



Defiant Courage: Norway's Longest WWII Escape

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In late March of 1943, four commandos arrive in northern Norway with a mission of establishing a base for sabotage operations. Before they can unload their cutter, they are betrayed, as a German Schnell boat arrives and turns the quiet fjord into a battle zone. Only one man, Jan Baalsrud, survives the attack. This is the story of his perilous journey to freedom.

Wounded, the dauntless soldier swims icy fjord waters, climbs snow-laden granite peaks, endures violent snowstorms and is hurled off a mountain by an avalanche. Fleeing the Gestapo and battling the harsh Arctic cold, Jan suffers snowblindness and frostbite. Though he possesses raw courage and an iron will, they are not enough to deliver him all the way to neutral Sweden and safety.

The people of northern Norway's Troms district step forward to assist Jan. Selflessly defying Nazi dictates, more than sixty people risk their lives to help the fugitive commando.

Flee

Defiant Courage: Norway's Longest WWII Escape Details

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From Reader Review Defiant Courage: Norway's Longest WWII Escape for online ebook

Candace Simar says

really enjoyed this true story about the Norwegian resistance during WW2. A must read for anyone interested in this subject.

Christine says

I highly recommend this book as an engaging and compelling recounting of a true story from WWII. Though the story is related in a very factual manor, it innately is emotional due to its dramatic situation. I was riveted by the story and hated having to put it down before finishing. The photos, maps, quotes, documents, and graphics included help to enhance one's understanding and appreciation of the realities of the extreme situation documented in the book. You can't help being not only inspired but completely amazed.

Nate says

After a sabotage mission goes horribly awry in the farthest reaches of Arctic Norway, one Norwegian soldier overcomes unthinkable challenges as he escapes from occupied Norway to free Sweden while being pursued at every turn by the German Army and his own traitorous countrymen. Along the way he is aided by countless brave Norwegians who face certain death to themselves and their loved ones if caught by the enemy. He sustains severe cold-related injury to his extremities - as a physician it is clear he had gangrene and was likely septic - prompting multiple self-amputations (which if not performed would have led to his demise by sepsis). This is a feel-good story and would make a great movie, and like many WWII tales makes you wonder time and time again "where did they find that (Defiant) Courage".

Linda Marquardt says

Very interesting and almost unfathomable story of which little is known. It showed the resilience of the human spirit to survive and points out the courage and compassion of those who helped their fellow countryman find his way to freedom. I really like the story despite trying to keep straight all those involved with names foreign to me. A riveting tale if you like WWII history. I would recommend it highly.

Nathan Albright says

When I started this story, I realized that I was already familiar with this story from my previous experience reading and watching the movie based on it [1]. Even so, although most of the story was familiar, this is a compelling story and it is worth reading from a different perspective, in this case largely from the point of view of the patriotic Norwegians who helped the desperately injured Jan Baalsrud escape from certain death at the hands of the Gestapo. If you want to read a story about Norway's experience in World War II [2] and

how a large group of people joined together to help someone in need and thumb their nose despite the extreme dangers to themselves at the Germans and their quislings, this book will certainly be worth your time. It is written in an intriguing style and at more than 300 pages it is not as fast a read as many contemporary books are. Even so, it is still a read full of pathos as well as an obvious and open admiration for the patriotism of Norwegians in the grip of Nazi oppression.

In terms of its contents, this book takes a chronological approach to the daring escape of Baalsrud from a sabotage mission gone wrong because of the mission's betrayal by a Norwegian merchant whose name was changed so that he would not be subject to continual harassment by the readers of this (and other) books. The authors begin with some context about Norway's fall to German troops and the response of many patriotic Norwegians to Norway's fall, including a company of commandos who joined with the British and had a base in the Shetlands Islands where they would engage in occasional raids. The authors then discuss the mostly fatal raid that was taken by twelve commandos, eleven of whom were killed, as well as the dangerous cat and mouse game played between the Nazis and their local supporters and patriotic Norwegians concerning the rescue of Baalsrud, which is told in great detail. Some of the names are changed to protect the guilty, but the book is full of drama and testament to the courage of many brave men and women--the authors are wide in their giving of credit where it is due, to Norwegians and Lapps, to men, women, and children, to families and bachelors, to carpenters and fishermen and reindeer herders and teachers, and the book comes with plenty of maps and photos of the people involved to give the reader and understanding of the rugged and unforgiving terrain of Northern Norway in the area around Tromsø.

What is especially admirable about this book is the way it puts virtue out front and center. This is not a book that looks at history with a cynical approach, or that views patriotism as a bad thing or that is unable to call good and evil by their proper names. This is a book about the many ways that people can be heroes, and how even children in times of war and occupation can be forced into difficult and complex situations. The authors show the resourcefulness and resilience of people in immensely difficult situations while simultaneously showing aspects of social history that has a compelling narrative while also showing the "little people" who are often ignored by history. All of this is done in a way that ought to make Norwegians feel justly proud about how they maintained freedom in spirit even in the face of German oppression. Yet in reading this book, there is a sense as well that while this reader at least (and no doubt many others) have no problem celebrating the sabotage of German military efforts in occupied Norway and the bravery and resistance of the Norwegian people, that the commandos and freedom fighters celebrated here would not be nearly as noble if their cause had not been just. Thankfully, it was.

[1] See, for example:

<https://edgeinducedcohesion.blog/2016...>

<https://edgeinducedcohesion.blog/2016...>

[2] See, for example:

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Rachel says

This is a true story written by a friend from church. It was very well written and readable. It was both tragic and inspiring. I love hearing stories of courage and people who will do the right thing no matter the consequences. It causes me to stop and ponder "what was it that gave the strength to risk everything for someone else". I like things that force me to think that and when I find an answer to then think "how can I be like that so I can always stand for the right".

Sharon says

A trial of endurance few could equal

This is a story of a brave man. Through determination, perseverance and the help of many good patriotic citizens of Norway and Sweden he walked, swam and crawled to escape capture by the Nazis. Then with their help he was transported over the mountain ranges to Sweden and freedom.

How did he/they manage it? For that you will need to read this story. Don't expect edge of your seat suspense or tension. It isn't that kind of book. But it is the story of a man's will to survive and the people that would give everything to help him.

Michelle says

I borrowed this book from an uncle who served as a missionary in the same region of Norway where much of this account took place. I have read many accounts of harrowing escapes from the Nazis yet as I read this one, I kept asking myself, "How did this guy even survive this?" His tale is truly remarkable in that so many people (both resistance members & not) were involved in helping this man escape, yet no one ever turned him in or betrayed any of his helpers either during or after the event! The French could've learned a lesson from these Norwegians.

Linda says

An amazing story of escape and endurance. One person survived the bombing of their ship in a fjord in northern Norway by the Germans in WWII. The authors interviewed the people who helped him along the way and did lots of research to find the true story. Maps showing his path of escape are included.

Peggy says

Excitement throughout!

I could hardly put this book down, wondering what would happen next! Seldom have I heard stories of Norway occupied by Nazi's during WWII. the persistence and courage of the main character, Jan, and the Norwegian resistance fighters makes me aware of the characteristics that are important in humanity. Ordinary citizens, giving what they can, keeping hope alive.

Issi says

A tremendous factual story of courage in the face of adversity; set in Norway during WWII.

Nancy Ann says

I agree with the reviewer who said it was hard to read in that sometimes I had to put the book down and take a break before going on, Jan's ordeal just couldn't seem to get any worse, but it did. He was close to death many times, yet he persevered, under almost impossible conditions and circumstances. The miscommunication toward the end was frustrating, but all contact between his heroic helpers had to be scrupulously protected from prying Nazi military intelligence. The Norwegians' mettle is revealed at every turn in this account of defiant courage.

A Steven Bouchard says

Just outstanding! The real heros.

5 stars for lack of higher number of stars! Just an excellent read!

I have read many WW II books and holocaust books. This book revealed to me the really true heros of WW II that were just "people" in Nazi fascist controlled areas. Whatever happened to those citizens of any country that fought with the underground and suffered so much than generals, colonels and majors? Who really made a difference and should have been recognized above and beyond those that were trained, educated and bound by rules?

This is a fantastic story of every kind of resilience, determination, belief systems, integrity, credibility, social resilience of integrity and of a very beautiful people we rarely hear about, because they don't bear the names of regularly tooted military leaders. Just every day people, a not so every day world, but, an every day belief system

True heros not reported to the world! A complete shame! If one has ever wondered about skill, education, compassion, neighborhood resistance, regional skills and morality, then, this is the top 1% of books to read! I

So sad that, at 64 years of age, this is the first time and book I have read about true heros and the "little insignificant people." Shame upon writers!

Erika says

This is an AMAZING true story! I didn't love the "voice" of the author -- I think it was a combination of too many simple sentences, and a little moralizing, that gave the book a kind of Dick and Jane get a Moral Compass feel. However! It was obviously painstakingly researched, and its incredible to me that someone who researched so well would also be a fantastic writer, so I'm not surprised and I don't judge. Much. But the author is local, and I hope if I ever meet her, she understands that! If you're interested in: WWII, Norwegians, war, prisoners, escapees, fugitives, mountains, reindeer, Samis, people, the world, the meaning of life -- read this book! I don't care what I said about the "voice". It will sound so stupid to you that I even said that after you read this!

John says

An interesting story of individual survival and the courage of the Norwegians resistance to the Nazi occupiers. A bit tedious/repetitive at times and hard to follow the escape route as it is described. The maps in the kindle edition are not that helpful.
