



Wake Island Pilot: A World War II Memoir (Memories of War)

John F. Kinney

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Wake Island Pilot is the story of John F. Kinney - hero, POW escapee, and aviation pioneer. It contains the first full-length account of a successful escape by a Marine captured in one of the great battles of World War II. Within hours of the Pearl Harbor attack, the Japanese struck the small U.S. garrison on Wake Island. As his squadron's engineering officer, young pilot John F. Kinney used all his considerable ingenuity to oversee the cannibalization of crippled planes for spare parts when he himself was not in the air fighting off the Japanese assault. His gallant efforts helped enable the desperate Marine and Navy defenders to hold out for an incredible two weeks, a truly epic struggle. After the island's inevitable surrender, Kinney was a Japanese prisoner in China for the next three and a half years. During this time, he put his amazingly inventive mechanical skills to work, creating from scratch numerous items, including a radio, to improve his fellow POWs' situation. Toward the end of the war, Kinney escaped from a prison train and, with the assistance of both Nationalist and Communist Chinese troops, made his way to an American airfield. He was thus one of the few Americans to escape from Japanese captivity outside the Philippines. General Kinney's subsequent Marine Corps career was equally distinguished: He flew fighters in the Korean War and helped develop the classic A4-D Skyhawk.

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