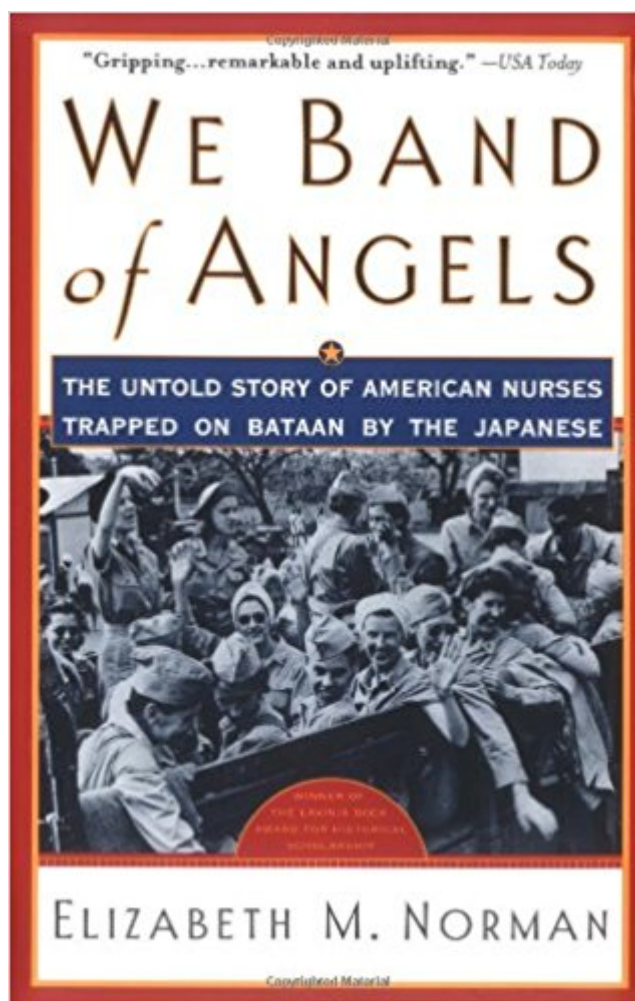


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# We Band Of Angels: The Untold Story Of American Nurses Trapped On Bataan By The Japanese



## Synopsis

Hailed by The New York Times Book Review as a "grippingly told" story of "power and relevance," here is the true, untold account of the first American women to prove their mettle under combat conditions. Later, during three years of brutal captivity at the hands of the Japanese, they also demonstrated their ability to survive. Filled with the thoughts and impressions of the women who lived it, "every page of this history is fascinating" (The Washington Post). **We Band of Angels** In the fall of 1941, the Philippines was a gardenia-scented paradise for the American Army and Navy nurses stationed there. War was a distant rumor, life a routine of easy shifts and evenings of dinner and dancing under the stars. On December 8 all that changed, as Japanese bombs rained on American bases in Luzon, and the women's paradise became a fiery hell. Caught in the raging battle, the nurses set up field hospitals in the jungles of Bataan and the tunnels of Corregidor, where they saw the most devastating injuries of war, and suffered the terrors of shells and shrapnel. But the worst was yet to come. As Bataan and Corregidor fell, a few nurses escaped, but most were herded into internment camps enduring three years of fear and starvation. Once liberated, they returned to an America that at first celebrated them, but later refused to honor their leaders with the medals they clearly deserved. Here, in letters, diaries, and firsthand accounts, is the story of what really happened during those dark days, woven together in a compelling saga of women in war.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"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 --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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. BOMC and History Book Club selections. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I 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.

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.

I 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.

Good view of the treatment of non-combats by the Japanese in WWII. Real world of treatment of non-combats by Japanese in WWII. Eye opener to conscious neglect and cruelty of Japanese with first person story by extremely brave women fighting to remain civilized in a dogworld of internment. I liked the book. History tells you what man can do and is capable of doing today.

Excellent book. Well-researched, detailed and significant. A timely reminder of what women proved they could do under duress during WWII. Even though these nurses didn't receive the accolades they deserved when they returned to the USA, it is good to know that times have changed, when efforts by women are being given so much more credit -- and not just in the military. Kudos to all of the nurses, especially the ones left behind to sweat it out in a prison camp in the Philippines, and to Elizabeth Norman for bringing their story to light.

I can't say enough good things about this book. It is a great story and very well written about the nurses who served in the Philippines at the start of the WW 2. Some of them made it out but most of them were interred for the duration. Their courage and dedication to their jobs and each other is to be admired. The author was able to speak with several of these ladies before they died so much of what is in the book is basically first hand accounts. There is no way for any of us to be able to relate to what these ladies went through but the author does give us a sense of what it was like. I am sure I will read this again to look for anything I might have missed and to just remind myself of what a great group of ladies they were.

Well researched. I especially was very interested as I was an Army Nurse, stationed in the Philippines just after WW2, I learned first hand the sufferings of the Americans, Filipinos, and many foreign nationals during the Japanese occupation. This is a bit of American history that should not be forgotten, not the cruelty of humans to one another, but rather the spirit of survival.

This is a beautifully written book. It tells a story that would otherwise be lost to history. The nurses who served in the Philippines during WWII during and after the Japanese invasion and occupation were remarkably dedicated and courageous. Alongside, the author paints a clear picture of the

deprivations faced by soldiers and civilians alike. The father of one of my friends survived the Bataan Death March and I always wanted to know more. Read this book; it will pull at your heartstrings and give you an education.

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