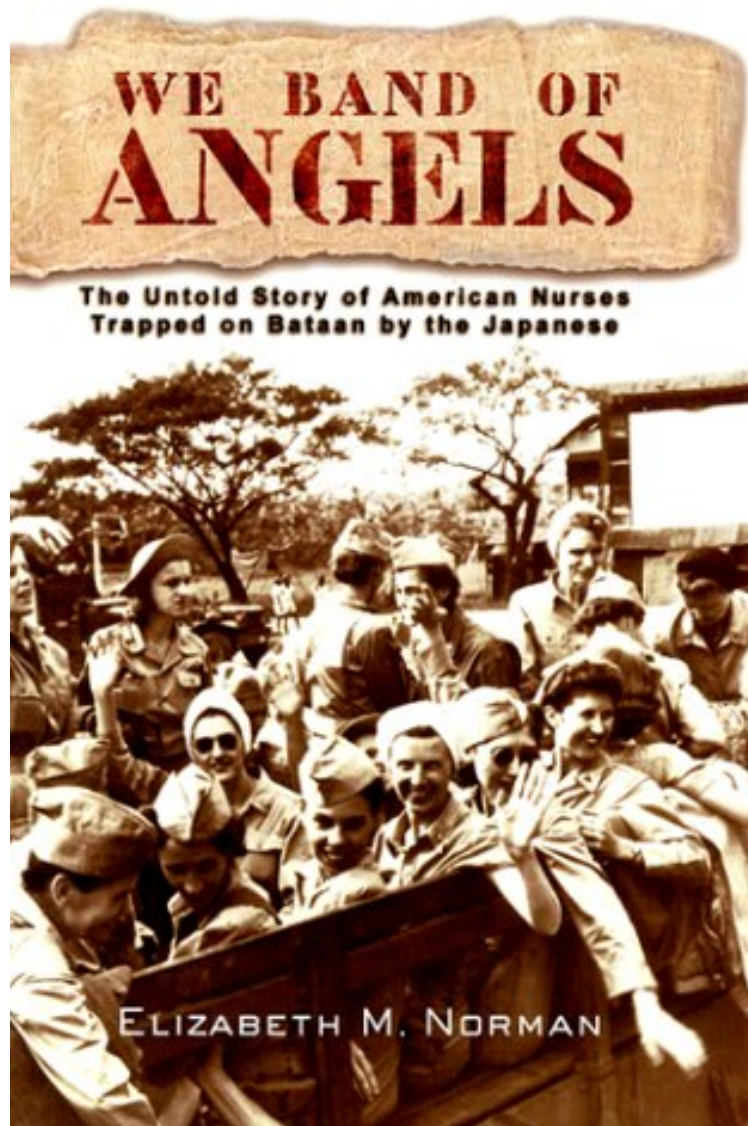


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We Band of Angels: The Untold Story of American Nurses Trapped on Bataan by the Japanese

Elizabeth M. Norman

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Elizabeth M. Norman : We Band of Angels: The Untold Story of American Nurses Trapped on Bataan by the Japanese before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised We Band of Angels: The Untold Story of American Nurses Trapped on Bataan by the Japanese:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. ... at the suggestion of a friend and I would recommend it to anyone who has an interest in history/a ...By savy seniorI purchased this title at the suggestion of a friend and I would recommend it to anyone who has an interest in history/a professional nursing background. Well written, flows nicely and tells a compelling story of real women who grew up in the depression era, entered nursing for differing and personal reasons, requested duty in the Philippines at the start of WW 2, obviously before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and lived through the hellish aspects of war. They maintained their cohesiveness as a unit, their professionalism in carrying out their duties to their patients under extreme duress and the brutal conditions of prisoner of war camps. I applaud Elizabeth Norman for her efforts to interview these women capture their stories before they were lost to us.4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Courageous NursesBy Grace A. Wonderful book about a breed of nurses who really knew how to give their very best despite horrendous conditions to care for their patients. Nurses who worked so hard but genuinely loved their careers and worked as a team, supporting each other in every aspect of work and life during a brutal period in WWII. Despite the harsh conditions they never gave up hope. The courage they displayed was remarkable. This book is a must read for nurses of today.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Nurse HeroinesBy G. MoccioI rated this book 5 stars because it was very well researched and well written. I was not aware of these nurses or the role they played in caring for the sick and wounded in Bataan and Corregidor. I am of an age where I still want to learn about WWII. I feel it is an important history the world should never forget and the story of this group of women is awe inspiring. My late son was an airborne combat medic in the 82nd and a nurse in civilian life. My beloved granddaughter is a registered nurse so the premise of this book is of great interest to me for both those reasons.

"This is a gripping book. Elizabeth Norman presents a war story in which the main characters never kill one of the enemy, or even shoot at him, but are nevertheless heroes. . . . First on Bataan, then moved to Corregidor, they were under almost constant shell fire, were always hungry, close to starvation, had horrendous diseases to deal with despite a shortage or even a complete lack of proper medicines, getting little or no sleep, nothing in the way of recreation--yet they were a true band of angels, inspiring all the men whom they were there to help. In a squalid prison camp, they remained giants, despite their small size. . . . They were the bravest of the brave, who endured unspeakable pain and torture. Americans today should thank God we had such women." --Stephen E. Ambrose
We Band of Angels is the story of women searching for adventure, caught up in the drama and danger of war. On the same day the Japanese Imperial Navy launched its surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, it also struck American bases in the Far East, chief among them the Philippines. That raid led to the first major land battle for America in World War II and, in the end, to the largest defeat and surrender of American forces. Caught up in all of this were ninety-nine Army and Navy nurses--the first unit of American women ever sent into the middle of a battle. The "Angels of Bataan and Corregidor"--as the newspapers called them--became the only group of American women captured and imprisoned by an enemy. And the story of their trials on a bloody battlefield, their desperate flight to avoid capture and their ultimate surrender, imprisonment, liberation and homecoming is a story of endurance, professionalism and raw pluck. Along the way, they helped build and staff hospitals in the middle of a malaria-infested jungle on the peninsula of Bataan. Then, short of supplies and medicine, they worked around the clock in the operating rooms and open-air wards, dealing with gaping wounds and gangrenous limbs, ministering to the wounded, the sick, the dying. A few fell in love, only to lose their men to the enemy. Finally, on the tiny island of Corregidor in Manila Bay, the Japanese took them prisoner. For three long years in an internment camp--years marked by loneliness and starvation--they kept to their mission and stuck together. In the end, it was this loyalty, this sense of purpose, womanhood and honor, that both challenged and saved them. Through interviews with survivors and through unpublished letters, diaries and journals, Elizabeth M. Norman vividly re-creates that time, telling the story in richly drawn portraits and in a dramatic narrative delivered in the voices of the women who were there.

.com "Found worms in my oatmeal this morning. I shouldn't have objected because they had been sterilized in the cooking and I was getting fresh meat with my breakfast.... I'm still losing weight and so are most of us..." Ruth Marie Straub, an Army nurse, wrote those words in her diary on March 15, 1942, just over three months after the Japanese first bombed the U.S. military base in Manila. She and her colleagues had evacuated the city and established, in the Philippine jungle, hospitals for the skyrocketing numbers of casualties. In the face of the advancing Japanese Army, the nurses and other military personnel continued to retreat, first to the Bataan Peninsula, and then to Corregidor, a rocky island in Manila Bay. Straub was one of the lucky ones; she was evacuated with a handful of other nurses in April 1942. Her remaining colleagues, meanwhile, surrendered with the rest of the U.S. forces in May and were taken to STIC--Santo Tomas Internment Camp, where they were to spend nearly three years in captivity. We Band of Angels tells the stories of these courageous women, tagged by the American media as "The Angels of Bataan and Corregidor." Utilizing a wide range of sources, including diaries, letters, and personal interviews with surviving "Angels," Elizabeth

M. Norman has compiled a harrowing narrative about the experiences of these women--from the country-club atmosphere of prewar Manila; to the jungle hospitals where patients slept on bamboo cots in the open air; to the Malinta Tunnel on Corregidor, where they choked on dust and worked while the bombs rained down above them; to the STIC, where per-person rations were cut to 900 calories a day and the women resorted to frying weeds in cold cream for food. The story Nelson tells is compelling but slightly flawed: like many biographers, Nelson has a deep affection and respect for her subjects, which causes her to soften rough edges. At the same time, however, Nelson argues that these women were not heroes--nor were they angels (in the acknowledgments, Nelson notes that she didn't want the word angels in the title, but the publishers had their way). Perhaps because Nelson is a nurse herself, she is trying to stress that her profession is noble and that these women were, in a sense, just fulfilling their duties. Nursing is noble, of course, but it is clear that these women were something special. Amazingly, all of the Angels of Bataan, some 99 in number, survived their ordeal--and clearly helped hundreds of the other sufferers survive. We Band of Angels deserves a space on the bookshelves of anyone interested in World War II. --C.B. Delaney

From Publishers Weekly

When the Japanese took the Philippines during WWII, 77 American women, navy and army nurses, were caught on Bataan and later imprisoned by the Japanese. The few who escaped were cast by the American press more as belles than as professionals who had held steady in their devotion to their patients and their country in the face of bombing, starvation and the gruesome injuries and diseases of their charges. A headline in the New York Times, for instance, announced that in Corregidor, Hairpin Shortage Causes Women to Cut Hair. The 77 women left behind never received as much attention, and Norman (*Women at War*) tries set the record straight about exactly what the Angels of Bataan and Corregidor did throughout the war. The book derives from interviews with 20 of the 77 nurses who were captured and is at its best when it stays closest to their words and stories. Norman makes excellent use of extensive quotations from diaries and interviews. Her writing lags at moments, particularly when it drifts away from the specific experiences of the nurses. But Norman also captures moments of great courage--for instance, when a nurse refused an evacuation order until her superiors agreed that not just American, but also Filipino, nurses should be moved to safety. In one amusing anecdote, the nurses force a Japanese guard to shoot a monkey that has been harassing them and disrupting the hospital. But the true highlights come in the evocation of tears and sweat that went into the nurses daily struggle to maintain their tight community and their dedication to their patients in the face of overwhelming adversity.

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From Library Journal

When the Japanese began their assault against Allied troops in the Philippines, a group of American nurses were caught in the crossfire. These women entered the service to build careers and travel the world, and none of them ever imagined they would see battle, let alone be held as POWs. Yet this is precisely what happened in December 1941 and early 1942, when the Philippines fell to Japan. During the initial months of the attack, the nurses were instrumental in setting up makeshift hospitals, first in the jungles of Bataan and later in the caves beneath Corregidor. Eventually, they were captured by the Japanese and sent to civilian POW camps at Santo Tomas and Los Baos, where they remained for the next three years. Norman (nursing, New York Univ.) tells their harrowing story through survivor interviews as well as letters and journals kept by the nurses during this time. Her book is a well-written account of an obscure piece of World War II history. Recommended.

Roseanne Castellino, Arthur D. Little, Cambridge, MA

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