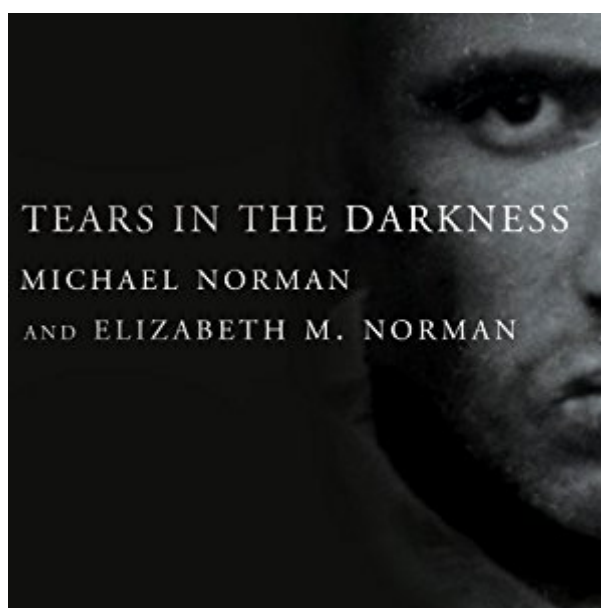


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Tears In The Darkness: The Story Of The Bataan Death March And Its Aftermath



Synopsis

In the tradition of *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *Hiroshima*, this major new work about World War II exposes the myths of military heroism as shallow and inadequate, and makes clear that war causes suffering for people on all sides.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

These two authors tried to tell the story of Ben Steele and other POWS who endured Japanese atrocities. Their mistake was incorporating the story of how the Japanese felt while invading the Philippines, A story about these invading Japanese soldiers should have been written in a separate book. Not joined together with the account of our fight for Bataan and Corregidor. If the authors were trying to evoke sympathy for the war criminal General Yamashita, they failed. To say he didn't know a thing about the atrocities committed against American soldiers is absurd. Responsibilities go up the chain of command and lies with all commanders. They are ultimately responsible for everything that happens under their command.

The Normans' magisterial history of one of the darkest chapters of modern warfare is one of those rare books that transforms readers. Those who read this book will be affected in different ways; some by the inconceivable suffering and cruelty, and some by the courage and grace of those who suffered. The authors have included not only the entire history of the death march and imprisonment, but also the consequences of these things on individuals, especially Montana's courageous Army Air Force enlistee Ben Steele, one of the few who survived. There was one episode that was

particularly telling. After the war Steele became an art professor, and the day came when a Japanese-American student entered his class, and all the horror and bitterness and desolation of his three years of imprisonment rushed back into Steele's mind. But then he learned that the student's Japanese-American family had been interned here in the States. Steele invited the student into his office for a heart-to-heart talk, and out of it came reconciliation. Ben Steele treated his Japanese student with all the fairness he could muster. Other readers will discover other treasures in this powerful and luminous history. But no reader will finish the book unchanged.

This well researched and engrossing book was written by Michael and Elizabeth Norman over a ten year period. The Normans purportedly interviewed over 400 Allies and Japanese, shedding light on the horrors of WWII in the Philippines. I've read numerous accounts of the atrocities, malice, and wanton neglect dished out to the POW's by the then conquering Japanese Army. This of course included the beheadings, bayonetting and bludgeoning of the prisoners during the infamous Bataan Death March. Also discussed was the viewpoint of the Japanese and why they didn't follow the Geneva Convention as the Allies were considered to be criminals and not POW's. The malfeasance suffered by the prisoners was built upon that faulty premise, along with race baiting teachings of the then revisionist historians; who distorted the samurai narrative of Bushido, aka "way of the warrior". The Imperial Japanese Army essentially brainwashed their recruits into becoming "human bullets" and belligerents in the making. The Normans also wrote about the "killing fields" where over 1000 Filipinos and Americans were segregated by rank and nationality, bound together in groups of 30, (with hands tied behind their backs), bayoneted and pushed over a cliff and into a ravine. This process lasted all day and night until all prisoners were considered to be dead or in their last throws of life. Remarkably two POW's survived to recant these horrors. The Japanese General who ordered these atrocities was eventually found guilty and hung for war crimes. The main character is Ben Steele, a Montana cowboy who enlisted in the Army Air Corps and was stationed in the Philippines prior to the start of WWII. He survived the Bataan Death March, slave labor, hell ships and the torturous day-to-day existence under a brutal, lawless regime. Ben's plight throughout the book gives the reader someone to latch onto, and makes the experience much more palpable. This book has found a permanent home in my library. I tip my hat to Michael and Elizabeth for a great literary/historical read. Fantastic job guys!

I am an avid WWII fan -- almost always reading something about WWII. I'm especially interested in the aspect of the war in the Pacific and especially Luzon, as my Dad was there. The story is what

I've come to expect as far as the treatment of our soldiers by Japan, and I've learned to expect some "language" in military readings, but, in my opinion, the language (cursing, expletives, etc.) take away from the story. I struggled to finish.

Ben Steele was a simple rancher from mom's hometown of Roundup, MT and friend of Merrill Lee, another Bataan survivor from Roundup. For most of us it's impossible to imagine the courage and determination of Steele, Lee, and other soldiers who endured the barbaric cruelty of Japanese soldiers in World War II, men who not only survived, but eventually returned home and resumed their lives as ranchers and family men. God bless them for what they endured in the cause of freedom!

The research was impeccable, the writing very penetrable. The entire book read fluidly, although there was a small amount of repetition, which I found mildly annoying. The subject matter was a chapter of US history with which I was only vaguely familiar, so it was instructive, without being the least pedantic. Every American should read this, especially in this current global era, when relationships with Japan are so changed and changeable and the population of that country is still adapting to modernity as we understand it. Carol A. Raizin

The best book EVER written about the Bataan Death March, cruelty, and POW camps. Very thorough, and I felt as though I was getting a good picture of the awful conditions in the camp, as well as getting to know some of the men that endured the march and camp life. This book was difficult to put down. I feel as though I learned a great deal about concentration/POW camps just from this one book. I will read it again, of that I am sure.

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