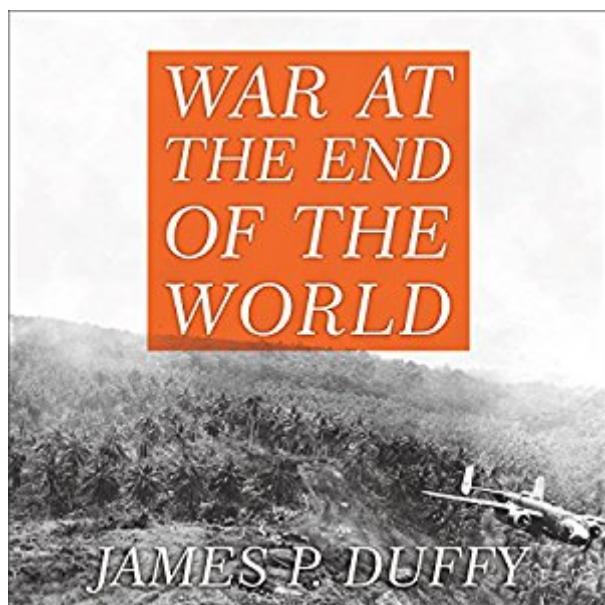


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# War At The End Of The World: Douglas MacArthur And The Forgotten Fight For New Guinea 1942-1945



## Synopsis

One American soldier called it "a green hell on Earth". Monsoon-soaked wilderness, debilitating heat, impassable mountains, torrential rivers, and disease-infested swamps - New Guinea was a battleground far more deadly than the most fanatical of enemy troops. Japanese forces numbering some 600,000 men began landing in January 1942, determined to seize the island as a cornerstone of the empire's strategy to knock Australia out of the war. Allied commander-in-chief General Douglas MacArthur committed 340,000 Americans, in addition to tens of thousands of Australian, Dutch, and New Guinean troops, to retake New Guinea at all costs. In this gripping narrative, historian James P. Duffy chronicles the most ruthless combat of the Pacific War, a fight complicated by rampant tropical disease, violent rainstorms, and unforgiving terrain that punished both Axis and Allied forces alike. Drawing on primary sources, *War at the End of the World* fills in a crucial gap in the history of World War II while offering listeners a narrative of the first rank.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I was drawn to this title because the father of one of my best friends served in New Guinea as a member of the Australian forces in WWII, contracting both malaria and dysentery in the process. I was not disappointed. The book is very well researched and written. In the interests of space I will point to what I consider to be the strongest and weakest points of the book. I think the strongest point of the book is its judicious and humanizing treatment of MacArthur, a figure all too easy to mythologize. After reading Manchester's *American Caesar* back in the day, I developed a fairly

jaundiced view of MacArthur owing to his well documented megalomania, but after reading Duffy's detailed description of the various strategies behind the numerous engagements that made up the General's New Guinea campaign, I began thinking that perhaps a fair degree of MacArthur's self-regard was warranted. The weakest point of the book for me, without question, was its lack of easily accessible maps of either New Guinea or the larger South Pacific theatre. Such maps do occur, but are buried so as to preclude easy, repeated access. Overall a gripping, trenchant account of some of the most gruesome and harrowing fighting of the war.

Great read! Good book and probably the only (recent) thorough history of the New Guinea campaign. Work covers the entire campaign from Japanese attack on Rabaul through 1945. Gives a good account of the Australians role in the campaign which is often missing in American accounts of the New Guinea campaign. For the last 30 years or so, Douglas MacArthur has gotten a fairly bad rap for his arrogance & "my way or the highway" approach to war, but this work gives a more rounded view of him. Arrogant he may have been, but an American genius nonetheless. Interestingly, the book I read just before I read this one was H. W. Brands "The General vs The President, about the confrontation between Truman & MacArthur during the Korean War. It was interesting to contrast the difference between MacArthur at his zenith (or near zenith) in New Guinea & his nadir in Korea. Franklin Roosevelt deferred to MacArthur, as did Truman later until he had had enough. I had an uncle who served in the US Army in New Guinea & knew several other guys who served there, wish I had talked to them more about their experience there. Great read!

My father fought in PNG in 1943 and 1944, then spent months in the hospital with malaria and jungle rot so serious he had cavernous ulcerations on his feet and legs. We suspect his health problems later in life may have come from the tar-like substances they used (experimented with) on the soldiers because they were desperately losing their army. We lost more men from the jungle/climate diseases (as did the Japanese) than from battles. I have read hundreds of books on WW2 in the Pacific, but little involving New Guinea. I SO appreciate a noted author deciding to write the most comprehensive history of WW2 New Guinea of which I am aware. It was a strategic imperative that the Japanese be stopped there. The utmost misery suffered by those who sacrificed either a part, or all of their lives there has almost been forgotten. A God-forsaken place to fight a war. May Duffy's book find a place in enough homes to pass on this story of sacrifice of so many men who did their duty at such a terrible cost.

At the outset, I admit to knowing almost nothing regarding the Allied effort in the Pacific Theater during WW2 other than viewing a few old war movies. With the reading of James P. Duffy's book, *War At The End Of The World*, my appreciation for those American- Australian soldiers, sailors and airmen has significantly increased. Mr Duffy provides sufficient background to set the stage that leads to the early phases of the campaign in New Guinea, specifically Japan's designs to dominate the Pacific region with Australia the next apparent target, and the appointment of Gen. MacArthur as commander-in-chief of the SWPA forces. The details of coordination between the Australian and American troops, together with the potential leadership problems that inevitably arise in joint ventures of this nature, along with the delay in providing men and materiel due to the administration's policy of "Europe first" was fully delineated and helped to illuminate the true dilemma facing MacArthur and the other planners in the region. However, what makes this story fascinating for me, is how Mr. Duffy brings the reader across this brutal landscape, with its mud, mountains, rain, dense vegetation, coral reefs, water masses , and pestilence and paints the picture about what these men endured over many, many months in their struggle to defeat the Imperial Forces. Gen MacArthur is integral to the story, but so too are the stories of the individual servicemen who fought here and I believe Mr. Duffy effectively balanced the telling of these different stories in what was a complicated and convoluted series of campaigns. I even appreciated the interjection of the stories from the Japanese participants which helped provide a broader understanding of what it was like for these men. I would have liked the inclusion of more detailed maps to help provide visual grounding to better understand the various campaigns. Overall, I enjoyed this book and recommend it to everyone who has an interest in military history, WW2 and especially the Pacific Theater.

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