

# Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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★ **Pure Grit: How American World War II Nurses Survived Battle and Prison Camp in the Pacific.**

Farrell, Mary Cronk (Author)

Feb 2014. 160 p. Abrams, hardcover, \$24.95. (9781419710285). 940.54.

Farrell chronicles the harrowing story of U.S. Army and Navy nurses based in the Philippines during WW II. After working under enemy fire, they became prisoners of war in two Japanese prison camps, where they continued to nurse soldiers and other captives. As time went on, severe malnutrition and lack of medicines left all the prisoners vulnerable to serious diseases. Still, the women bonded, supporting each other during the years before their release in 1945. The nurses' return to civilian life was hampered by an unsupportive military and what we now recognize as post-traumatic stress syndrome. The first official recognition of their service came in 1983, after many had died. Farrell offers a thoroughly researched account encompassing the experiences of 67 American nurses held as POWs in the Philippines. Well-chosen quotes from interviews, personal accounts, and articles bring their voices into the story, while the many period photos offer intriguing glimpses of the war, the camps, and the women's later lives. At times the narrative is nearly overwhelmed by the sheer number of experiences recorded and women profiled. But in the end, the details of many nurses' individual trials combine to form a memorable portrayal of their shared experience, one which will emotionally impact readers.

— *Carolyn Phelan*