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It happened in the shadow of Pearl Harbor—mere hours after the first attack on the day that would “live in infamy.” But few know the full story of Wake Island. Now a prominent military historian, breaking new ground on the assault, relates the compelling events of that day and the heroic struggle that followed. Thanks to the brave Marines stationed there—and the civilian construction workers who selflessly put their lives on the line to defend the island—what was supposed to be an easy victory became a protracted and costly battle for Imperial Japan. This is the story of that battle, from survivors on both sides, and with a gallery of historic photos.

Pacific Alamo: The Battle for Wake Island Details

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From Reader Review Pacific Alamo: The Battle for Wake Island for online ebook

Fredrick Danysh says

In December 1941 the Japanese attacked Wake Island which was an aircraft stopping point on the way to the Philippines. On December 7, 1941, American construction workers and US Marines were beefing up the defenses. Like the Alamo in Texas history, these American forces battled a supeior enemy force while waiting for promised relief.

Hardy says

I approached this book knowing shamefully little about the Wake Island defense- only that the garrison had resisted the Japanese briefly against enormous odds. The author, deftly drawing from veteran accounts on both sides, did an excellent job describing the transition of Wake from a provisioning stop to a military base and then to the site of a heroic military and civilian effort to repel the enemy.

A better title for the book might have been "The Saga of Wake Island," for the continuing narrative of the Wake defenders' ordeals in prison camps and their eventual liberation was every bit as powerful as that of the battle itself.

This book is an excellent and easily readable account of a part of United States history that merits greater attention and appreciation. Dive in and be as moved as I was.

Gary says

A very good book on the battle of Wake Island. It includes the story of the men involved during their heroic stand at Wake. It also tracks how their hopeless situation inspired a nation, in desperate need of good news early in the war. The author draws information from the many survivors that were still alive when the book was written.

Samuel says

Great recounting of what went on in this little corner of the world, yet was so significant to the events of WWII.

Keith says

Great account of the Wake Island fight which was hopeless but gave hope to the people back home at a dark time in early World War II just after Pearl Harbor.

Chad says

Really good account of what lead up to the incredible feat of the initial defense of Wake Island, just days after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. As with most incidents of military disaster, poor planning and upper brass decisions played a major role in the outcome.

Wukovits interviewed many, many survivors, both military(enlisted and officers) and civilian workers who were present on the tiny atoll when Japan decided to make it hers. From the personal accounts, memoirs and well preserved histories, he puts together a complete, well-rounded account of one of the most unbelievable military events in history. Wake is referred to as the Pacific Alamo, and it stands alongside the the 1836 defense of the Alamo in Texas, Thermopylae, and the British -vs- the Zulus as the greatest "last stands" in history.

If you don't know what happened at Wake, read this book. If you think you know what happened at Wake, read this book. If you have studied what happened at Wake, read this book. You won't be disappointed.

Shauna says

This was a great book about events that I'm ashamed to admit I hadn't known about previously.

David says

Wonderful Book. Hard to put down. Easy to read. Fast, yet detailed. Great Story

Madison says

"The Alamo of the Pacific" was fittingly so called. Civilians, Marines, soldiers and sailors banded together for an unexpected battle that provided the United States with a much needed reprieve after Pearl Harbor, but ultimately ended in their defeat. Civilian construction workers became soldiers overnight, volunteering to man guns and battle foes they knew little about. Wukovits paints a gripping, detailed picture of the carnage of one of the most bloody battles of WWII, and the day-in-day-out struggle of the men fighting there.

This book is written like a novel. You will find it hard to put down (you may find yourself staying up into the wee hours, unable to tear yourself away). Intensely researched and amazingly detailed, the author seeps the book in the sights, emotions, thoughts and experiences of the outnumbered men who found themselves holding a tiny atoll of land against a fearsome enemy, and later as captives in Japanese PoW camps.

There is a great deal of language in the book, but besides that, I would recommend it. *Pacific Alamo* will draw you in. You will choke on dust kicked up by bombs, you will see comrades covered in blood as they aim their 3-inch guns at sneering aircraft, you will cling to the rocky ground as bullets rain down upon you, you will feel the sun beat down upon you as you numbly fight exhaustion and discouragement. Will relief ever come?

Four stars as the highest rating I normally give.

Daniel Brown says

Wow, I wasn't aware of what went on with Wake. It's amazing what the soldiers and civilians there went through. Those guys were tough hard-asses who really went above and beyond. I keep thinking about the different people and their stories and what they all went through. I thought it was great how the Japanese perspectives were in here too. I definitely recommend it.

Brian says

An amazing story. Wake Island, strategically important due to its location - Tokyo was 2,000 miles Northwest, Hawaii 2,000 miles east, and the Philippines 2,800 miles west.

449 US Marines had arrived in August 1941. Undermanned and under equipped, they started to fortify the island. 1,146 civilians already on the island worked to build an airfield and facilities. On December 4th (the 5th in Hawaii, on other side of the dateline) 55 Marine aviators arrived.

On December 8th (again, the 7th in Hawaii and mainland US) the Japanese attacked Wake by air.

On December 11th, a Japanese naval attack group started the invasion. This handful of Marines (plus 68 US Navy and 5 US Army) not only beat them back, but a US Marine artillery gun sank the first Japanese ship of the war - a destroyer. Several hundred of the civilians took up arms, while several hundred more actively supported the battle. This crew, with only 2 fighter planes - sank 2 Japanese destroyers, a submarine, two patrol boats and heavily damaged a light cruiser. Japanese killed in action were between 800 and 900. They forced the landing back and the Japanese withdrew. Daily air raids continued until a new, larger invasion force returned. On December 23rd, with 52 US military killed, 70 civilians killed, they surrendered.

The tale of what followed is equally gripping. The mistreatment of the POWs evacuated to China, as well as the massacre of 98 civilians on Wake Island in October 1943 shows the brutality of the Japanese military.

I found the book enjoyable. The author allowed you to get to know some of the people involved. Occasionally would repeat the same facts without need and in several places contradicted himself on minor matters. He also spoke of the POW's use as slave labor by Japanese companies, naming several well known firms. However, he only briefly, in passing, talks to prisoner work details and never mentions work in factories or for specific companies.
