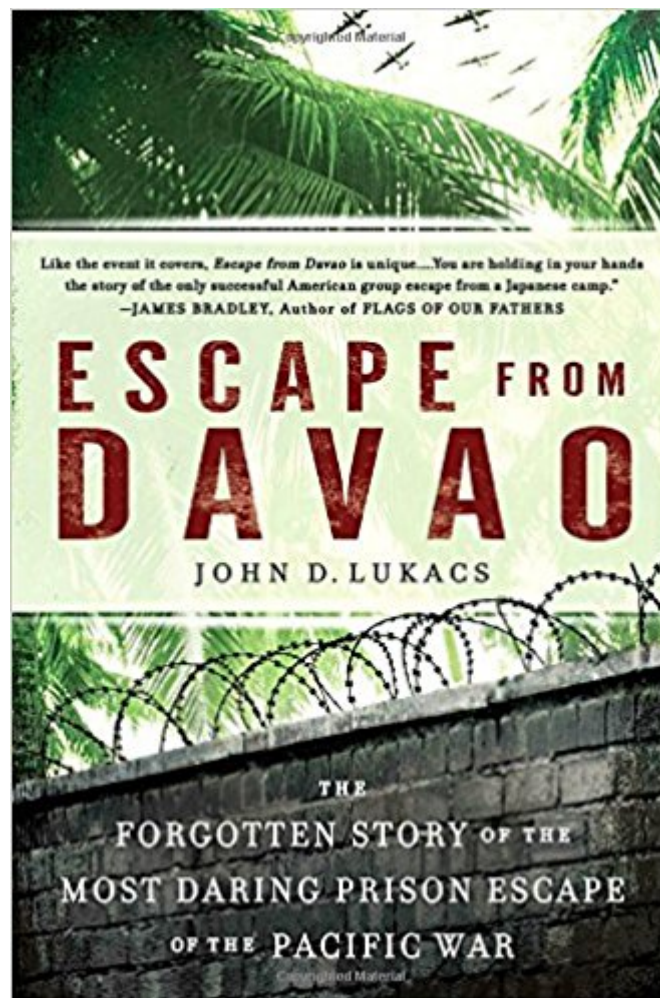




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# Escape From Davao: The Forgotten Story Of The Most Daring Prison Break Of The Pacific War



## Synopsis

One of the greatest Pacific war stories never told. On April 4, 1943, ten American prisoners of war and two Filipino convicts—nicknamed the “Davao Dozen”—executed a daring escape from one of Japan’s most notorious prison camps. Called the “greatest story of the war in the Pacific” by the War Department in 1944, the full account has never been told until now. A product of years of in-depth research, John D. Lukacs’s gripping description of the escape brings this remarkable tale to life. In this remarkable contribution to the realm of WWII POW narrative, Lukacs describes the dramatic escape for a new generation to admire the resourcefulness and patriotism of the men who fought in the Pacific. “Like the event it covers, *Escape from Davao* is unique. You are holding in your hands the story of the only successful American group escape from a Japanese camp.” —James Bradley, author of *Flags of Our Fathers*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Lukacs’s contribution to WWII POW literature reconstructs an escape by Americans from the Japanese-occupied Philippines. From biographical introductions of the dozen Americans involved, dramas of their captures at Bataan and Corregidor, and ordeals of imprisonment and maltreatment, Lukacs launches into their breakout scheme and the nail-biting danger of putting it in motion. Ably declaiming the ensuing intrepid events, Lukacs readily evokes the high tension and strenuous travails of the fugitives’ evasion of enemy patrols en route to evacuations by American submarines. But, as Lukacs recounts, their stories of Japanese atrocities (which included

revelation of the Bataan Death March), in which their heroic saga was wrapped, were too hot for officialdom to handle. Fearful of endangering remaining POWs, but also tempted by the opportunity to put to use the inevitable intensification of popular anger against the Japanese, FDR expressly delayed release of the news until it coincided with a war-bond sales drive. Built from every available research source, Lukacs's diligent, impassioned history will aid and abet the ever-growing interest in the WWII fighting experience. --Gilbert Taylor --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Like the event it covers, *Escape from Davao* is unique. You are holding in your hands the story of the only successful American group escape from a Japanese camp." -James Bradley, author of *Flags of Our Fathers, Flyboys*, and *The Imperial Cruise* ""*Escape From Davao*" is a remarkable story that explores the heights of human courage and compassion even as it reveals the depths of brutality that one set of human beings is capable of inflicting on another. Exhaustively researched and superbly written, the book incorporates many elements of a well-crafted suspense novel. Indeed, readers may wish at times that it were fiction, rather than cruel, distressing fact." -Bill Sloan, author of *Brotherhood of Heroes, The Ultimate Battle* and *The Darkest Summer* "John Lukacs has justifiably brought attention to one of the Pacific War's most overlooked stories in his riveting book about the escape from Davao. Lukacs so breathes life into the tale that readers feel the d

As June 6 is observed as a day of commemoration for D-Day, the world pays their respect to those who fought the European theater of World War II off the shores of Normandy in 1944. But another greater part of the war had also been occurring within the other side of world, the War in the Pacific, and a war within the home front involving disclosure of POWs within this front of the war and uplifting the censorship that same year that would reveal the complexities and misconceptions that took place two years prior, a few months later after Pearl Harbor, and in the Philippines, the infamous Bataan Death March in 1942. John D. Lukacs takes into account and clarifies the major events by acknowledging and recognizing the forgotten heroes that returned as well as those who did not in his detailed narrative *Escape From Davao: The Forgotten Story of the Most Daring Prison Break of the Pacific War*. Lukacs elaborately documents the circumstances surrounding the Bataan Death March and the American and Filipino forces that were taken prisoner by the Imperial Japanese Army and sent to Davao Penal Colony awaiting the imminent. However, this would be one of the successful prison breaks to occur during the war, and Major William E. Dyess would be responsible for leading the men to freedom earning the Distinguished Flying Cross and later

recommended to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor but also pursuing another war, exposing the horrid conditions that thousands of individuals had to experience during the torrential ordeal that would eventually be posthumously shown in his own account *Bataan Death March: A Survivor's Account*. But the interesting element about Lukacs's narrative is that he does not recycle Dyess's story but rather expands upon it providing a chilling and haunting aspect to this historical narrative of the survivors and the major participants, and the controversy centering on the full disclosure and the limiting of information that would be dispersed to the press and the public, which contributed to the misconceptions generated during the war as depicted in a Chicago Tribune political cartoon in January 1944 that shows POWs in a desperate, helpless, and dying state with the caption that reads: "I Guess the European Front is More Important." Indeed, cartoons as well as the various references in the book are suggestive of the political atmosphere that permeated and appalled those who survived as well as their families. After reading *Escape From Davao*, one may see that this story is an important part of the War in the Pacific and World War II. In addition, it further shows the continuous need to examine this part of the war and different perspectives that existed that one is still not aware of or have forgotten. Without the key participants, such as Edward Dyess and his story, the historical narrative puzzle of understanding would not be possible. Beyond the prominent names of leaders that one has read or studied in their history textbooks, Dyess's experience and the many unnamed individuals of those who endured the struggles are relevant in telling and examining the subject of history, and again, another teachable moment.

[i]Escape From Davao[/i] by John D. Lukacs. Simon & Schuster, 2010. 429 pp. I heard about this book only about a week or 10 days ago. Although I meant to wait a bit, I just couldn't (My mother always said I lacked patience!) and an order through followed. I received the book late last week. I had read William Dyess' book [i]The Dyess Story[/i] in junior high. Then, my occasional meeting with Sam Gashio, increased my interest. I was a bit suspicious of Lukacs' credentials, since this was his first book and he is a sportswriter by trade. Lukacs did an excellent job on the book and it sort of capped all the other stories of the escape from Davao Penal Colony in early 1943 by 10 Americans and two Filipinos. Although the story has been told by several of the escapees, this is the first recent history. ("10 Escape From Tojo" was a gathering of the "Life" Magazine articles of 1944). The book was divided roughly into four parts: 1) biographies of all twelve and what they did prior to the surrender. 2) The Bataan Death March and capture (a few were captured on Corregidor or on other places; 3) Life in prison camp and the escape; 4) Arriving home and the attempts to get the story of the POW camps published (one escapee was recaptured several months later and executed). Many

of the wartime accounts had to skim over what happened during the actual escape attempts until arrival in Australia. Lukacs did a good job of showing the troubles and difficulties in reaching the guerrillas and proving they were legitimate escapees. He also describes the rivalry between Wendall Fertig and other guerrilla leaders. I had always thought the escapees left together, but they were evacuated in three groups over several months. One small surprise was that Grashio was evacuated by the submarine [i]Bowfin[/i], currently on display at Pearl Harbor (which I saw in 2005). One point that Lukacs made over and over, was without the help and cooperation of the local Filipino population. Two were convicted murderers. Lukacs writes touchingly of one of the escapees visiting a dying Manuel Quezon and obtaining pardons for both. The last hundred pages of the book (besides the epilogue) details the attempts to get the story told to the American public, which was one of the main reasons the prisoners escaped. What followed was nearly six months before the red tape could be removed. Tragically, William Dyess was killed in a P-38 crash before this could happen. The epilogue was interesting to me, personally. All but one of the escapees has since passed away. Sam Grashio, my personal hero, in 1999. At least two of the Marines saw further combat in the Pacific towards the end of WWII, which surprised me. I recognized several names that I had contacted during the time I wrote my magazine articles in the 1980s. The book is a great compilation of what happened during the only large-scale prison break from a Japanese POW camp of World War II. It describes well the tragedy, horror and bravery of the prison camps and the "March". It is well-written and very readable. Well worth purchasing, or at least, reading.

This is a fascinating account of a prison escape by a group of US POWs in the Philippines in World War II. After surviving the Bataan Death March and horrific prison camp conditions, they were eventually transferred to the Davao penal colony, where a small group of soldiers hatched an escape plan and somehow survived. The book is interesting for a lot of reasons: First, I didn't know much about the War in the Pacific as it related to Japanese treatment of Americans, which was truly shocking. The book provides a statistic about the number of POWs who died at the hands of the Japanese in the Pacific versus the number who died at the hands of the Germans and Italians in Europe, and the difference is staggering. Additionally, the hostile terrain of the Philippines made escape that much more difficult. I was also unfamiliar with the guerrilla network in the Philippines. Without giving too much away, it was critical to the escapees' long-term survival. I thought the last quarter of the book dragged a little bit and could've been summarized into a few pages, but overall, it was a quick read with some moments of white-knuckled terror. I highly recommend.

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