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Albanian Escape: The True Story of U.S. Army Nurses Behind Enemy Lines

Agnes Jensen Mangerich

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On November 8, 1943, U.S. Army nurse Agnes Jensen stepped out of a cold rain in Catania, Sicily, into a C-53 transport plane. But she and twelve other nurses never arrived in Bari, Italy, where they were to transport wounded soldiers to hospitals farther from the front lines. A violent storm and pursuit by German Messerschmitts led to a crash landing in a remote part of Albania, leaving the nurses, their team of medics, and the flight crew stranded in Nazi-occupied territory. What followed was a dangerous nine-week game of hide-and-seek with the enemy, a situation President Roosevelt monitored daily. Albanian partisans aided the stranded Americans in the search for a British Intelligence Mission, and the group began a long and hazardous journey to the Adriatic coast. During the following weeks, they crossed Albania's second highest mountain in a blizzard, were strafed by German planes, managed to flee a town moments before it was bombed, and watched helplessly as an attempt to airlift them out was foiled by Nazi forces. Albanian Escape is the suspense-filled story of the only group of Army flight nurses to have spent any length of time in occupied territory during World War II. The nurses and flight crew endured frigid weather, survived on little food, and literally wore out their shoes trekking across the rugged countryside. Thrust into a perilous situation and determined to survive, these women found courage and strength in each other and in the kindness of Albanians and guerrillas who hid them from the Germans.

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