



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

By Laura Hillenbrand



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#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • NOW A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE • 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

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.

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.

Praise for *Unbroken*

“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 blurry 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*

“Marvelous . . . *Unbroken* is wonderful twice over, for the tale it tells and for the way it’s told. . . . It manages maximum velocity with no loss of subtlety.”—*Newsweek*

“Moving and, yes, inspirational . . . [Laura] Hillenbrand’s unforgettable book . . . deserve[s] pride of place alongside the best works of literature that chart the complications and the hard-won triumphs of so-called ordinary Americans and their extraordinary time.”—**Maureen Corrigan, *Fresh Air***

“Hillenbrand . . . tells [this] story with cool elegance but at a thrilling sprinter’s pace.”—*Time*

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon 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.

From Publishers Weekly

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
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From [Booklist](#)

A second book by the author of *Seabiscuit* (2001) would get noticed, even if it weren't the enthralling and often grim story of Louie Zamperini. An Olympic runner during the 1930s, he flew B-24s during WWII. Taken prisoner by the Japanese, he endured a captivity harsh even by Japanese standards and was a physical and mental wreck at the end of the war. He was saved by the influence of Billy Graham, who inspired him to turn his life around, and afterward devoted himself to evangelical speeches and founding boys' camps. Still alive at 93, Zamperini now works with those Japanese individuals and groups who accept responsibility for Japanese mistreatment of POWs and wish to see Japan and the U.S. reconciled. He submitted to 75 interviews with the author as well as contributing a large mass of personal records. Fortunately, the author's

skills are as polished as ever, and like its predecessor, this book has an impossible-to-put-down quality that one commonly associates with good thrillers. HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: This departure from the author's previous best-seller will nevertheless be promoted as necessary reading for the many folks who enjoyed the first one or its movie version. --Roland Green

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jeffrey Brown:

Book is actually written, printed, or highlighted for everything. You can know everything you want by a book. Book has a different type. As you may know that book is important matter to bring us around the world. Alongside that you can your reading talent was fluently. A publication Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption will make you to possibly be smarter. You can feel considerably more confidence if you can know about every thing. But some of you think that open or reading a new book make you bored. It is not make you fun. Why they could be thought like that? Have you in search of best book or suited book with you?

Judith Roemer:

This book untitled Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption to be one of several books that best seller in this year, that is because when you read this guide you can get a lot of benefit into it. You will easily to buy this particular book in the book shop or you can order it by using online. The publisher of the book sells the e-book too. It makes you more readily to read this book, since you can read this book in your Touch screen phone. So there is no reason for you to past this book from your list.

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