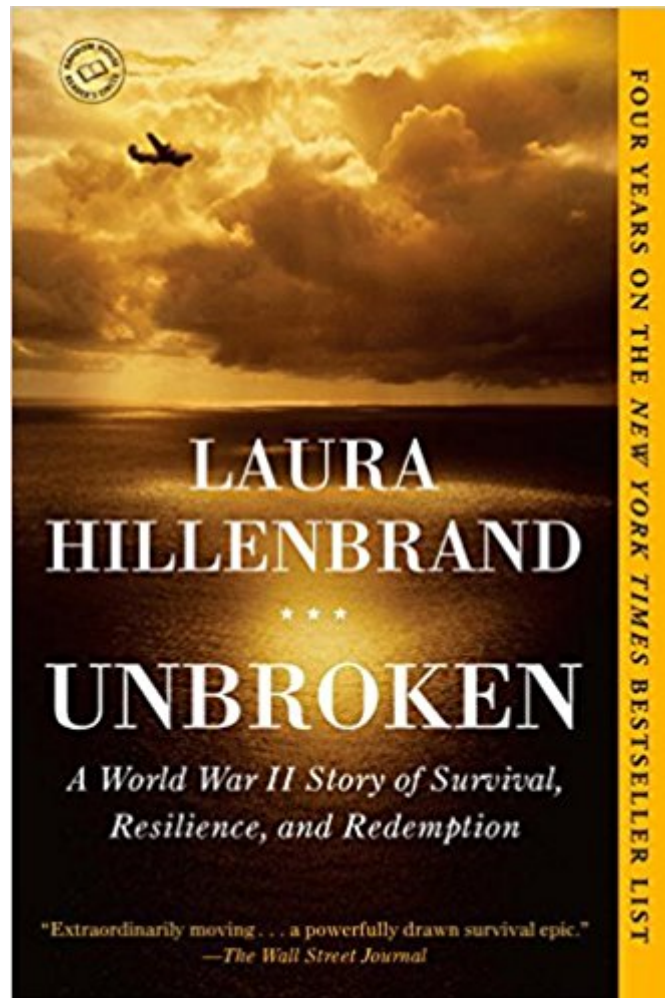




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# Unbroken: A World War II Story Of Survival, Resilience, And Redemption



## Synopsis

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • NOW A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE • Look for special features inside. Join the Random House Reader's Circle for author chats and more. In boyhood, Louis Zamperini was an incorrigible delinquent. As a teenager, he channeled his defiance into running, discovering a prodigious talent that had carried him to the Berlin Olympics. But when World War II began, the athlete became an airman, embarking on a journey that led to a doomed flight on a May afternoon in 1943. When his Army Air Forces bomber crashed into the Pacific Ocean, against all odds, Zamperini survived, adrift on a foundering life raft. Ahead of Zamperini lay thousands of miles of open ocean, leaping sharks, 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. • Appearing in paperback for the first time • with twenty arresting new photos and an extensive Q&A with the author • "Unbroken is an unforgettable testament to the resilience of the human mind, body, and spirit, brought vividly to life by Seabiscuit author Laura Hillenbrand. Hailed as the top nonfiction book of the year by Time magazine • Winner of the Los Angeles Times Book Prize for biography and the Indies Choice Adult Nonfiction Book of the Year award • "Extraordinarily moving . . . a powerfully drawn survival epic." • "The Wall Street Journal • "[A] one-in-a-billion story . . . designed to wrench from self-respecting critics all the blurby adjectives we normally try to avoid: It is amazing, unforgettable, gripping, harrowing, chilling, and inspiring." • "New York • "Staggering . . . mesmerizing . . . Hillenbrand's writing is so ferociously cinematic, the events she describes so incredible, you don't dare take your eyes off the page." • "People • "A meticulous, soaring and beautifully written account of an extraordinary life." • "The Washington Post • "Ambitious and powerful . . . a startling narrative and an inspirational book." • "The New York Times Book Review • "Magnificent . . . incredible . . . [Hillenbrand] has crafted another masterful blend of sports, history and overcoming terrific odds; this is biography taken to the nth degree, a chronicle of a remarkable life lived through extraordinary times." • "The Dallas Morning News • "An astonishing testament to the superhuman power of tenacity." • "Entertainment Weekly • "A tale of triumph and redemption . . . astonishingly detailed." • "O: The Oprah Magazine • "[A] masterfully told true story . . . nothing less than a marvel." • "Washingtonian • "[Hillenbrand tells this] story with cool elegance but at a thrilling sprinter's pace." • "Time • "Hillenbrand [is] one of our best writers of narrative history. You don't have to be a sports fan or a war-history buff to devour this book" • "you just have to love great storytelling." • "Rebecca

Skloot, author of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Best Books of the Month, November 2010: From Laura Hillenbrand, the bestselling author of *Seabiscuit*, comes *Unbroken*, the inspiring true story of a man who lived through a series of catastrophes almost too incredible to be believed. In evocative, immediate descriptions, Hillenbrand unfurls the story of Louie Zamperini--a juvenile delinquent-turned-Olympic runner-turned-Army hero. During a routine search mission over the Pacific, Louie's plane crashed into the ocean, and what happened to him over the next three years of his life is a story that will keep you glued to the pages, eagerly awaiting the next turn in the story and fearing it at the same time. You'll cheer for the man who somehow maintained his selfhood and humanity despite the monumental degradations he suffered, and you'll want to share this book with everyone you know. --Juliet Disparte

The Story of *Unbroken* by Laura Hillenbrand Eight years ago, an old man told me a story that took my breath away. His name was Louie Zamperini, and from the day I first spoke to him, his almost incomprehensibly dramatic life was my obsession. It was a horse--the subject of my first book, *Seabiscuit: An American Legend*--who led me to Louie. As I researched the Depression-era racehorse, I kept coming across stories about Louie, a 1930s track star who endured an amazing odyssey in World War II. I knew only a little about him then, but I couldn't shake him from my mind. After I finished *Seabiscuit*, I tracked Louie down, called him and asked about his life. For the next hour, he had me transfixed. Growing up in California in the 1920s, Louie was a hellraiser, stealing everything edible that he could carry, staging elaborate pranks, getting in fistfights, and

bedeviling the local police. But as a teenager, he emerged as one of the greatest runners America had ever seen, competing at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, where he put on a sensational performance, crossed paths with Hitler, and stole a German flag right off the Reich Chancellery. He was preparing for the 1940 Olympics, and closing in on the fabled four-minute mile, when World War II began.

Louie joined the Army Air Corps, becoming a bombardier. Stationed on Oahu, he survived harrowing combat, including an epic air battle that ended when his plane crash-landed, some six hundred holes in its fuselage and half the crew seriously wounded. On a May afternoon in 1943, Louie took off on a search mission for a lost plane. Somewhere over the Pacific, the engines on his bomber failed. The plane plummeted into the sea, leaving Louie and two other men stranded on a tiny raft. Drifting for weeks and thousands of miles, they endured starvation and desperate thirst, sharks that leapt aboard the raft, trying to drag them off, a machine-gun attack from a Japanese bomber, and a typhoon with waves some forty feet high. At last, they spotted an island. As they rowed toward it, unbeknownst to them, a Japanese military boat was lurking nearby. Louie's journey had only just begun. That first conversation with Louie was a pivot point in my life.

Fascinated by his experiences, and the mystery of how a man could overcome so much, I began a seven-year journey through his story. I found it in diaries, letters and unpublished memoirs; in the memories of his family and friends, fellow Olympians, former American airmen and Japanese veterans; in forgotten papers in archives as far-flung as Oslo and Canberra. Along the way, there were staggering surprises, and Louie's unlikely, inspiring story came alive for me. It is a tale of daring, defiance, persistence, ingenuity, and the ferocious will of a man who refused to be broken. The culmination of my journey is my new book, *Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption*. I hope you are as spellbound by Louie's life as I am. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Starred Review. From the 1936 Olympics to WWII Japan's most brutal POW camps, Hillenbrand's heart-wrenching new book is thousands of miles and a world away from the racing circuit of her bestselling *Seabiscuit*. But it's just as much a page-turner, and its hero, Louie Zamperini, is just as loveable: a disciplined champion racer who ran in the Berlin Olympics, he's a wit, a prankster, and a reformed juvenile delinquent who put his thieving skills to good use in the POW camps. In other words, Louie is a total charmer, a lover of life--whose will to live is cruelly tested when he becomes an Army Air Corps bombardier in 1941. The young Italian-American from Torrance, Calif., was expected to be the first to run a four-minute mile. After an astonishing but losing race at the 1936 Olympics, Louie was hoping for gold in the 1940 games. But war ended those dreams forever. In

May 1943 his B-24 crashed into the Pacific. After a record-breaking 47 days adrift on a shark-encircled life raft with his pal and pilot, Russell Allen "Phil" Phillips, they were captured by the Japanese. In the "theater of cruelty" that was the Japanese POW camp network, Louie landed in the cruelest theaters of all: Omori and Naoetsu, under the control of Corp. Mutsuhiro Watanabe, a pathologically brutal sadist (called the Bird by camp inmates) who never killed his victims outright--his pleasure came from their slow, unending torment. After one beating, as Watanabe left Louie's cell, Louie saw on his face a "soft languor.... It was an expression of sexual rapture." And Louie, with his defiant and unbreakable spirit, was Watanabe's victim of choice. By war's end, Louie was near death. When Naoetsu was liberated in mid-August 1945, a depleted Louie's only thought was "I'm free! I'm free! I'm free!" But as Hillenbrand shows, Louie was not yet free. Even as, returning stateside, he impulsively married the beautiful Cynthia Applewhite and tried to build a life, Louie remained in the Bird's clutches, haunted in his dreams, drinking to forget, and obsessed with vengeance. In one of several sections where Hillenbrand steps back for a larger view, she writes movingly of the thousands of postwar Pacific PTSD sufferers. With no help for their as yet unrecognized illness, Hillenbrand says, "there was no one right way to peace; each man had to find his own path...." The book's final section is the story of how, with Cynthia's help, Louie found his path. It is impossible to condense the rich, granular detail of Hillenbrand's narrative of the atrocities committed (one man was exhibited naked in a Tokyo zoo for the Japanese to "gawk at his filthy, sore-encrusted body") against American POWs in Japan, and the courage of Louie and his fellow POWs, who made attempts on Watanabe's life, committed sabotage, and risked their own lives to save others. Hillenbrand's triumph is that in telling Louie's story (he's now in his 90s), she tells the stories of thousands whose suffering has been mostly forgotten. She restores to our collective memory this tale of heroism, cruelty, life, death, joy, suffering, remorselessness, and redemption. (Nov.) -Reviewed by Sarah F. Gold (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Laura Hillenbrand follows her spectacular biography of race horse Seabiscuit with the gripping tale of Louis Zamperini's life and tribulations as a downed airman in WWII. "Unbroken" is written in Hillenbrand's inimitable style, blending global events with personal anecdotes from the lives of Lt. Zamperini and his family and fellow airmen. Prior to the war, Zamperini had overcome serious obstacles to become one of the best milers in track and field history, competing in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin with Jesse Owens and other famous American Olympians. As America entered WWII he became a bombardier flying B-24s in the Pacific Theater. When his plane ditched in a

remote part of the Pacific, Louie and two colleagues survived the crash, and drifted thousands of miles for more than 47 days before being picked up by a Japanese ship. During those weeks they endured unthinkable hardships: one of their companions died aboard the life raft, they were repeatedly attacked by sharks, and strafed by Japanese planes. After Louis and his pilot, Russell Allen Phillips were "rescued," an even more harrowing journey began, as both men were incarcerated in a series of brutal Japanese POW camps. The vivid descriptions of camp conditions and the inhuman brutality of many of the prison guards are gut wrenching. The depth of depravity that Louie and his fellow prisoners had to endure is unimaginable, and the fact that he survived to live a productive life is a testament to his incredibly resilient and unbreakable will and spirit. The author does not shrink from telling about Louie's post-war troubles with alcohol, rage and PTSD. The account of Zamperini's reluctant encounter with evangelist Billy Graham, is touching and instructive, for it proved to be the event that allowed Louie to finally come to peace with his hatred of the worst of the Japanese guards, Mutsuhiro Watanabe, "The Bird," Louie was finally free of the haunting nightmares and his need to seek revenge. As I was reading this book, one of my close friends saw the book in my hand and said: "This book changed my life!" The story of Louie Zamperini and his trials and tribulations is that inspiring.

What a fantastic book! I read it in only a few sittings. It was so engaging I couldn't put it down. My father also flew in B-24 Liberators in WWII. My father, Hank Culver, flew with Jimmy Stewart, the movie actor-turned bomber pilot. They both flew some of the most dangerous missions of the war together in the same squadron - 703rd Bomb Squadron, 445th Bomb Group - with the U.S. 8th Air Force based at Tivenham, England. I used this book as a reference for the writing of my first book, *Nine Yanks and a Jerk*, and my forthcoming books, *Daylight Raiders* and *Son of a Gunner*. See my website page [www.sonofagunnerb24.com](http://www.sonofagunnerb24.com) for more details. You did a wonderful job Lauren. Your book is a great tribute to Mr. Zamperini and the Greatest Generation!

This work of World War II non-fiction sticks with me even two years after reading it. The scenes, drama and people that populate the story were so vividly drawn that I can still recall the Japanese POW camp guard named the Bird. I grew terrified each time he arrived, as if I, not Luis Zamperini, would have to drum up the mental fortitude to survive his torture. Even now my heart-rate notches up a speck. What can I say that hasn't already been said by the many reviewers who loved this book? Well, it goes without saying that I highly recommend it: for anyone who loves WWII memoirs (or any memoir for that matter), for writers of non-fiction, and for those who enjoy stories of

valor, defying the odds, and in-depth profiles. Hillenbrand is a master of detail. She researches the hell out of a story, and how she does it, I don't know, but it makes for a compelling, highly believable read. Thank you, Laura.

A truly tragic yet beautiful story affirming the importance of human life, and how its myriad struggles help define each and every one of us, for better or worse. Unbroken is the story of how one soldier, despite enduring unspeakable hardships and tortures that would drive almost anyone insane, was able to ultimately forgive those who wronged him, and eventually find healing and solace through the power of faith, hope and newfound love. We should always forgive the past, for it cannot be changed; what has happened, happened. But that does not at all mean that we should ever forget it. Instead, we can and should learn from it and use it to grow through our personal hurts and trials. "A moment of pain is worth a lifetime of glory." Truly, that is so.

This is one man's account of being a POW in Japan during World War II. The inside story of how men were so brutally treated. Then, if you survived, how it affected their life. But, it didn't end there. It tells how God can restore a broken life & heal the anger & bitterness he felt replacing it with personal peace. This book held my attention from beginning to end as it described this man's experience during the war & what him and so many of our soldiers had to endure. It was an eye opener.

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