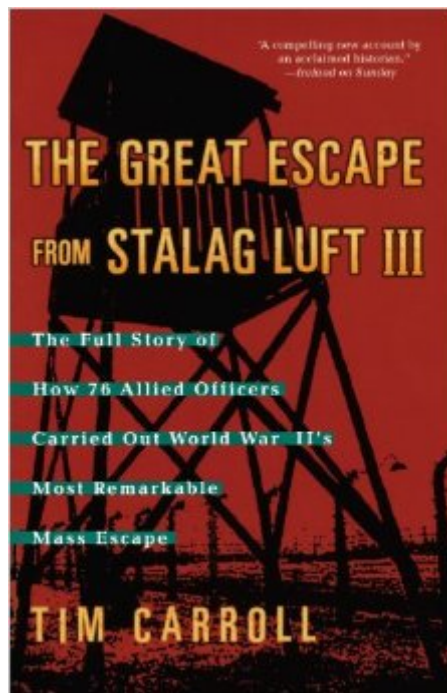


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The Great Escape From Stalag Luft III: The Full Story Of How 76 Allied Officers Carried Out World War II's Most Remarkable Mass Escape



Synopsis

The true story of one of the most heroic feats of World War II...the daring prison camp breakout that inspired the classic film *The Great Escape*. Stalag Luft III was one of the Germans' "escape-proof" prison camps, specially built by Hermann Göring to hold Allied troops. But on March 24, 1944, in a courageous attempt by two hundred prisoners to break out through a series of tunnels, seventy-six Allied officers managed to evade capture -- and create havoc behind enemy lines in the months before the Normandy Invasion. This is the incredible story of these brave men who broke free from the supposedly impenetrable barbed wire and watchtowers of Stalag Luft III -- and who played an important role in Allied intelligence operations within occupied Europe. The prisoners developed an intricate espionage network, relaying details of military deployment, bombings, and raids. Some of them were involved in other daring escape attempts, including the famous *Wooden Horse* episode, also turned into a classic film, and the little-known *Sachsenhausen* breakout, engineered by five *Great Escapers* sent to die in the notorious concentration camp on Hitler's personal orders. Tragically, fifty of those involved in the *Great Escape* were murdered by the Gestapo. Others were recaptured; only a few made it all the way to freedom. This dramatic account of personal heroism is a testament to their ingenuity and achievement -- a stirring tribute to the men who never gave up fighting. Includes eight pages of photographs and illustrations, excerpts from Göring's testimony during postwar investigations, and a list of the men who escaped.

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Customer Reviews

Most of the information presented herein has already been presented by earlier authors writing about the *Great Escape*. One unique feature of this book is the testimony of those 7 of the original

76 escapees who were still alive at the time of publication of this book (2004). Most of them believed, in retrospect, that the Great Escape had been worth it. But one of them opined that it was not worth the lives of the 50 who had been murdered by the Germans. The book has some unique photographs, and contains an extensive bibliography of books and other materials on the Great Escape. Carroll provides good detail about the construction of the three openings (traps) of the tunnels Tom, Dick, and Harry. A group of Polish RAF officers who were engineers designed and built the traps. So cleverly were the traps constructed that the Germans found only one of them (Tom), and then only by accident and after numerous unsuccessful intensive searches. The author Carroll makes some biased statements that detract from the otherwise excellent quality of the book. He claims, for instance, that the escaped POWs were engaging in espionage because the information they obtained was not all entirely related to their escape prospects, as they necessarily observed objects of military significance during their traverses through Germany and Germany-occupied territories. But, using such a loose definition of espionage, how could escaped POWs not be engaging in espionage? He also makes the ridiculous statement that Churchill wanted to "flatten every acre" of Germany, and brings up the destruction of Dresden in this regard.

This is one of the most fascinating books on a subject that has always fascinated me -- the 1944 "Great Escape" from Stalag Luft III. The details are well-known to most World War II students and movie fans -- although the movie took considerable liberties with the facts to provide Steve McQueen with a ripping good motorcycle chase scene. But the real story of the "Great Escape" is more complicated than people realize. The British, Commonwealth, American, and Allied POWs behind the wire are often portrayed in books, films, and TV shows as being clever, high-spirited pranksters pulling one over on their buffoonish, humorless, square-headed captors on a daily basis. This book shows that it was not so -- escape from PoW camps was a difficult enterprise, waged against a fairly determined and intelligent enemy, and that it was not a case of schoolboy hijinks -- it was serious operations. The British officers who headed the Escape Committees and "X Organizations" regarded escaping as being part of fighting the war -- using escaped PoWs to distract German forces, make them mobilize increasingly scarce assets to hunt them down, and thus drain the Nazi economy and war effort. The X Organization also realized that it was the planning and working on escape attempts that boosted PoW morale -- not merely getting home. Working on escape attempts gave PoWs purpose and energy in life, instead of whiling away their captive time in inertia. Mr. Carroll takes a slightly different approach to telling this familiar story -- we hear directly from many PoWs and relatives, learning about such things as how they communicated

by code to MI 9 in London, and their interrogation by the Gestapo. There are some holes...

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