



# Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience and Redemption

Written by Laura Hillenbrand

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# Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience and Redemption

By Laura Hillenbrand

## Unbroken: A World War II Story

In her long-awaited new book, Laura Hillenbrand writes with the same rich and vivid narrative voice she displayed in *Seabiscuit*. Telling an unforgettable story of a man's journey into extremity, *Unbroken* is a testament to the resilience of the human mind, body, and spirit. On a May afternoon in 1943, an Army Air Forces bomber crashed into the Pacific Ocean and disappeared, leaving only a spray of debris and a slick of oil, gasoline, and blood. Then, on the ocean surface, a face appeared. It was that of a young lieutenant, the plane's bombardier, who was struggling to a life raft and pulling himself aboard. So began one of the most extraordinary odysseys of the Second World War. The lieutenant's name was Louis Zamperini. In boyhood, he'd been a cunning and incorrigible delinquent, breaking into houses, brawling, and fleeing his home to ride the rails. As a teenager, he had channeled his defiance into running, discovering a prodigious talent that had carried him to the Berlin Olympics and within sight of the four-minute mile. But when war had come, the athlete had become an airman, embarking on a journey that led to his doomed flight, a tiny raft, and a drift into the unknown. Ahead of Zamperini lay thousands of miles of open ocean, leaping sharks, a foundering raft, thirst and starvation, enemy aircraft, and, beyond, a trial even greater. Driven to the limits of endurance, Zamperini would answer desperation with ingenuity; suffering with hope, resolve, and humor; brutality with rebellion. His fate, whether triumph or tragedy, would be suspended on the fraying wire of his will.

I was cleaning up after the wife and I had dinner last night and there was a small amount of green beans left. There weren't nearly enough for another serving to make them worth saving so I dumped them in the sink, but just as I was about to turn on the garbage disposal, I realized that to the POWs described in *Unbroken* those few green beans I was about to mulch would have been a feast they would have risked torture and beatings for. I was disgusted with myself for the rest of the night. You know I was cleaning up after the wife and I had dinner last night and there was a small amount of green beans left. There weren't nearly enough for another serving to make them worth saving so I dumped them in the sink, but just as I was about to turn on the garbage disposal, I realized that to the POWs described in *Unbroken* those few green beans I was about to mulch would have been a feast they would have risked torture and beatings for. I was disgusted with myself for the rest of the night. You know the book you're reading is hitting you hard when you feel that much shame for letting a tiny bit of food go to waste.

Louie Zamperini is one of those guys who definitely earned that Greatest Generation label. The son of Italian immigrant parents, Louie was a rebellious kid who was constantly into one form of mischief or another, but when he finally channeled his energy into running, he became a high school track star in California. Louie was so good that he made the 1936 Olympics in Berlin at the age of 19, and even though he didn't medal, he ran one lap of a race so quickly that he electrified the crowd and even caught Hitler's attention.

As a college runner, Louie held several national records and many thought that he'd be the man to eventually break the four minute mile. He was poised to do well in the 1940 Olympics, but then World War II cancelled the games. Louie left college and ended up in the air corps even though he was scared of planes. He became a bombardier and went to the Pacific after Pearl Harbor. Louie survived several missions, including one where their B-24 barely made it back with over 500 holes in it.

While on a search and rescue mission, Louie's plane crashed in the ocean, and only he and two others survived. With few supplies on two tiny life rafts, they'd endure exposure, starvation, thirst and sharks.

However, after finally reaching an island and being captured by the Japanese, Louie's hellish experience as a POW would make him miss the raft and the sharks. Starved, beaten, tortured and degraded, Louie also faces extra punishment at the hands of a brutally sadistic guard who singled him out. Louie and the other prisoners desperately try to hang on long enough for America to win the war and free them.

I didn't care anything about race horses, but found Laura Hillenbrand's Seabiscuit an incredibly interesting read. She's surpassed that book here with this well researched story. Hillenbrand creates vivid descriptions of Louie's childhood, the Berlin Olympics, the life of an air man in the Pacific, and a Japanese POW camp while also telling the stories of the people around Louie.

She also does a superior job of describing a phase of World War II that tends to get overlooked, Japanese war crimes against prisoners. The number of prisoners killed by the Japanese through starvation, beatings and forced labor are staggering, but Hillenbrand also shines a light on the Japanese policy of killing all POWs if that area was about to be invaded. Per her research, they were preparing to begin slaughtering prisoners in Japan in late August and September of 1945, but the dropping of the atomic bombs and the surrender of the emperor probably saved those POWs lives. If the war would have carried on or a conventional invasion done, then mostly likely those prisoners would have been killed.\*

\*(Do not take this as my personal feelings about whether nuclear weapons should have been used or not. I'm just relaying a part of the book here, and Hillenbrand makes no argument as to whether dropping the bombs was justified. She writes that many of the POWs believed that the bombings probably saved their lives and leaves it at that. And if you feel like trying to start a comment fight about it, I'm just going to delete it so don't bother. I left my sword and shield at home today and don't feel like battling trolls.)

Ultimately, while this is a book about people enduring incredible hardship and cruelty during war, it's a hopeful book, not a depressing one. Great writing and the care that Hillenbrand took with the people and places make this compelling reading.

...more

## Unbroken A World War II Story Of Survival

Hillenbrand has broken the unwritten code for Americans to downplay the wrongs of the Japanese during World War II (other than Pearl Harbor) in favor of focusing on the egregious acts of the Nazis. My education in World War II history has focused on the Holocaust and the unforgivable damage we did to Japan by unleashing the atomic bomb. I appreciate all the research Hillenbrand did to bring us the other side of the story.

Louis Zamperini is my new hero. I loved his charisma and endurance, both of which Hillenbrand has broken the unwritten code for Americans to downplay the wrongs of the Japanese during World War II (other than Pearl Harbor) in favor of focusing on the egregious acts of the Nazis. My education in World War II history has focused on the Holocaust and the unforgivable damage we did to Japan by unleashing the atomic bomb. I appreciate all the research Hillenbrand did to bring us the other side of the story.

Louis Zamperini is my new hero. I loved his charisma and endurance, both of which shined through in Hillenbrand's meticulous writing. I haven't been this invested in non-fiction in a long time. Even when she was talking about airplane design I was enthralled. And even though I figured Zamperini had to have survived his ordeal to give Hillenbrand an interview, I was still anxious about his survival. My favorite part of Louis' story is (view spoiler)[his journey to forgiveness and healing through his conversion to Christianity, especially his willingness to meet with The Bird and offer unconditional forgiveness (hide spoiler)]. How inspiring and moving, his whole story, but especially his life after the war.

I don't think I can pick up another book for a few days. I need to let this one settle before I delve into fiction that will feel meaningless after this. ...more

Wow am I in the minority.

I absolutely loved Seabiscuit, so I expected great things from this one. However, where Seabiscuit focused narrowly on a small set of characters and events, this was more sprawling, bursting with a poorly-sketched cast of characters who, over time, became nearly indistinguishable. For most of the middle section, the book wore me down with its unrelenting catalogue of abuse and privation. On a related note, I wasn't crazy about the fact that the book endlessly described what was happening to Zamperini, as opposed to what was going through his mind, what gave him hope, etc.--material that I would have found infinitely more interesting.

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As other reviewers have noted, although listed as non-fiction, the book suffers from potentially unreliable narration, as most details were reported to the author some 50 years after the fact. After that long, memories of events dim or, conversely, are embellished. Indeed, some details felt a bit off to me (for instance, Zamperini described being tangled up in wires and going down with his plane when he blacked out; he was miraculously free of all encumbrances when he came to). A huge detail that seemed off was Zamperini's redemption at the end: it didn't make sense to me that Zamperini's problems with alcoholism, post-traumatic stress disorder, and rage, fueled by years of the aforementioned abuse and privation, were all completely and conveniently cured by a couple of hours listening to the preaching of Billy Graham. (To be honest, I thought this plot point tends to demean veterans' struggles generally.)

But the book moved along at a brisk pace and held my attention. I feel like I learned a lot about an aspect of American and WWII history that may be overlooked (the experiences of POWs in Japan was never covered in any of my high school or college history classes). So for that I give this book an enthusiastic 3 stars. ...more

## Unbroken A World War II

I've seen recently that negative commentary or reviews about this book invoke a kind of backlash normally reserved for non-conformists who critique the Bible, The Diary of Ann Frank, The Last Lecture, or any Oprah 'Book of the Month'. Well, brace yourself because here comes another one.

This book is a poorly written, exaggerated, sensationalized version of a true story, an over-hyped pop history book more concerned with drumming home the message that the human spirit can be indestructible in the face of extreme adversity (a pet theme for the author it seems) than in being a tight and accurate biography of a war hero. I had the feeling throughout the book that the "true story" was buried somewhere deep in the pages, struggling to get past the hyperbole and over-the-top events to floor the reader with what really happened. It's instead mired in the monotonous descriptions of our protagonist's lurid misfortunes and maltreatment, told in mind-numbing detail, and never really allowed to break free.

Judging by the notes, Laura Hillenbrand has put in a respectable amount of research yet the way in which she weaves the facts into the book is so sloppy and lacking any hint of subtlety it leaves you feeling like you're reading a first draft script for a Michael Bay flick (remains to be seen if you are). The resulting story is horrendously tedious, repetitive, and "despite the fascinating subject and the stage where it's all taking place" boring as all hell.

The first part of the book takes us from Louie's humble beginnings through his meteoric rise to the Olympics. The second part involves Louie's time in the military and all of his oftentimes unbelievable achievements. The third is the account of his B-24 bomber crash, subsequent loss at sea, capture by the Japanese, and the endless rounds of torture and beatings. The fourth and last part is his rescue life after the War and finding God with Billy Graham. How can this be made boring? Well, it can if your prose never rises above a dull, rambling, ill-constructed narrative about how this event happened, then this one did, and then this thing happened after that.

The characters in the book are so shallow and one-dimensional, hardly a one is given more than a passing intro before the story bumbles on to the next thinly veiled anecdote. The people begin blurring into the next and you're left struggling to tell one cardboard person from another. Apart from Louie and his family the only other characters that really stood out were his raft mate and best buddy Phil and his most sadistic prison guard dubbed The Bird. Every minute of every one of Louie's beatings by

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The Bird is documented to the nth degree; every one of The Bird's tantrums, mood changes, facial tics, and spazz attacks is written about in the most curious of detail. The reader is subjected to dozens of "last sightings" of The Bird only to have him "shockingly" resurface in the most unlikely of situations a chapter later. You know the kind of scene I mean: "And Louie looked up at the new arrival only to discover once again â€" Dah dum duuuuuuum!!! "â€"that it was The Bird!" This can only be pulled so many times before the reader starts to feel like they're being strongly manipulated by the author. It happens so often in fact you start to think of it as a good candidate for some kind of literary drinking game where you take a shot of bourbon every time he shows up.

Now, far be it for me to disparage war veterans, especially POWs who've endured the kinds of crushing abuse that Louie and his fellow service men have, but how is it that we are able to get such detailed minutia over 50 years after it all went down? I bet you can't describe the full details of the days of your wedding, your first child being born, your first car crash, your first date, getting your driver's license, etc. These were all life-changing, and in some cases traumatic, days in your life and it's a safe bet that most, if not all, of these events took place more recently for you than 50 years ago. Most of us remember scant bits and pieces of events and many of these memories have â€œdriftedâ€• from reality in our fallible brains. Even polling spectators who were there at the time and cobbling together all of the recollections won't make for a fully fleshed-out memory. This thought kept rattling around my brain as I made my way through the book. How on earth could these things be recalled so clearly and precisely after all that time? I've read other POW accounts that say that all days start to blur together and the extreme horrors the soldiers endured are blocked out of memory. Some soldiers, as Hillenbrand herself says in the book, forget the war entirely. The sneaking suspicion (and you can't help but feel like a total shit for thinking it) is that a lot of the filler put in the book to string the anecdotes together is fabricated to puff up the story to appeal to a broader audience.

These suspected filler bits are nothing compared to some of the fantastical events scattered throughout the book. Zemperini is cheapened and the readers are dared not to roll their eyes as he is aggrandized and endlessly adulated from a man to a superhuman demi-god. He can withstand plane crashes, hourly beatings for over a year, prolonged starvation, backbreaking physical labor, diseases, and anything else that can be dished out. Consider his scenes of fist-fighting sharks in open water, meeting Hitler after his Olympic race, running a 4:12 mile -- in the fucking sand(!), surviving violent dysentery for weeks on end with only scant handfuls of polluted water to drink (not to mention the â€œdeath sentenceâ€• disease beriberi that he contracted and overcame, despite it being untreated), blacking out as he's tangled in wires in his sinking bomber only to wake up untangled and able to swim freely to the surface, self-repairing a broken nose and leg while at prison camp, and living through 40+ days at sea with practically no water or food then having the patience to wait offshore overnight once he reaches an island -- of course, just in time for a typhoon to hit them in their raft! Seriously? These personal achievements are apart from his sufferings in a group setting like enduring over 220 punches in the face during one camp thrashing and moving 20 â€" 30 tons (yes, TONS -- 40,000 to 60,000 U.S. pounds) of material at a rail yard in a day. Why the author stopped there and didn't throw in a cage match with a silverback gorilla to determine alpha male dominance I'm not sure.

I imagine therein lies part of the reason why this book resonates so deeply with our intelligence-starved society today. Long titillated by years of reality TV, Saw movie sequels, and other torture porn many are conditioned to be drawn to the grisly and violent story of a guy who went through hell and made it to the "€œmillion dollar vote" by the end. It's the car crash scene you slowly drive by and can't pull your eyes away from ("Can you pull those bodies closer to me so I can get a better look?"). I also suspect the book serves as a keen display to whiners in search of inspiration that hey, maybe my life ain't so bad after all.

I say hats off to Louis Zamperini and his fellow soldiers. Seriously. A toast! I have nothing but bottomless admiration, respect, and gratitude for his service and am in awe of his mettle and perseverance. He is one tough-as-nails guy whose achievements should not be overlooked and never be forgotten. It just would have been nice if his story could have been told in a more honest and fair manner, letting the facts speak for themselves without all the earnest dramatization, unabashed hero worship, and hyperbole slathered so thickly over them. His autobiography "Devil at My Heels" maybe? ...more

"If I knew I had to go through those experiences again," he finally said, "I'd kill myself."

Louis Zamperini was a precocious child. He was always finding creative ways to get himself in trouble. He was desperate for any attention. Causing trouble is one way to get it, another way is to become really, really good at something. His brother Pete, a multi-sport star athlete, forced him into cross country and track in the hopes of keeping him out of trouble. The running, at first, felt like a punish

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I went out for cross country my senior year of high school not because I had a burning desire to run, but because I wanted to get in shape for basketball season. The football coach had visions of me being a tall, reasonably fast, wide receiver. I had visions of a helmet crashing into my knee ending not only a short lived football career, but also wiping out my penultimate season of basketball. On the cross country team was a guy named Roger. His father had been an Olympic athlete. He had qualified for the games in Mexico, drank the water, and became too sick to compete. Roger had dreams of the Olympics in his future. I had a much smaller goal of improved stamina for basketball.

By the time the first race rolls around Iâ€™m still not sure how I will stack up with the other runners. With Roger beating me easily every day at practice I was more worried about embarrassing myself. At this point I had no racing strategy, no thought except finishing two miles. The gun sounds, everybody takes off in a stampede. At about the one mile marker I started passing scads of runners who were flagging. I was thinking am I outpacing myself here? Am I going to run out of gas? Then up ahead I caught a flash of Phillipsburg Panther blue. I could see Roger! He was duking it out with a pair of twins from a rival city. The stories that Zamperini told the author about runners elbowing, pushing, gouging...all true. Of course Roger wasnâ€™t worried about how long he took to run the race he was just putting a pace out there that eliminated all but his most formidable opponents. When the finish line came into sight he kicked down the afterburners and won with ease.

I finished 6th out of 65 runners, suddenly running took on a new meaning for me.

I was descended on by the local radio, television, and newspaper reporters. They asked me about the upcoming basketball season, a sport with a lot more interest to the community than cross country. They did ask me a few questions about the race which I couldnâ€™t really answer because I wasnâ€™t really sure how I managed to come in 6th. I looked over at Roger who was sitting on the ground changing out of his running shoes. No one was asking him any questions. I wish Iâ€™d motioned him over or walked over to him bringing the people asking questions with me, but I was still trying to make sense of everything.

He told me later that he was just glad I was bringing some attention to the program. He was magnanimous, but I felt about four inches tall. Louis and Roger would have understood each other perfectly. They knew all they had to do was keep winning and eventually the world would notice.

Louis Zamperiniâ€™s Olympic passport.

I never did learn to love running, but I did love competing.

Laura Hillenbrand knows how to tell a story. Readers will find the descriptions of Zamperini's races leading up to the Olympics much more compelling than they think, even if they donâ€™t have an interest in sports. Zamperini qualified in the 5000 meters by the skin of his teeth for the historic 1936 Olympic Games. Jesse Owens was the story that year. He was putting a finger in Adolf Hitlerâ€™s eyes every time he stepped onto the track. Zamperini finished eighth, but he was determined to return in 1940 and win a fist full of medals.

The wheel of fortune landed on a different fate for Louis Zamperini.

B-24 diagram

World War Two put a crimp in many plans, dreams were put on hold, careers were set aside, and marriages were speeded up. Zamperini ended up a bombardier in a B-24. His job of dropping bombs on the Japanese was hazardous enough, but when a commanding officer ordered his crew up in a plane that flew "mushy" and had been stripped of all nonessential parts he was certainly tempting fate.

The plane was called The Green Hornet and just like the movie by the same name it crashed and burned. Three members of the crew survived and Zamperini was one of the fortunate few.

The Bucket of Bolts that dropped the boys into the Pacific. I always love the airplane artwork.

After drifting for months, surviving by sheer grit and determination, they are picked up as prisoners of war by the Japanese.

Life has got to improve, right? After all they don't have sharks rubbing at the bottom of their survival raft every day and every night. They don't have to worry about where their next drink of water is going to come from or their next meal.

Wrong.

The shark metamorphosis into a Bird, the Bird is Matsuhiro Watanabe. He is a psychopath who actually became sexually aroused beating up helpless prisoners. When the movie comes out this guy is going to be known the world over as one of the sickest most despicable human beings to ever exist. The list of charges against him, at the end of the war, were a stream of paper eight feet long.

Matsuhiro "the Bird" Watanabe

His favorite target: Lieutenant Louis Zamperini.

"The Pacific POWs who went home in 1945 were torn-down men. They had an intimate understanding of man's vast capacity to experience suffering, as well as his equally vast capacity, and hungry willingness to inflict it. They carried unspeakable memories of torture and humiliation, and an acute sense of vulnerability that attended the knowledge of how readily they could be disarmed and dehumanized."

I was surprised to learn that my own understanding of the treatment of POWs under the Japanese was sketchy at best. I'm still processing the images invoked from recently reading The Devil of Nanking about the massacres at Nanking in 1937. Like the Nazis the Japanese at this time were interested in the purity of their own race. They felt that as a superior race it was their place to rule all of Asia. They believed that to surrender was cowardly and dishonorable behavior. This belief led to some very erratic

aggressive behavior by Japanese soldiers who would rather die than be taken prisoner.

So The Bird was a corporal who had been turned down for an officer's position, this humiliation infuriated him. He despised these American soldiers who had surrendered and he especially despised the officers.

More than 37% of Americans held captive by the Japanese died. Only 1% of Americans held by the Nazis and Italians died. The Japanese guards were brutal and sadistic and at the end of the war many of them were prosecuted and executed. This changed as the Americans discovered that Japan would prove a valuable ally in the upcoming Cold War. The prosecution of further war criminals became a political stumbling block and were stopped.

I reached a point where I wondered why Louis Zamperini continued to want to live. He was too strong, too stubborn, too competitive to give up. When he crashed, his parents didn't know he survived. They were kept in nervous, soul crushing suspense because a demented Corporal decided that the POWs under his command would not be able to write home. Laura Hillenbrand could have let the behavior of the Japanese guards weigh this book down into a horrific tale of depressing stories of physical and mental abuse, but though she does share a lot of those stories with us they are uplifted by the sheer determination of Zamperini not only to live, but to get one chance to wrap his hands around the neck of his tormentor.

This book had me considering who we are when we go to war. Why do so many leave their homes as fathers, husbands, brothers and become this shockingly terrifying person capable of the most sadistic behavior? War is hell. I know that, but there is a huge difference between killing someone in self defense on a battlefield and quite another to systematically, with creativity, torture people. The Rape of Nanking or the abuse of POWs defies all logic. These soldiers are not criminals or murderers. These are normal people until they are put in a uniform; and then, somehow they transform into criminals and murderers.

Laura Hillenbrand with Louis Zamperini

Hillenbrand includes a plethora of pictures all placed in with the text so you can look at a picture of what she is describing as you read it. I wish more publishers would do this for more books. It really enhances the experience. Hillenbrand is an excellent writer with a gift for storytelling. She adds in these wonderful details that really bring the story to life, so instead of waiting for the movie pick up the book and marvel at the capacity of humans to survive and bring their lives back from the brink of despair. Survival, Resilience, and Redemption are the subtitle of this book. You will end the book knowing and believing that Louis Zamperini exemplified all those qualities in the face of impossible odds.

If you wish to see more of my most recent book and movie reviews, visit <http://www.jeffreykeeten.com> I also have a Facebook blogger page at: <https://www.facebook.com/JeffreyKeeten> ...more

## Unbroken A World War II Story Pdf

I've just finished this awesome book, and have since washed the tears from my face. I can't hope to write a coherent review (there are so many good ones already written), so I'll just jot a few thoughts down:

- \* This is why I love non-fiction.

- \* Best book (by far) I've read this year.

- \* Every positive cliché adjective should be applied to this story.

- \* 5 stars isn't enough.

- \* If it was fiction, you wouldn't believe it.

- \* Go buy yourself a cloth hankie, 'cause a kleenex ain't gonna cut it by the last ch I've just finished this awesome book, and have since washed the tears from my face. I can't hope to write a coherent review (there are so many good ones already written), so I'll just jot a few thoughts down:

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- \* If it was fiction, you wouldn't believe it.

- \* Go buy yourself a cloth hankie, 'cause a kleenex ain't gonna cut it by the last chapter.

- \* Makes me wish my dad was still around so I could ask him about the war.

- \* My next book is going to SUCK in comparison (might as well re-read Breaking Dawn then).

- \* Read this great review by my GR friend Amy S: <http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...> (her review made me want to read this book - great job Amy!)

- \* Perfect book to wrap up on Memorial Day, 2012:

To those who served, to those who still serve, to those who made it back, to those who didn't, to those

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who still suffer in ways we cannot imagine, thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. ...more

Louie Zamperini was quite a character, wild, given to mayhem and thievery, but he straightened out enough to become a world-class runner, joining the US team in the Berlin Olympics. He continued his athletic career at USC, setting running records there, preparing for the next international competition. But the world would skip that event, leaving Louie adrift. He joined the military and washed out, but he was drafted back in after Pearl Harbor, as a bombardier. When Louie's plane went down in the middle of the Pacific, while on a bombing run, his great adventure began. Unbroken is Louie's tale of survival.

Laura Hillenbrand - image from Flavorwire

Louie and two other crew members would drift for an unthinkable duration before sighting land, struggling to collect potable water, desperate to catch fish and birds for food and terrified of being devoured by the constantly marauding sharks. Once they finally landed it was out of the frying pan and into the rising sun, as they were taken prisoner by the Japanese. Enduring years of the beatings, deprivations, forced labor and humiliations that were daily fare in Japanese POW camps made their ocean voyage seem like a pleasure cruise.

This is not only an amazingly researched book, with details that clearly took serious, serious digging to unearth, but Laura Hillenbrand is a gifted story-teller, as any who have read *Seabiscuit* can attest, and she brings her narrative skills to this remarkable, real-life tale. Having introduced Louie in the early chapters and providing reasons to care, she documents a relentless sequence of trials that he and his mates had to endure. It does get a little repetitive, but there were times when the hairs on my arm stood up and saluted and I had to put the book down because the horrors these men faced were so frightening and upsetting. Think *Jaws* vs a rubber raft. But I was so captivated by the story that I dove right back in after a short break. The unpleasantness of the Geneva-challenged WW II Japanese military was not news to me, but the details Hillenbrand provides gave that vision considerable depth. There is a psycho-guard character in this story who would fit in well in many a horror film. And yet, with all the monstrosities of the camps, there is also Hogan's Heroes-type humor that will make you laugh out loud.

Louis Zamperini

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Louie's life post-liberation was no picnic either. PTSD was not in the lexicon at the time, but anyone today would recognize the symptoms. Even though the unspeakable horrors he endured had not killed him, the internalized terrors he brought home might have finished the job. Hillenbrand takes us through those trials and tells the surprising story of how this incredibly strong, but seriously damaged man, was mended.

Unbroken offers an important portrait about a dark time, but shows how strength, courage, incredible determination and a dose of faith can overcome any obstacle. You will weep, rage, laugh and cheer. What more can a reader ask?

=====EXTRA STUFF

The author's personal and  
FB  
pages

A fascinating article on Laura Hillenbrand from Smithsonian Magazine

July 3, 2014 - Zamperini passes, the NY Times obit ...more

## Unbroken A World War II Story Summary

Holy mackerel. This is the single non-fiction book you ought to put on your read list for 2013. Even if you don't read it, its presence on your shelf will enrich your library.

This is a WWII survival story of an American aviator in the Pacific theater. And wow! Louis Zamperini. Zamp!

An Italian immigrant with the fastest mile in college track who shook hands with Hitler at the 1936 Olympics, shot down in the Pacific, 40+ days in a 2-man raft with 3 people, captured, paraded for propaganda, torture Holy mackerel. This is the single non-fiction book you ought to put on your read list for 2013. Even if you don't read it, its presence on your shelf will enrich your library.

This is a WWII survival story of an American aviator in the Pacific theater. And wow! Louis Zamperini. Zamp!

An Italian immigrant with the fastest mile in college track who shook hands with Hitler at the 1936 Olympics, shot down in the Pacific, 40+ days in a 2-man raft with 3 people, captured, paraded for propaganda, tortured sadistically on mainland Japan for years by a Japanese known only as "The Bird" that said "we're not in Geneva anymore," rescued at 90 pounds wearing the same 3 year old clothes, followed by years of alcoholic depression, only to be saved by an upstart preacher, Billy Graham, when reminded of the promise he made God in the ocean doldrums with lips so burned and swollen they blocked his nostrils, dedicating his remaining life to working with underprivileged kids.

This is the kind of story that causes people to break unexpectedly into chants of U-S-A, U-S-A, U-S-A. Patriotic outbursts are common at international sporting events, political rallies, displays of military power, and they are also common at pages 85, 130, 165, 201, 232, 255, 287, 303, and 313.

Laura Hillenbrand does a wonderful job presenting the timing and pacing of this novel, so that it simply reads itself to you. And there are plenty of pictures. Just enough information, just the right touch for a feel-good story. Bravo.

In 10-15 years America will lose all its primary sources from WWII. You will have no reference, no great-grampa to reveal that epoch to you in lost military jargon and GI colloquialism. Great-grampa, the leatherneck, that, when you were a punk adolescent, sat alone in the warm sunroom with paper-thin skin on the backs of his hands, spots of lentigo, and steaming black coffee in winter. Gut-rot coffee, the way he learned to drink it back then, in a hole, or at predawn prep for takeoff. And so, I'm afraid that younger generations will lose the silken threads that link living history. I'm afraid that kids who think nothing unusual of presidents with no military experience will view WWII simply as another knuckle in history—"something to study, fodder for a paper"—but no less important than history that piles up each year and must be studied in turn.

But WWII was so defining for so many generations, globally, it just yearns not to be forgotten.

Due diligence for my star rating:

1. Zamp was an officer in the Army Air Corp; I was an officer in the Air Force.
2. Zamp was a navigator; I was a navigator.
3. Zamp flew in a B-24D LIBERATOR; I flew in an RC-135W RIVET JOINT.
4. Zamp flew in a multiseat, crew-based aircraft; I flew in a multiseat, crew-based aircraft.
5. Zamp had a callsign; I had a callsign.
6. Zamp flew in the Pacific theater; I flew in the Pacific theater.
7. Zamp fought a war and saw combat; I fought a war and saw combat.
8. Zamp took aviator survival school; I took aviator survival school.
9. Zamp has a standard-issue leather jacket for high altitude flight; I have the same.
10. Zamp is still alive!!!

For non-service members, it's a complete mystery the bonds that tie men of military and combat experience. Zamperini is my brother. He and I could talk at the O'Club bar until closing, no matter the 51 years between our service. We could talk about training, flying, targeting the enemy, jumping up during negative G's so that you hover for an unearthly span of time before settling easy back on the bulkhead. His experience has sweetened my understanding of my own military service. This book has at least extended Zamperini's legend to the end of my life. Beyond that, spoken history is fact, then parable, then myth.

I believe this is the kind of book that military members—especially aviators—must read to carry forward the memorial and self-sacrifice of duty, honor, country.

If this doesn't convince you, almost 100,000 people have given the book 4.46 stars in 2 short years. I wonder how many have been in the military?

U-S-A, U-S-A, U-S-A!

U-S-A, U-S-A, U-S-A!

...more

If you are wondering if you should read "Unbroken", just read it. Even if you don't end up liking it, you just need to read it. Everyone does.

Louis Zamperini was an Italian-American Olympic runner whose plane goes down in World War 2, and he and two other men drift on a raft for a long, long time. I don't want to tell you anything else, because I want you to experience it. This book packs a double punch--the story itself is as amazing as Laura Hillenbrand's genius story-telling.

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Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience and Redemption

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Louis Zamperini was an Italian-American Olympic runner whose plane goes down in World War 2, and he and two other men drift on a raft for a long, long time. I don't want to tell you anything else, because I want you to experience it. This books packs a double punch--the story itself is as amazing as Laura Hillenbrand's genius story-telling.

Books like this inspire us, they shift our perspectives, they enlighten us, and they scare the \*bleep\* out of us. Louis stretched the human experience to the very depth and breadth of its ability to survive and lived, scratch that, LIVES to tell about it. ...more