



The Will to Live: A japanese POWs Memoir of Captivity and The Railway

Len Baynes

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The Author kept a diary recording his 1,000 days of captivity at the hands of the Japanese army. The difficulties and risks involved in this task were immense, yet he persevered although it meant deliberately defacing and cutting up the small pieces of paper. As a result, his memoir is both contemporaneous and entirely reliable. Reading this account of life and death during the fruitless fighting and his subsequent captivity in numerous camps in Singapore and on the Death Railway in Thailand is a humbling and moving experience. He describes not just the appalling hardship and brutality but, tellingly, his relationships with fellow POWs, his captors and the local population. As an NCO, Len found himself 'fronting up' for his men and, being a self-sufficient man with strong beliefs, this led to some difficult situations, at times, with both the Japanese and his British superiors. While critical about a number of the latter, he has nothing but respect for others such as the legendary Colonel Toosey of Tamarkan Camp. Thanks to his honest and direct style, *The Will To Live* is a fine and inspiring firsthand example of the ever popular Japanese POW/Railway of Death genre. It reveals much about the nightmare experiences suffered by the Author and his colleagues and the way they coped under the most adverse conditions. His drawings complement the text and the Foreword by Ronald Searle, also a POW, speaks for itself.

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