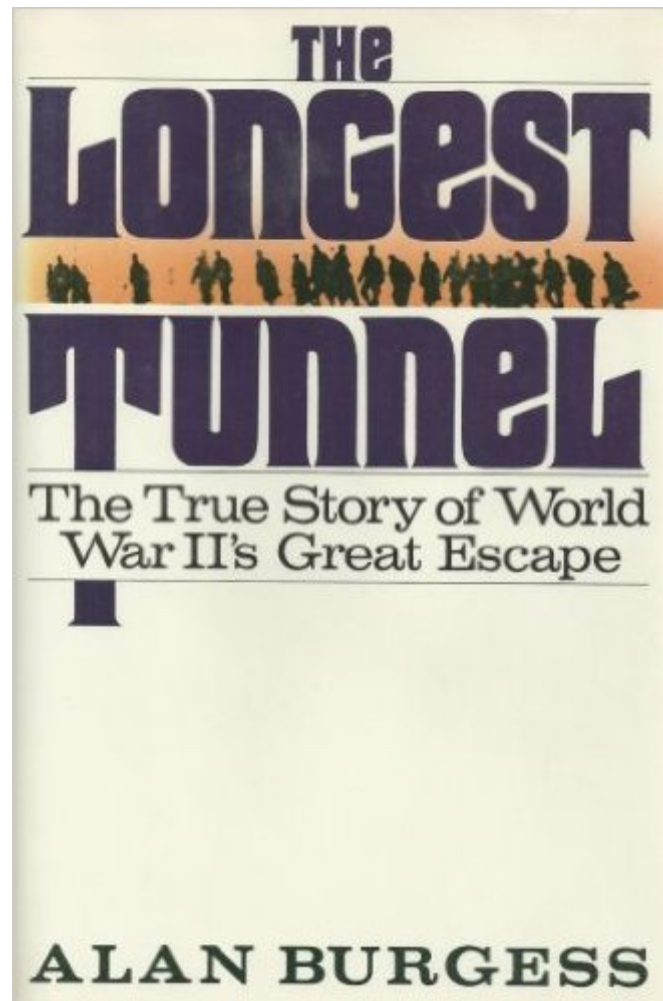


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The Longest Tunnel: The True Story Of World War II's Great Escape



Synopsis

Book by Burgess, Alan

Book Information

Hardcover: 289 pages

Publisher: Grove Pr; 1st edition (January 1990)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1555840337

ISBN-13: 978-1555840334

Product Dimensions: 9.2 x 6 x 1.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (10 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,089,618 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #111 in [Books > History >](#)

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Customer Reviews

Burgess provides information that was unavailable to Paul Brickhill for his 1950 book on the Great Escape. Burgess provides fascinating photos from German sources, now also available online, of the goon towers of Stalag Luft III, Tom's trap, Harry from various angles, etc. Fascinating new details have also come to light. Consider, for instance, the depths of the tunnels. The POWs believed that placing the tunnels thirty feet down put them out of range of the microphone listening devices. It turns out that the devices still were able to pick up the sounds of the tunneling. The Germans thus knew that tunneling was going on, but were enraged at not being able to pinpoint the location of Tom for a long time and Harry up to the breakout of the 76. But the depth of the tunneling evidently made the signal diffuse enough to prevent the listeners from zeroing on the exact site of the tunnel. Burgess describes the three Polish engineer-pilots who were responsible for the design of the traps for Tom, Dick, and Harry. Each trap had to be completely different from any other so that the Germans could not make a generalization for subsequent searches if they found one or two of them. The challenges were considerable. The initial trapmaking was a noisy operation, requiring cover noise to be made by other POWs. The trap had to be invisible to German eyes yet capable of being closed and sealed in a few tens of seconds. Harry's trap was actually the one underneath a stove. Tom's trap was found by the Germans apparently by accident. A goon reportedly dropped a pipe at or near the trap, causing the fast-drying concrete mask to chip and thus give away the trap.

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