



## **The Last Escaper: The Untold First-Hand Story of the Legendary World War II Bomber Pilot, 'Cooler King' and Arch Escape Artist**

*Peter Tunstall , Corran Purdon (Foreward)*

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The product of a lifetime's reflection, *The Last Escaper* is Peter Tunstall's unforgettable memoir of his days in the British Royal Air Force and as one of the most celebrated British POWs of World War II. Tunstall was an infamous tormentor of his German captors. Dubbed the "cooler king" on account of his long spells in solitary, he once dropped a water "bomb" directly in the lap of a high-ranking German officer. He also devised an ingenious method for smuggling coded messages back to London. But above all he was a highly skilled pilot, loyal friend, and trusted colleague.

Without false pride or bitterness, Tunstall recounts the hijinks of training to be a pilot, terrifying bombing raids, and elaborate escape attempts at once hilarious and deadly serious—all part of a poignant and human war story superbly told by a natural raconteur. *The Last Escaper* is a captivating final testament by the "last man standing" from the Greatest Generation.

## **The Last Escaper: The Untold First-Hand Story of the Legendary World War II Bomber Pilot, 'Cooler King' and Arch Escape Artist Details**

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## **From Reader Review The Last Escaper: The Untold First-Hand Story of the Legendary World War II Bomber Pilot, 'Cooler King' and Arch Escape Artist for online ebook**

### **Pat Murphy says**

It is the memoirs of a WW 2 bomber pilot who was in the Royal Air Force and shot down over Germany and put in different prisoner of War camps. They were not concentration camps or death camps. These camps had some rules that were for the most part followed. The author has a nice easy way of telling his story. Some parts read pretty fast and some didn't. I find that history and non fiction usually does that. It was worth the read, but once will be enough for me.

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### **Thomas says**

Wow, the real Cooler King was so cool and ballsy that only Steve McQueen could have played him. However he was British and not a part of the whole "Great Escape." He and his fellow escapers did stuff that sounds like something from Mission Impossible.

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### **Sam B says**

Phenomenal. I've read many WWII memoirs, but most were written during, or soon after the war finished. I thoroughly enjoyed his sprinklings of reflections and insight looking back on the war many years later. Gripping read.

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### **Steve says**

An incredible account from the author (who served in the British RAF during World War II) who made several escape attempts from German POW camps that he was transferred to Colditz, an inescapable fortress in the mountains.

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### **Naomi says**

An exciting read, Tunstall's story invites us to imagine how we might survive under the same conditions, and also encourages us to remember just how desperate the situation was for Britain at the beginning of the Second World War and the decisions made in that desperation. Frequently funny, Tunstall also shares what discourages and distresses prisoners of war (and, arguably, any of us) and ways of coping. Plenty here for book club and older family discussions. Recommended.

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## **Chris Doelle says**

There was nothing I didn't like about this book. Read my full review -->  
<http://www.ridingwiththewindowdown.co...>

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## **Dan Shonka says**

This was a Goodread's giveaway book, and man, am i ever glad i was lucky enough to get this one!!! This is a fantastic memoir about a remarkable man and his fellow mates as they battled the Nazis. . . even after being captured and held as POWs. Tunstall's many and varied escape attempts are extremely entertaining, as are those of his fellow POWs. Perhaps even more interesting (and often humorous) were the stunts the fellows pulled just to drive their German captors mad. Tunstall's account is brutally honest, as he reflects on his own faults, and failings. He gives assessments of his fellow prisoners, naming those he respected and admired, and protecting the names of the ones who had deep troubles dealing with extended prison life. As a retired history teacher, i REALLY liked his final chapter, the Afterward. In it, he patiently takes to task those critics who try to judge one era based on the values and 20/20 hindsight of the present. His arguments are very hard to dispute indeed. I only wish i had a chance to meet this fine, courageous, creative, witty man in person. This is an extremely well-written book, and i highly recommend it to all, whether you like to read fiction or non-fiction. ('Cause it will yet again prove that truth is often stranger than fiction.)

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## **Bruce says**

Better than your average WWII memoir. Amazing to see the lengths prisoners would go through to escape and get back to the fighting especially when one could be shot for the effort. Popularly written. a favorite incident found one of the officers asking for "air discipline" during an escape. That being not to scream out should one fall while trying to repel down a five story building.

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## **Kathleen Varga says**

Peter Tunstall's book is excellent, well written and informative. It was interesting to discover how ill prepared England was for the coming war compared to Germany. My admiration went to the prisoners and their ingenuity and perseverance in trying to escape. The author's full life afterward was well deserved. Thank you to Goodreads and Overlook Books for a free copy of this book.

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## **Edward Wallin says**

### **A great and exciting read!**

Best book I have ever read on the POW experience in WW II. The author frustrated his captors at every turn but retained his sense of humor and humanity in the most trying circumstances. He somehow returned to lead a very normal life after five terrible years.

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## **Samuel Tyler says**

'The Last Escaper' opens differently to many of the great escape biographies that were released soon after the war as it is told some 70 years later. Peter Tunstall was a RAF pilot who was shot down and spent many years as a Prisoner Of War across occupied Europe, including in Colditz. He lived through the war, but also lived through many decades of peace. Will these years of the relative quiet life lessen the tales of bravery and dare doing of the war? Of course not!

Tunstall's biography purports to give more perspective on being a POW during WW2 and that it won't be just another boy's own adventure. However, it does not take long to work out that this is not strictly true. Tunstall was known as the 'Cooler King' during the war due to the amount of time spent in solitary confinement after repeated attempts to escape various camps. Not only did he try to escape, but when he was trapped he spent as much time as possible disrupting his captives. With this in mind, 'The Last Escaper' has some great stories to tell; many of them not that highbrow.

The one thing that comes off the page more than any other is the strong character of Tunstall himself. It is clear that he was a single minded man and this would have been needed to survive the war and partake in as many escape attempts as he did. He obviously had a glass-half-full approach to life and this reflects on his stories; many of them light-hearted asides about botched escapes or pranks on the guards.

There is also a darker side to the book, which is only right when exploring the subject matter. Although Tunstall never contemplated suicide, there are elements of 'The Last Escaper' which explore what it felt like to be trapped and nowhere to go. The afterword is particularly poignant as Tunstall discusses the vilification of the Allied Bombers after the war. The importance of hindsight is integral to any student of history and this afterword is a great lesson for anyone who wants to try and get into the mind-set of those who lived history and didn't just study it.

Even with moments of great pathos, the prevailing feel of 'The Last Escaper' is one of action and fun. Tunstall's writing is wonderfully evocative. He is also able to explain quite complex and dry subject matters in a way that is entertaining i.e. the workings of a plane engine. You get a real sense of what it was like to be a POW, how the differing nationalities coped – some with dignity, some with passion and the Brits often with a silly sense of humour. His actual moments of freedom are extremely tense as you wonder if he will make it back home. Never one to hog all the limelight, Tunstall is equally happy to praise those around him who managed successful escapes and tells their tales with as much passion as he does his own.

'The Last Escaper' may very well be the last of the memoirs to come out of the POW camps of WW2 as the generation passes. Unlike the prologue suggests there seems to be relatively little reflection of the past 70 years of peace on this book. Instead, it is another extremely fun look at POW with moments of poignancy and very well written memories.

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## **Andrew Tunstall says**

OK, he was my Dad, but still... probably the last first-hand account of WW2 ever to be written, and the only

one to have been written so many years after the event - with the perspective of an old man living in the 21st century.

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### **Stacy says**

When Royal Air Force (RAF) pilot Peter Tunstall and his crew became lost during a World War II night bombing mission, they were taken as prisoners of war by the Germans. At the POW camp, Tunstall immediately began following the instructions given to RAF officers in such situations: try to escape, and be as big a bloody nuisance as possible to the enemy. What follows is an account of his escape attempts and harassment of the guards as he was shuttled between various POW camps and solitary confinement due to his capers. Over the years, Tunstall escaped and was caught over 8 times using various methods including one where he dressed up as a German guard and brazenly walked through the front gate with his unknowing guards saluting him. From laugh out loud moments of hilarious pranks on the guards, to sobering accounts of the physical and psychological tolls on the men, the story provides a personal look at life in the German POW camps. The Last Escaper showcases the ingenuity of one man hell-bent on escaping, and the power of his indomitable spirit; it's a story that will linger long after the book ends.

(Reviewed for San Francisco Book Review)

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### **Urbandale Library says**

I really liked how this book did not deal with the horrors of POW camps exclusively. The details of the escapes were so interesting and funny. This is a captivating first-hand story of a fascinating and harrowing time in Tunstall's life.

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### **Seth Nelson says**

Very British.

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