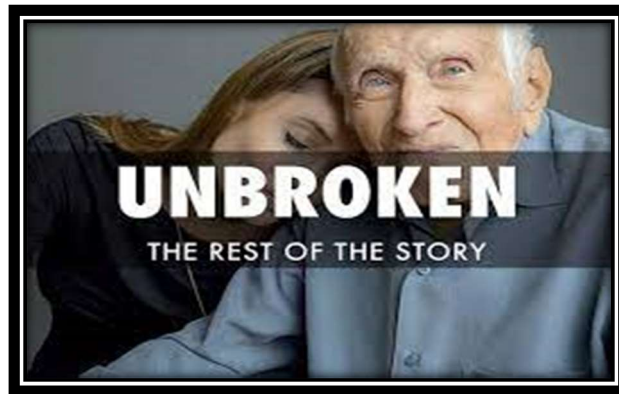


LOUIS ZAMPERINI

THE MAN WHO REFUSED TO GIVE UP OR GIVE IN WHEN LIFE GOT TOUGHER

THIS ARTICLE HAS THREE PARTS

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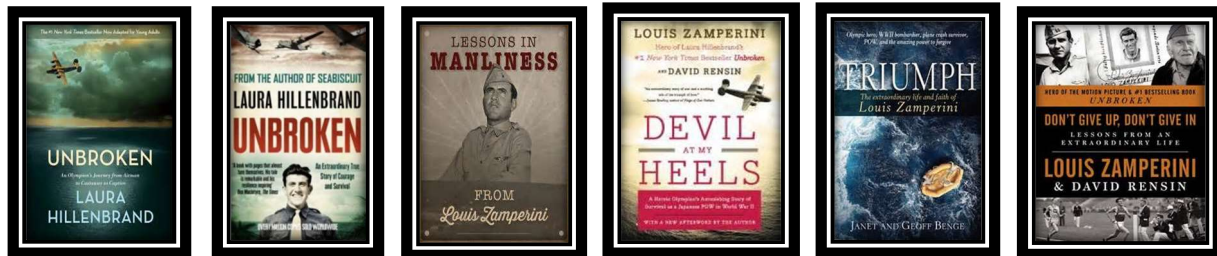
A VALUABLE LESSON ON THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS AND REDEMPTION

"You've got to focus on one thing- coming in first – It's a natural thing we're born with" Louis Zamperini

Louis Zamperini was a juvenile delinquent, a troublemaker, an Olympic runner @ 19 years of age, a WW2 war hero, an alcoholic, a friend of Billy Graham's, and a religious missionary, whose life was the subject of a best-selling book that was made into a highly rated Movie.

Louis Zamperini, the Olympic runner and World War II officer who survived a horrific plane crash, a seven-week journey across the Pacific in a raft, near starvation and unspeakable torture in Japanese POW camps, has died. He was 97. At the time of his death, Zamperini resided in Hollywood, California. There is no gravesite as Louie had chosen to be cremated.

The cause of death was pneumonia, his family said in a statement from Universal Pictures, which is making a film adaptation of **"Unbroken,"** Laura Hillenbrand's bestselling chronicle about Zamperini's life.....also the writer of Seabiscuit



"Having overcome insurmountable odds at every turn in his life, Olympic runner and World War II hero Louis Zamperini has never broken down from a challenge. He recently faced the greatest challenge of his life with a life-threatening case of pneumonia. After a 40-day-long battle for his life, he peacefully passed away in the presence of his entire family, leaving behind a legacy that has touched so many lives" the Zamperini family statement said.

SEE HIS UNBELIEVABLE LIFE STORY VIDEO AT THE BELOW LINK

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aEGL-wyz1yk>

"It will be hard to make a film worthy of this great man," Angelina Jolie told the Hollywood Reporter in 2013. "I am deeply honored to have the chance and will do all I can to bring Louie's inspiring story to life."



Louis Zamperini with "Unbroken" director Angelina Jolie in October. The film, based on the bestseller about his life, opened in theaters this past Christmas Day "His indomitable courage and fighting spirit were never more apparent than in these last days."

SEE THE INTERVIEW BY TOM BROKAW WITH ANGELINA JOLIE AND LOUIS ZAMPERINI

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbLdlr6lBI>

2015 ROSE BOWL PARADE GRAND MARSHALL

World War II bombardier and Olympic runner Louis Zamperini was named this year's (2015) Rose Bowl Parade Grand Marshall shortly before his death in July of this year. (2014)



A white horse without a rider walked the route to honor the former prisoner of war, who is the subject of the new Angelina Jolie-directed movie "Unbroken."



Louis Zamperini's Family Ride in the Grand Marshall's Car

"It was a very cold morning, but we had a great time," his son Luke Zamperini, 61, told the Daily News. "My dad would have loved to have been here, though it might have been too cold for him. He was a pretty tough guy."

A BIT ABOUT THE AUTHOR

On her Facebook page, Hillenbrand wrote, "Farewell to the grandest, most buoyant, most generous soul I ever knew. Thank you, Louie, for all you gave to me, to our country, and the world. I will never forget our last, laughing talk, your singsong 'I love you! I love you!' and the words you whispered to me when you last hugged me goodbye, words that left me in happy tears, words that I will remember forever. I will love you and miss you to the end of my days. Godspeed !



The only meeting that Louie and Laura ever had...after the book was finished but Louie passed away before the movie was released

The only time that Louie and Laura Hillenbrand ever met was after both the Book and the screenplay for "Unbroken" was released. Laura tells about this meeting in the video referenced at the beginning of the following article about her life.

Angelina Jolie, the director of the "Unbroken" film, added, "It is a loss impossible to describe. We are all so grateful for how enriched our lives are for having known him. We will miss him terribly."

Louis Zamperini did not live to see "Unbroken" debut in Western New York movie theaters. The Olean native died over the summer.

But Zamperini, 97 at his death, *did live long enough to see the publication of Laura Hillenbrand's book about his life.* And, as Hillenbrand told The Buffalo News in an interview published in 2012, Zamperini was very moved by the work.

Hillenbrand's second book, "Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption" was chosen as the October selection of The Buffalo News Book Club in 2012. *Hillenbrand told The News at that time that she had learned about Louie Zamperini while investigating the subject of her first book, the racehorse Seabiscuit.*

She had seen the runner's name in old papers from the Depression era. *"The way I found Louie was through Seabiscuit,"* Hillenbrand said in 2012. "When I was researching Seabiscuit, I was perusing a lot of 1930s newspapers – that's what I like to do, read the whole newspaper."

Hillenbrand said that she had noted Zamperini's name in the old news coverage and decided to keep him in mind. "I resolved then that when I was done with Seabiscuit, I would try to find him," said Hillenbrand.

Hillenbrand's first book, "Seabiscuit: An American Legend," came out in 2001 and also became a movie. In the book, she wrote about a racehorse that beat the odds and became famous across the country.

She said that Zamperini told her how much he appreciated "Unbroken". I remember he left this long message, and he said, 'Laura you put me through it,' " Hillenbrand said in the interview. "But he loved it."

"He said I had made all his prison camp friends real to him again. He said he had to stop reading every so often to remind himself the war was over."

During their collaboration (which ultimately spanned more than 75 phone interviews and exhaustive globe-spanning research supported by approximately 400 endnotes), *Hillenbrand and Zamperini agreed not to meet in person until the book was published.* The author needed to envision Louie as the young troublemaker whose spirit would transform him into a hero for the ages...and the subject was busy enough with a charitable schedule and speaking engagements that seemed impossible for men half his age.

Hillenbrand talked to The News at that time about issues with her health that make it difficult for her at times to travel or do her research work. "When I'm not feeling well, I can't do much," she said.

However, the author said her extensive research into World War II for "Unbroken" taught her new things.

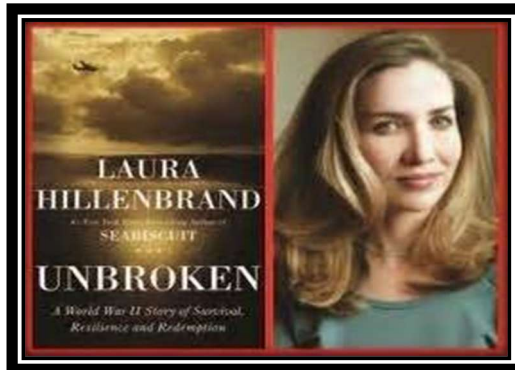
Hillenbrand worked on "Unbroken" for seven years. She had to learn about vintage bombers, among other things.

She said it is important to be passionate about your research when you are writing books. "You've got to be in love with it," Hillenbrand said. "It's got to be something that's going to make you happy." "You have to be obsessed."

Hillenbrand's book was released in November 2010. It remains on the bestseller lists almost four years later. It was named the top nonfiction book of 2010 by Time Magazine.

LAUREN HILLENBRAND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

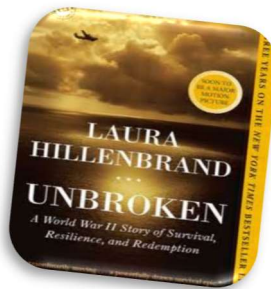
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At the end of this section, there will be an article, sort of an Autobiography of Laura Hillenbrand, the author of the book “Unbroken”, concerning her telephone conversations with Louis Zamperini and what compelled her to write this book and much more about her life. She is a very wonderful and talented lady who has endured much in her life.

LOUIE’S STORY BEGINS

181 C



Zamperini's tale is one of those that would be dismissed as fiction if it weren't true.



Louie as a boy was always in trouble

Louis was a fighter before he was a runner, according to a biography released by the University of Southern California. His father taught him how to box so he could defend himself against bullies who taunted him because he could not speak English. Louis was a juvenile delinquent by any stretch of the word. Always in trouble, Pete Zamperini, an older brother, encouraged him to try out for the track team at Torrance High School.

There he set the national high school record in the mile at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum in 1934; his record time of 4 minutes and 21.2 seconds would last for 20 years.



When “The Tornado from Torrance” graduated, he was invited to train for the 1936 Olympic team at the USC track; he subsequently entered USC on a scholarship. Under Coach Dean Cromwell, Zamperini set a national collegiate mile mark of 4:08.3 that stood for 15 years, and in 1940 he ran an indoor mile in 4:07.6 at Madison Square Garden. To realize how fast of a time this was in 1940 it should be noted that the first under 4 minute mile was run by Roger Bannister in 1954 @ 3.59.4. The current world record for the mile is 3.43.13 and it was established in 1999.

Too bad his luck didn’t hold in Berlin, where Zamperini threw away his once-in-a-lifetime chance at Olympic glory.

“Well, you have to understand what those times were like,” he says sheepishly. “I was a Depression-era kid who had never even been to a drugstore for a sandwich.

Here I was, leaving Torrance, going on a train to New York City, going on a boat to Germany. This was more exciting to me than making the [Olympic] team. And all the food was free. I had not just one sweet roll, but about seven every morning, with bacon and eggs. My eyes were like saucers.”

By the end of the trans-Atlantic voyage, the saucer-eyed Olympic hopeful had put on 12 pounds. With this extra cargo packed onto his kinetic frame, Zamperini finished the 5,000 meters in eighth place, with a time of 14:45.8. Even so, he managed to delight an arena full of spectators, including Adolf Hitler.

“It was quite a sight,” he recalls. “Though I’d been behind, I sprinted the whole last lap, running it in 56 seconds after three whole miles. The crowd was going nuts.”

Afterward, as photographers snapped Zamperini’s picture, Hitler’s chief propagandist invited the young American runner to come to shake hands with the Nazi leader. “Aha! The boy with the fast finish!” Hitler said to Zamperini through an English interpreter.

Ask Zamperini today what he thought of the dictator, and he pauses to reflect: “It wasn’t until many years later that I looked back and realized I’d shaken hands with the worst tyrant the world has ever known.” His impression at the time was of a man with “an annoying disposition, like a dangerous comedian.”

The young Olympian’s off-the-track exploits were equally sensational. One of his bunkmates was famed sprinter Jesse Owens. “He was a prince of a guy, a sweet, humble man,” Zamperini recalls. “The coach told him to keep an eye out for me because I was, you know, a bit frisky – and they were letting us go out into the city at night.”



Jesse Owens

Owens wasn’t watchful enough, because Zamperini almost lost his life again, executing a harebrained prank: trying to snatch a Third Reich souvenir.

"They don't have small-sized beers in Germany," Zamperini says, by way of an excuse for his lunatic caper. "I was drinking in a pub across from the Reichstag where some Nazi flags were flying, and I thought, 'I've got to have that flag for a souvenir.'" The inebriated American had already clambered up the flagpole when he heard the guards shouting and firing in the air. Zamperini's German consisted of a single word: bier. All the same, he got the point; meekly climbing down, he offered flattery: "I wanted to take it home to remember my wonderful time here," he told the guards in English. After conferring with their colonel, the soldiers decided to let the crazy athlete have his souvenir. (That flag, along with the ring from Adolphe Menjou and many other souvenirs, are now part of the Zamperini Museum, kept in the attic of his Hollywood home.)



"During the Olympics, I stole Hitler's swastika flag off the Reich Chancellery. I thought, Boy, what a souvenir!! "

Ironically, in his next life-and-death crisis, it was academics, not athletics, that would save Zamperini: specifically, the teachings of USC physical education professor Eugene Roberts. "Dr. Roberts inspired us," Zamperini recalls. "He taught us about the human body, what muscles we were using. He also taught us to take inventory of our minds and to think before we opened our mouths. A good lesson in mind over matter."

After the Olympics and graduation from USC, Zamperini had planned to continue competing as an athlete; he was favored to take a victory lap in the 1940 Games. But World War II intervened, and instead of training on the track, he trained as an Army Air Corps bombardier.



Louie examines a shell hole in the side of his plane after returning from a mission

With the 1940 Olympics canceled due to the outbreak of World War II, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps before Pearl Harbor and eventually became a bombardier on the sometimes unwieldy B-24 Liberator, nicknamed the "Flying Brick." In late May of 1943, he and a crew took off on a search mission for a fallen pilot. Somewhere over the open Pacific, the plane failed and crashed into the ocean.

Zamperini and two colleagues survived, but their troubles were just beginning.

He and the other crew members had to survive 47 days on a raft, in scorching sunlight and often without drinking water. They collected rain when it fell and killed albatrosses who were on the raft. Sharks constantly circled beneath them. One of the other survivors died on the 27th day and was wrapped and cast overboard.

When Zamperini and his buddy, pilot Russell Allen "Phil" Phillips, finally washed ashore on a Pacific island, they found they had drifted 2,000 miles -- only to be taken in as prisoners of war by the Japanese.

Life only got harder. The men were fed poorly and feared being killed by their captors. Zamperini was singled out for abuse by one of the Japanese guards because he was so well known.

He was tormented by prison guard Mutsuhiro "Bird" Watanabe, who was later included in General Douglas MacArthur's list of the 40 most wanted war criminals in Japan, but evaded prosecution.



The "Bird"

"I could take the beatings and the physical punishment," Mr. Zamperini said, "but it was the attempt to destroy your dignity, to make you a nonentity that was the hardest thing to bear." Mr. Zamperini said his athletic training had helped him withstand the torment.

"For one thing, you have to learn self-discipline if you are going to succeed as an athlete," he said. "For another thing, you have to have confidence in yourself and believe that no matter what you're faced with, you can deal with it — that you just can't give up. And then there's the aspect of staying in shape. And humor helped a lot, even in the gravest times."

Held at the same camp was then-Major Greg "Pappy" Boyington, and in his book, *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, he discusses Zamperini and the Italian recipes Zamperini would write to keep the prisoners' minds off the food and conditions.

First Louis was declared missing at sea, and then on May 28, 1944, a year and a day after his plane crashed, he was mistakenly declared KIA (killed in action).

The following month Louie's parents received a death certificate signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

"In grateful memory of First Lieutenant Louis S. Zamperini, A.S. No. 0-663341, who died in the service of his country in the Central Pacific Area, May 28, 1944.

He stands in the unbroken line of patriots who have dared to die so that freedom might live, grow, and increase its blessings.



Capt. Louis Zamperini, left, and Capt. Fred Garrett at Hamilton Field, Calif., after their release from a Japanese prisoner of war camp in 1945.



Louis hugs his Mom on return to the USA

In 1945, at the war's end, Mr. Zamperini was liberated along with hundreds of other prisoners of war at the Naoetsu camp, northwest of Tokyo. "Though he was still sick, wasted, and weak, he glowed with euphoria such as he had never experienced," Ms. Hillenbrand wrote.

POST-WAR LIFE



Zamperini married Cynthia Applewhite in 1946, to whom he remained married until she died in 2001. Also, Torrance Airport, in his California hometown, was renamed Zamperini Field in his honor, on the fifth anniversary of the Attack on Pearl Harbor

As documented in "Unbroken," after the war, Zamperini struggled to adjust. He drank heavily. He had trouble sleeping. He wanted revenge on the Bird. But, thanks to a newfound faith -- inspired by visits to Billy Graham's Los Angeles Crusade in 1949 -- and an unshakable spirit, he overcame his troubles and became an inspirational speaker.

He established a camp for troubled youths called Victory Boys Camp. His wife, Cynthia, was a cornerstone of his life. They were married for more than 50 years until she died in 2001.

SEE AN INTERVIEW WITH MUTSUHIRO WATANABE "THE BIRD" AT THE BELOW LINK

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3-S3_j9j-8

He also forgave his wartime tormenters, some of them in person during a 1950 visit to a Tokyo prison where they were serving sentences for war crimes. He was willing to forgive the Bird, though Watanabe refused to meet with Zamperini when he had the chance, in 1998, when Zamperini returned to Japan to carry the torch at the Nagano Winter Games.

Louis then wrote a letter to "The Bird"

SEE THE VIDEO AS LOUIS READS THE LETTER FOR THE BIRD

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_rHWZQdjfHQ

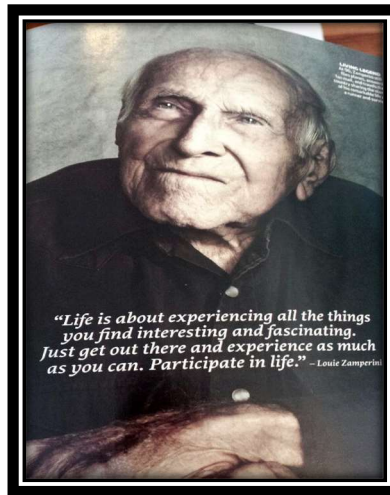
Scott Blackmun, CEO of the U.S. Olympic Committee, issued a statement offering condolences to the family and saying, "We're proud to say that among his many accomplishments and triumphs, Mr. Zamperini was an Olympian. His fighting spirit was a true representation of Team USA and our country, both in Berlin and throughout his life. His presence will be missed."

Louis Zamperini, the subject of the best-selling book Unbroken, was interviewed by Jay Leno on the Tonight Show on Thursday, June 7, 2012. Zamperini talks about how he was tortured and experimented upon by the Japanese on a Pacific island after he was captured having survived 47 days on a life raft. He was eventually shipped to Japan for further torture and ended up as a slave laborer for Japanese corporations.



Louis as he appeared on the "Tonight" Show with Jay Leno
(Unfortunately, NBC has chosen to block the video of this show)

He survived the infamous Ofuna Naval Interrogation Center in Kamakura and was then shipped to two of Japan's most horrific prison camps near Tokyo: Omori where he slaved for Nippon Express and then Naoetsu where he labored for Shin-Etsu Chemical and Nippon Stainless (NSSC). These multinational companies still exist with the same names.



Unbroken will be translated into 23 languages worldwide. Japanese is not one of the languages as no publisher in Japan has shown an interest in this bestseller.

JAPANESE REACTION

Posted: Friday, December 12, 2014, 1:20 pm

TOKYO (AP) — Angelina Jolie's new movie "Unbroken" has not been released in Japan yet, but it has already struck a nerve in a country still wrestling over its wartime past.

The buzz on social networks and in online chatter is decidedly negative over the film, which depicts a U.S. Olympic runner who endures torture at a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp during World War II.

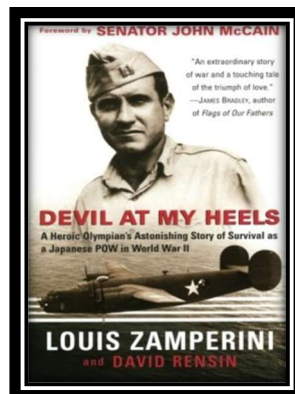
Some people are calling for a boycott of the movie, although there is no release date in Japan yet. It hits theaters in the U.S. on Dec. 25.

Others want the ban extended to Jolie, the director — unusual in a nation enamored with Hollywood, and especially Jolie and her husband Brad Pitt, who have reputations as Japanese lovers.

VIDEO SHOWING ADDITIONAL JAPANESE NEGATIVE REACTION

http://www.bradfordera.com/news/article_9fc62fae-822b-11e4-a6dd-934585c5357b.htm

Zamperini wrote two memoirs about his experiences, both bearing the same title: Devil at My Heels. The first (written by Helen Itria), subtitled "**The Story of Louis Zamperini**", was published by Dutton in 1956. The second, subtitled "**A World War II Hero's Epic Saga of Torment, Survival, and Forgiveness**" (written with David Rensin), bore a familiar title but was top to bottom wholly new, and with much additional information. It was published in 2003 by William Morrow. **It contains a Foreword by John McCain.**



THE REST OF THE STORY

THE PART THAT THE MOVIE DIDN'T COVER BUT THE BOOK DID



THE WAR AFTER THE WAR

You'd think a man who survived two plane crashes, a Japanese POW camp, and 47 days adrift in the ocean could conquer anything. The new DVD "[CAPTURED BY GRACE](#)" ([See link at the end of this article](#)) tells the rest of Louis Zamperini's story, which was not depicted in the movie "Unbroken."

But WWII veteran and Olympic athlete Louie Zamperini couldn't win his battle with alcohol and depression. That is until he encountered the life-transforming power of Jesus Christ when his wife practically dragged him to a Billy Graham meeting under a Los Angeles circus tent in 1949.

"My life was completely changed ever since," Zamperini said in a new video from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. The video, *Captured by Grace*, picks up Zamperini's story where the movie *Unbroken* left off.

Nightmares began in prison camp and plagued Zamperini long after he returned home to California. "The nightmares were every night," he said. "I couldn't get rid of it."

Time wasn't healing his wounds; it was making them worse. One night Zamperini dreamed he was strangling The Bird. Instead, he woke up strangling his wife.

Scared and desperate, he started getting drunk to forget about the horrors that plagued him.

With her husband out drinking every night, Zamperini's wife Cynthia filed for divorce. After surviving so much, Zamperini was about to lose everything.

A TURNING POINT

That's when a concerned neighbor invited Cynthia to the Billy Graham Crusade taking place in a Los Angeles tent dubbed the Canvas Cathedral. She accepted the invitation and then accepted Christ. Her husband wanted no part of Christianity, but his heart softened when Cynthia said she no longer wanted a divorce.



The Canvas Cathedral in Los Angeles, where Louis Zamperini and many others accepted Christ in 1949 after hearing a young Billy Graham preach the Gospel

After storming out of the tent the first night, Zamperini amazingly returned for one more evening. That time, the Bible verses Billy Graham quoted went straight to Zamperini's heart.



"Of all my near-death experiences my life never passed before my eyes," he said. "But when Billy Graham quoted Scripture my life did pass before my eyes."

For the first time in years, **Zamperini remembered the promise he made to God when he was floating in the South Pacific.**

"My life passed before my eyes, and I saw an ugly life," Zamperini said. "Yes, I had a lot of great times. A lot of great experiences, and a lot of escapes from death, but I still didn't like my life after the war. It was terrible."



Louis Zamperini and Billy Graham at the 1949 Los Angeles Crusade where Zamperini made a life-changing decision for Christ

That night in L.A., Zamperini went forward and accepted Christ, and the biggest miracle of his life was set in motion.

"I knew I was through getting drunk," Zamperini said. "I knew I was through smoking, and I knew I'd forgiven all of my guards including The Bird. Never dawned on me again that I hated the guy.

"That was the first night in all those years I'd never had a nightmare, and I haven't had one since."

[BACK TO JAPAN](#)

Zamperini's transformation was so all-encompassing, that he returned to Japan to share the Gospel with hundreds of Japanese troops he once hated. This time, they were the ones behind bars, imprisoned for war crimes. Zamperini watched as many of them accepted Christ. **He attempted to meet with the bird to state his forgiveness, but the Bird would not meet with him.**

He went on to share his faith around the world, speaking at several Billy Graham Crusades and cultivating a friendship with Billy Graham that lasted until Zamperini's death on July 2, 2014.



Louis Zamperini speaks at the 1958 San Francisco Crusade

Though they first met in 1949, the connection between the two men grew after Billy Graham read Zamperini's story in *Unbroken*, Laura Hillenbrand's 2010 bestseller.

More than 60 years later, Mr. Graham was compelled to write Zamperini a letter after hearing a more detailed account of his 1949 life-changing conversion to follow Christ in *Unbroken*.

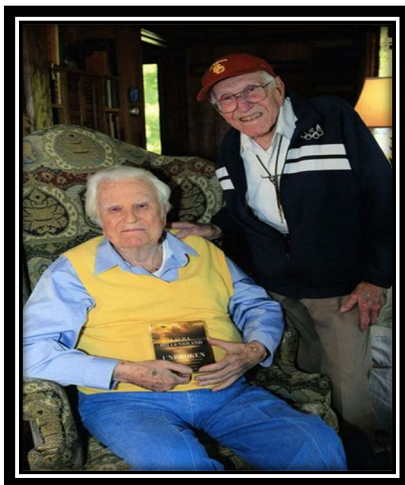
"Dear Louis," wrote Billy Graham, "My associate read me parts of the new book about you yesterday. What a life you have lived. What a description you have in the book of your conversion to Christ in 1949, and the great part that [your wife] Cynthia played in it, which I was aware of, but not in such detail. I had tears in my eyes and praise in my heart for what God has done through you."

Zamperini visited Mr. Graham in June of 2011 at his home in Montreat, N.C., and also visited the Billy Graham Library where he held a book signing at age 94. Zamperini was an inspirational speaker and teamed up with Mr. Graham at several of his Crusades, including San Francisco (1958) and Los Angeles (1963).



Picture of Louis Zamperini and Billy Graham from 1949

"This Billy Graham thing is a phenomenal miracle the way it started," Zamperini said. "The way it spread out. I'm one guy who got saved, and I've spoken to hundreds of thousands and had my testimony in papers where millions read it...One person! Think of the spider-web effect all over the world."

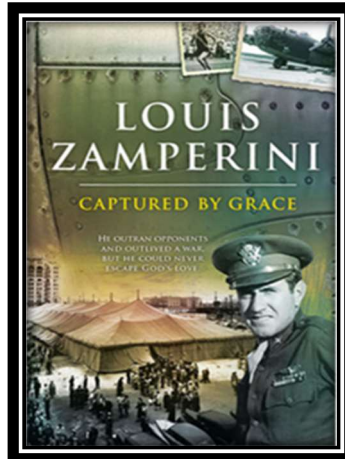


Louis and Billy Graham in 2011

The movie Unbroken opened in theaters on Christmas Day, 2014, the same day BGEA (Billy Graham Evangelistic Association) released Captured by Grace, and details much of Zamperini's extraordinary life.

The Unbroken movie omits the last several chapters of Hillenbrand's book, leaving out Zamperini's conversion to Christianity and the miraculous transformation that followed.

In Captured by Grace, audiences can see the rest of the powerful redemption story.

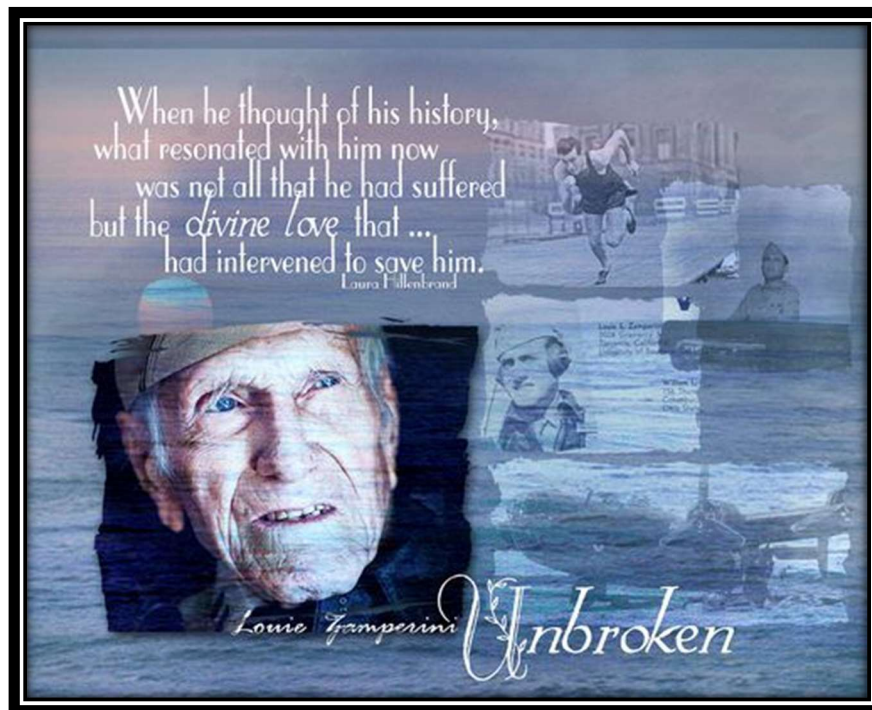


CAPTURED BY GRACE - LOUIS ZAMPERINI

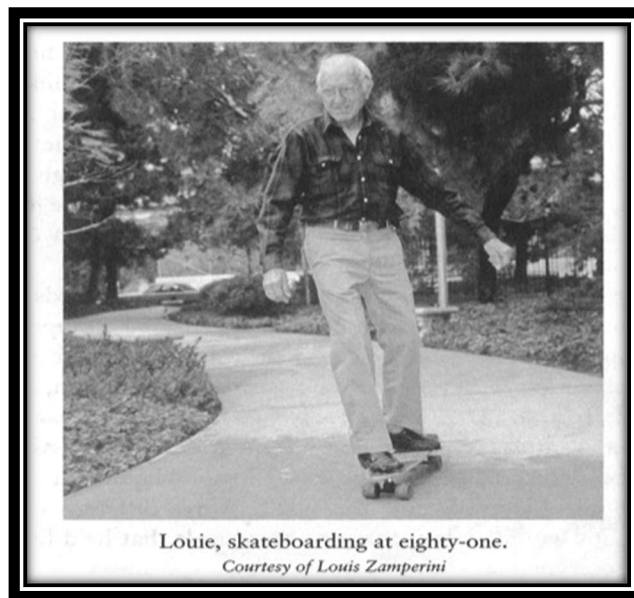
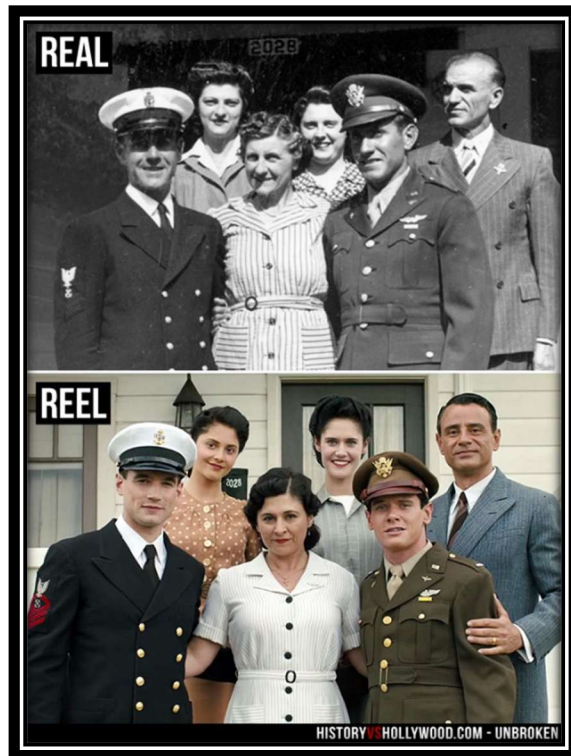
Please type or paste the following link into your browser to watch this video

<http://billygraham.org/video/louis-zamperini-captured-by-grace/>

"Thank God for Billy Graham," Zamperini said in the 30-minute DVD. "He's indelible in my heart and mind. The heart of this story is when I found Christ as my Savior. That's the heart of my whole life.



THE ZAMPERINI FAMILIES

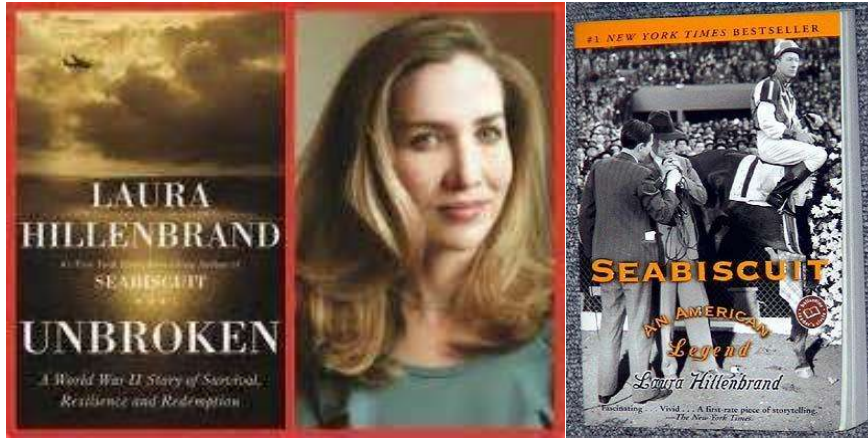


Zamperini's vaunted athleticism continued to defy the passing years. He skied until he was 91 and, at 65, took up skateboarding, which he didn't give up until the age of 81. But he still jogged at 87.

"I've made it this far and refused to give up because, all of my life, I've always finished the race ".....Louis Zamperini

**THE STORY OF LAURA HILLENBRAND - THE WRITER OF
BOTH UNBROKEN & SEABISCUIT
A COURAGEOUS WOMAN WHO DEALS WITH A DEBILITATING DISEASE**

181B



A VERY SPECIAL INTERVIEW WITH LAURA HILLENBRAND ON CBS 'FACE THE NATION'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mkl-tNe7wvM>

INTRODUCTION

Laura Hillenbrand is the author of the critically acclaimed *Seabiscuit: An American Legend*, which spent 42 weeks at #1 on the New York Times bestseller list, in hardcover and paperback. *Seabiscuit* was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, won the Book Sense Nonfiction Book of the Year Award and the William Hill Sports Book of the Year Award, landed on more than fifteen best-of-the-year lists, and inspired the film *Seabiscuit*, which was nominated for seven Academy Awards, including Best Picture. According to Newsweek, *Seabiscuit* is the best-selling sports book in history.

Hillenbrand's New Yorker article, "A Sudden Illness," won the 2004 National Magazine Award, and Laura is a two-time winner of the Eclipse Award, the highest journalistic honor in thoroughbred racing. The New Yorker's article "Sudden Illness" can be read in its entirety at the following link:

"A SUDDEN ILLNESS" BY LAURA HILLENBRAND FOR THE NEW YORKER MAGAZINE

http://cfsresearchcenter.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=79:a-sudden-illness-how-my-life-changed-by-laura-hillenbrand&Itemid=435



She and actor Gary Sinise were the co-founders of Operation International Children) a charity that provided school supplies to needy children through American troops. Laura lives in Washington, D.C.

HER STORY

In a 2014 interview on 60 Minutes, Bob Schieffer said to Laura Hillenbrand: To me your story – battling your disease ... is as compelling as his (Louis Zamperini's) story. [This link to view this 60-minute segment is shown directly below her picture at the beginning of this article about Laura.](#)

After the stunning success of "Seabiscuit," Hillenbrand suffered a relapse of the chronic fatigue syndrome that has ruled her life for more than two decades. From 2007 through the summer of 2009, she never left her house; for some of those months, she never left her room. Her relationship with a friend named Flanagan was pushed to its limits.



Laura and the jockey that rode Sea Biscuit into Horse Racing History

But all the while, she was calling people she was too weak to visit, and e-mailing the people she was too weak to call. She was requesting newspapers from archives and scanning forgotten POW lists. She was finding a guy who owned a clunky Norden bombsight and persuading him to set the contraption up on her kitchen table so she could understand how soldiers accurately dropped bombs during World War II. "We spent a while," she says delightedly, "bombing Phoenix."

Last week, after nearly a decade of laboring, Hillenbrand's second book was released - a biography of the Olympic runner whose dreams of breaking the four-minute mile were smashed by a plane crash and an unspeakable stay in a Japanese war camp. It is called "Unbroken."

Zamperini says "Laura told me she wanted to write my biography. I told her I was already finishing my [memoir]. She said I must do it. I said, Laura, I've milked this thing dry. There's nothing left. She said, I must."

Louis Zamperini is 93. In his running days, he was the most famous racing mammal aside from Seabiscuit, which is how Hillenbrand learned about him to begin with. Zamperini was frequently mentioned on the sports pages along with the horse she was profiling: his juvenile delinquent childhood, the redemption he found in running, the bitterness he felt when he returned from war, and the soothing balm of forgiveness. His celebrated story had already been the subject of three books. When Hillenbrand phoned him, he couldn't imagine there was anything to add.

"But she found so many things," Zamperini says - prison diaries he hadn't known his fellow inmates were keeping, for example, or the fate of the boat that rescued him after his plane crash. "I have to call her and ask her what happened to me in certain prison camps."



For seven years, they developed a friendship in absentia. Zamperini didn't know why all of their conversations were over the phone until he read an interview with Hillenbrand and learned about her illness. Then, "I sent her one of my Purple Hearts. I said you deserve this more than me."

The book is 400 pages long. Hillenbrand interviewed Zamperini, who now lives in California, 75 times. She also spoke with his family, friends, and former comrades, many of whom died before she could finish the work. "Unbroken" is a meticulous, soaring, and beautifully written account of an extraordinary life.

Hillenbrand and Zamperini never met face-to-face until the book was published

AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE



Laura in November 2014

"I have to detach myself completely from aspirations," Hillenbrand says, discussing how she has learned to cope with her illness. "I hardly ever listen to music anymore because it arouses all of this yearning in me." She numbs herself to the things she cannot have.

Journalists have liked pointing out the irony of Hillenbrand's work: A woman for whom walking around the block constitutes a marathon writes about the finest specimens of physical endurance.

It's not irony, she says. It's escape. "I'm looking for a way out of here. I can't have it physically, so I'm going to have it intellectually. It was a beautiful thing to ride Seabiscuit in my imagination. And it's just fantastic to be there alongside Louie as he's breaking the NCAA mile record. People at these vigorous moments in their lives - it's my way of living vicariously."

In the nine years since "Seabiscuit" was published, Hillenbrand has become a receiver of narratives from fellow sufferers of CFS who want to either offer their help or ask for hers. When they can't get hold of Hillenbrand, they call her husband, leaving tear-filled messages at his American University office.

"There haven't been a lot of people who are coming forward to talk about this disease," she says ruefully. "We're all home in bed."

Asked to describe, in detail, what exactly the rather blithely named chronic fatigue syndrome feels like, Hillenbrand says, "I got sick when I was 19, and I'd been a healthy 19-year-old, so I don't have a lot to compare it to. Does it feel like the pain after you give birth? I don't know." There is nauseating vertigo. On bad days, "If the house was burning down, I could not sit up. It's a state of acute suffering when you get like that. It's kind of like pain, but . . ." she pauses. "I don't know how to describe it."

The woman who can spend paragraphs describing men who have been dead for decades, undergoing unparalleled human suffering, using records that almost no one knew existed, is unable to put into words the betrayal of her own body.

A TREMENDOUS LOVE STORY

About six months ago, Hillenbrand and Flanagan, her husband, needed to replace a rug. Because Hillenbrand wasn't able to leave the house for a carpet-buying excursion, Flanagan went alone, taking pictures of the contenders with his cellphone.

They'd met in college at a campus deli, her a sophomore, him a senior. They'd been dating for just five months when Hillenbrand got sick, which happened suddenly and nonsensically, like a book that has had all of its middle pages torn away. First, they and a friend were driving back to Kenyon College after spring break. Then, Hillenbrand could barely move. Food poisoning, doctors said, but it wasn't.



Laura Hillenbrand, in her Washington home, says she copes with her illness by detaching herself completely from aspirations. "I hardly ever listen to music anymore because it arouses all of this yearning in me," she says.

Eventually, Hillenbrand was forced to leave Kenyon College. She relocated to Chicago where her boyfriend had been accepted to graduate school, but while visiting her mother in Maryland she collapsed and knew she'd never be strong enough for the flight back to Illinois. Washington became her default home. She and Flanagan remained apart until he could find a job in the area, at which point Washington became his default home, too.

"If you had asked the 21-year-old me, **"Would you like to be someone's caretaker for the rest of your life?"**" Flanagan says, "I don't think our relationship was sufficiently evolved at that time." For years, they put off getting married; Hillenbrand wanted to be well before planning a wedding.

In the beginning, at least, "well" seemed like a reachable destination. It was ludicrous to think things might not improve. "We didn't want to . . . adopt the attitude that she might not get better," Flanagan says. *"When it became obvious she wasn't getting better, we'd been together for so long that marriage seemed . . ."*

How much closer could a ceremony bind two people who had been through what they had?

When "Seabiscuit" became a bestseller, Flanagan threw open a second-story window and gleefully shouted the news to the neighborhood. The book was a rejoinder to anyone who had ever associated CFS with laziness. And it felt good, Hillenbrand says wryly, "being able to be something other than [Flanagan's] invalid girlfriend."

But the success of Hillenbrand's book also helped uncover a cache of emotions that Flanagan had been hiding about her illness. He was exhausted, terrified, frustrated, and sad. But he feared that sharing any of this with Hillenbrand would only tax her health further, and so he was also isolated from the one person he wanted to talk to.

"I started to have doubts," he says, asking himself if he was with her out of moral duty. "I tried to persuade myself that I didn't love her."

"I thought, 'Now she's wealthy,' " he remembers. "Now I won't be the world's worst bastard if I leave."

He came to her one night in June with all of these confessions, but the resulting conversations only made their relationship stronger.

"I had to persuade myself I could leave," Flanagan says, "before I could realize that I didn't want to."

*They were married in 2008, during a good spell, at the Hay-Adams Hotel downtown. **Hillenbrand was seated for the ceremony and wasn't strong enough for the reception.*** She thinks the cake had alternating layers, chocolate, and vanilla-apricot, but she doesn't remember because she didn't get to taste it herself.

No matter. It was, both agree, a beautiful wedding.

In 2014, they separated after 28 years as a couple, living in separate homes.

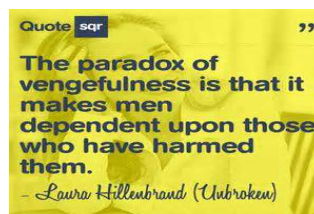
POINT OF DEPARTURE

In the carefully calibrated world of Laura Hillenbrand, every reaction has an equal and opposite reaction. On one day, she might agree to an interview but skip a shower. Energy is finite, and she typically has enough for one activity a day. She is constantly measuring herself, and monitoring herself. She might write a bestseller - she might write two - but the ensuing fame will touch her only tangentially. ***She will not see her books in Barnes & Noble. She will not move into a bigger house; too much more space would be overwhelming.***

People ask, sometimes, whether she would consider writing a book about chronic fatigue syndrome. She doesn't plan on it. She already knows what that life is like.

Before she got sick, she loved to travel. Now, when she is well enough, her favorite thing is to drive down to Reagan National Airport and sit in view of the runway. She loves the big openness of the runway and the fact that she can see very far away.

It's a gateway to another world.



As we settled into our chairs, I realized that for Hillenbrand, the film represents a letting go — not so much of Zamperini, who died this summer at 97, but of his story and her custody of it. There are no more editions to revise, no more adaptations, and as the new year arrives in her new home, ***she faces a new chapter in her life.***

I asked whether she was ready to begin thinking about a new book, and she smiled. "Yeah, I feel so fully alive when I'm really into a story," she said. "I feel like all my faculties are engaged, and this is where I'm meant to be. It's probably what a racehorse feels like when it runs. This is what it's meant to do, what its body is meant to do." She paused. "This is what my mind is meant to do."

"Does that feel close?" I asked.

Hillenbrand nodded. "Yesterday, I felt so good, and I was thinking, You know, you might be able to start," she said. "It was the first time I had the thought, maybe you can begin now. It might be in fits and starts, and I might have to quit for a while — but I think I'm going to begin again." She said she knew the subject of her next book but wasn't ready to make it public.

"It was a big story, a long time ago, that's been completely forgotten," she said. "I had never heard of any of it, and I just accidentally stumbled upon it in an old newspaper."

LAURA'S EULOGY FOR LOUIS ZAMPERINI

It seems like a proper closing for this article to include the wonderful Eulogy that Laura Hillenbrand wrote for Louis Zamperini which was read by Angelini Joile at Louie's Memorial Service.

INTRODUCTION

The Eulogy for Louis Zamperini was written by Laura Hillenbrand, the author of "Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption." Hillenbrand became close friends with the World War II hero during the seven years it took to research the write the book. Confined to her Bethesda home due to chronic fatigue syndrome, Hillenbrand's primary contact with Zamperini for years was by telephone, with some of their conversations lasting three hours or more as she painstakingly researched the book. When they finally met in person, Zamperini presented her with his Purple Heart medal. Even after the book was published, the two shared almost daily telephone calls.

Angelina Jolie, director of the film based on the book, delivered the remarks on Hillenbrand's behalf on July 13 at Zamperini's memorial service at Hollywood Presbyterian Church, where he had been a member and taught Sunday school for many years.

THE EULOGY

Louie and I began and ended in laughter.

I went to him drawn by the almost unimaginably dramatic and often harrowing events of his life. But when he spoke, something surprised and captivated me even more than his history. As he told of a war ordeal of profound suffering, in his voice, there was no mournfulness, no self-pity, no bitterness, no anger. Instead, he was cheerful, buoyant, sparkingly witty. "I'll be an easier subject than Seabiscuit," he said, "because I can talk."

If anything defined Louie, it was that. What made his life transcendent, what made it resonate in millions of hearts, was not the hardship he encountered, but how he greeted it, how he turned it to joy, and what that told the rest of us about the potential that sleeps within ourselves.

For all its grueling trials, his life was not a sad story because he wouldn't allow it to be. It was a triumph — of persistence, of optimism, of love. Louie summoned strength amid suffering, joy amid sorrow, forgiveness amid cruelty, and hope that knew no master. To him, his odyssey was a gift. His laughter was irrepressible because he looked about him and saw only blessings. The most beautiful thing about this wondrous man was that he wished for all of us to see in our own lives what he saw in his. His story was his gift to us

He scattered every talk we had with laughter. From our first hello to his last, singsong, "I love you! I love you!" every word he shared with me was infused with joy. In my hard hours, he was my steadying hand. In my happy hours, he was my gentle reminder to be alive to my blessings, to be grateful for them, and to share them as he did his. Because I knew him, I see my world, my struggles, my bliss, my dreams, differently, and my life is richer, deeper, sweeter.

When I learned he was gone, I thought of words written by Maya Angelou:

And when great souls die, after a period peace blooms, slowly and always irregularly. Spaces fill with a kind of soothing electric vibration. Our senses, restored, never to be the same, whisper to us. They existed. They existed. We can be. Be and be better. For they existed.

Who among us hasn't persevered, hasn't seen a broader horizon of possibility, hasn't seen light in the darkness, because Louie existed? And in the way in which we are all changed for knowing him, doesn't he live still?

I feel him now among us, young again, his strong legs reaching and pushing, his great lungs drawing in the sweet air, his grand, bounding heart beating, beating, beating. Listen. You can hear his laughter.



COMMENTS OF BOTH THE AUTHOR AND THE SUBJECT

181C



The paradox of vengefulness is that it makes men dependent upon those who have harmed them, believing that their release from pain will come only when their tormentors suffer.

Dignity is as essential to human life as water, food, and oxygen. The stubborn retention of it, even in the face of extreme physical hardship, can hold a man's soul in his body long past the point at which the body should have surrendered it.

A lifetime of glory is worth a moment of pain. Louie thought: Let go.

Without dignity, identity is erased.

What God asks of men, said [Billy] Graham, is faith. His invisibility is the truest test of that faith. To know who sees him, God makes himself unseen.

When he thought of his history, what resonated with him now was not all that he had suffered but the divine love that he believed had intervened to save him.

Though all three men faced the same hardship, their differing perceptions of it appeared to be shaping their fates. Louie and Phil's hope displaced their fear and inspired them to work toward their survival, and each success renewed their physical and emotional vigor. Mac's resignation seemed to paralyze him and the less he participated in their efforts to survive, the more he slipped. Though he did the least, as the days passed, it was he who faded the most. Louie and Phil's optimism, and Mac's hopelessness, were becoming self-fulfilling.

At that moment, something shifted sweetly inside him. It was forgiveness, beautiful effortless, and complete. For Louie Zamperini, the war was over.

A lifetime of glory is worth a moment of pain.

Finally, I wish to remember the millions of Allied servicemen and prisoners of war who lived the story of the Second World War. Many of these men never came home; many others returned bearing emotional and physical scars that would stay with them for the rest of their lives. I come away from this book with the deepest appreciation for what these men endured, and what they sacrificed, for the good of humanity. It is to them that this book {Unbroken} is dedicated,

Such beauty, he thought, was too perfect to have come about by mere chance. That day in the center of the Pacific was, to him, a gift crafted deliberately, compassionately, for him and Phil. Joyful and grateful amid slow dying, the two men bathed in that day until sunset brought it, and their time in the doldrums, to an end.

We just sat there and watched the plane pass the island, and it never came back," he said. "I could see it on the radar. It makes you feel terrible. Life was cheap in war.

The one who forgives never brings up the past to that person's face. When you forgive, it's like it never happened. True forgiveness is complete and total.

His conviction that everything happened for a reason, and would come to good, gave him laughing equanimity even in hard times."

If I knew I had to go through those experiences again," he finally said, "I'd kill myself.

Someone who doesn't make the (Olympic) team might weep and collapse. In my day no one fell on the track and cried like a baby. We lost gracefully. And when someone won, he didn't act like he'd just become king of the world, either. Athletes in my day were simply humble in our victory. I believe we were more mature then...Maybe it's because the media puts so much pressure on athletes; maybe it's also the money. In my day we competed for the love of the sport...In my day we patted the guy who beat us on the back, wished him well, and that was it.

All I want to tell young people is that you're not going to be anything in life unless you learn to commit to a goal. You have to reach deep within yourself to see if you are willing to make the sacrifices. Yet a part of you still believes you can fight and survive no matter what your mind knows. It's not so strange. Where there's still life, there's still hope. What happens is up to God.

I think the hardest thing in life is to forgive. Hate is self-destructive. If you hate somebody, you're not hurting the person you hate, you're hurting yourself. It's healing; actually, it's a real healing...forgiveness.

The great commandment is that we preach the gospel to every creature, but neither God nor the Bible says anything about forcing it down people's throats.

I'd made it this far and refused to give up because all my life I had always finished the race.

God knew my needs and took care accordingly.

The world, we'd discovered, doesn't love you like your family loves you.

I was raised to face any challenge.

(after asking Christ into his heart) I waited. And then, true to His promise, He came into my heart and my life. The moment was more than remarkable; it was the most realistic experience I'd ever had. I'm not sure what I expected; perhaps my life or my sins or a great white light would flash before my eyes; perhaps I'd feel a shock like being hit by a bolt of lightning. Instead, I felt no tremendous sensation, just a weightlessness and an enveloping calm that let me know that Christ had come into my heart.

People tell me, "You're such an optimist". Am I an optimist? An optimist says the glass is half full. A pessimist says the glass is half empty. A survivalist is practical. He says, "Call it what you want, but just fill the glass." I believe in filling the glass."

It was all in His hands now - as it had always been.

The Bible speaks of the Word of God as added. Sometimes it's planted by the wayside, and nothing grows there. Sometimes it's sown among the thorns and represents the person who makes the decision and then goes back to his old life of bars and chasing women or whatever. A third seed is sown among the rocks. There's sand and dirt between the rocks, and when it rains you'll see a stalk of green coming up. But on the first day with sunshine, it wilts because there is no room for roots. The fourth seed is planted on fertile soil, and finally, it takes hold and has a chance to grow and live. That's what happened to me.

To live, a man needs food, water, and a sharp mind.

God has given me so much. He expects so much out of me.

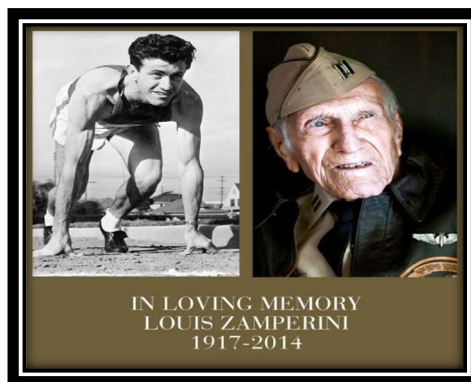
One moment of pain is worth a lifetime of glory.

(On surviving on the raft for 47 days) We had truly made it on a wing and prayer.

All I knew was that hate was as deadly as any poison and did no one any good. You had to control and eliminate it if you could."

I've always been called Lucky Louie. It's no mystery why.

The race film had confirmed a dead heat. That was great. But even better, most of the New York press finally learned to spell my name correctly.



SEE MORE ABOUT LAURA AT

<http://laurahillenbrandbooks.com/news/>

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