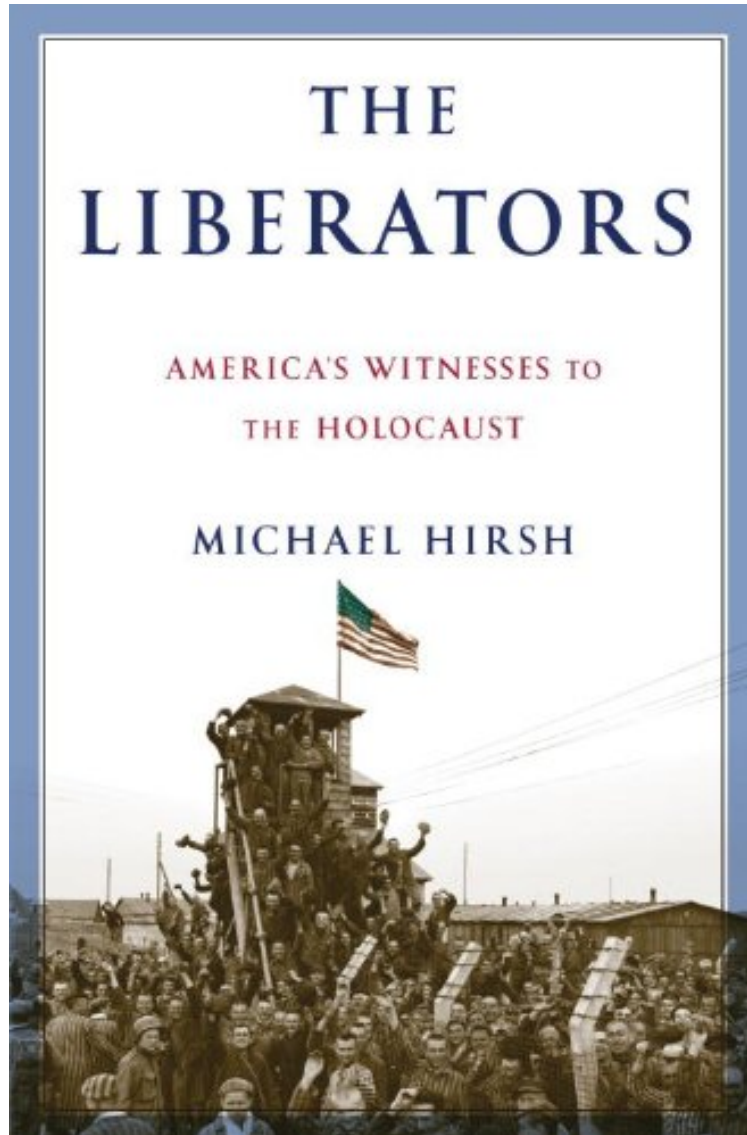


# The Liberators: America's Witnesses to the Holocaust

*Michael Hirsh*

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**Michael Hirsh : The Liberators: America's Witnesses to the Holocaust** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Liberators: America's Witnesses to the Holocaust:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Fantastic story of the liberators of concentration camps By L. S. Reed The greatest generation had to fight its way through the Normandy hedgerows, the rivers of Lorraine, and the Ardennes campaign. Then, the following spring, as the Nazi resistance was collapsing, they had to face a totally new horror -- the liberation of the concentration camps throughout Germany, Austria, and the rest of liberated Europe. The

book is well written and is based on hundreds of interviews with GI's, a few of whom were held in concentration camps or POW camps, most of whom played some role in liberating one or more camps. The stories they tell are horrifying. They're authentic memories from officers and foot soldiers, not trained psychologists. The book tells the story of the liberation and the immediate aftermath, when inmates welcomed their liberators and in some cases took revenge on the few guards who hadn't fled as Allied armies approached. It also tells the story of the reaction of Allied generals, including Eisenhower, Bradley, and Patton. The story of Eisenhower's tour of one camp is especially moving as he painstakingly checked out every corner of the camp, making sure he took in every detail so that he could be an informed witness in the future if others charged that the Holocaust was "made up." One thing that increased the horror is that none of the GI's were prepared for what they saw. There is some debate about how much the Allied high command knew, but there can be no doubt that these GI's and officers were taken totally by surprise. WWII veterans were famously eager to get on with their lives once they returned home and famously reticent about their combat experiences. When I was young, every adult male I knew had been in the armed services during WWII, yet I don't remember hearing a single "war story" in all the years I was growing up. This book gives ample reason for why that might have been. The weight these young men must have carried the rest of their lives is almost inconceivable. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Indelible memories By gbmillion The soldiers who marched into concentration camps on German soil all shared similar reactions: the unforgettable smell on the approach to the camps and the shock at seeing maltreatment on such a vast scale. None of the soldiers was prepared for the sights that greeted them on entering the camps. They were all battle hardened soldiers. They had seen people burnt, shot and blown to bits. But it didn't prepare them for the enormity of the camps. Many of the soldiers tell stories of how they merely stood by when inmates took revenge on their former captors. One soldier recalls that an inmate asked him for a weapon. Another tells of how he watched a group of inmates bludgeoning a guard to death with a bicycle. No one intervened. The most profound chapter is the final one. Here the veterans, all in the eighties and nineties, discuss how they feel now about their memories of more than sixty years ago. All of them are still traumatized to one degree or another. Many of them only spent an hour or two in the camps before moving on to chase the enemy. But those few hours left the most indelible impressions. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Well-Researched By Sandra Campbell This is an excellent, well-researched book on this topic. The author went to great lengths to detail and explain what was seen and felt. It would be very worthwhile reading for anyone interested in this period and these events of this history.

At last, the everyday fighting men who were the first Americans to know the full and horrifying truth about the Holocaust share their astonishing stories. Rich with powerful never-before-published details from the authors interviews with more than 150 U.S. soldiers who liberated the Nazi death camps, *The Liberators* is an essential addition to the literature of World War II and a stirring testament to Allied courage in the face of inconceivable atrocities. Taking us from the beginnings of the liberators final march across Germany to V-E Day and beyond, Michael Hirsh allows us to walk in their footsteps, experiencing the journey as they themselves experienced it. But this book is more than just an in-depth account of the liberation. It reveals how profoundly these young men were affected by what they saw—the unbelievable horror and pathos they felt upon seeing stacks of bodies like cordwood and skeletonlike survivors in camp after camp. That life-altering experience has stayed with them to this very day. Its been well over half a century since the end of World War II, and they still haven't forgotten what the camps looked like, how they smelled, what the inmates looked like, and how it made them feel. Many of the liberators suffer from what's now called post-traumatic stress disorder and still experience Holocaust-related nightmares. Here we meet the brave souls who now in their eighties and nineties have chosen at last to share their stories. Corporal Forrest Robinson saw masses of dead bodies at Nordhausen and was so horrified that he lost his memory for the next two weeks. Melvin Waters, a 4-F volunteer civilian ambulance driver, recalls that a woman at Bergen-Belsen fought us like a cat because she thought we were taking her to the crematory. Private Don Timmer used his high school German to interpret for General Dwight Eisenhower during the supreme Allied commanders visit to Ohrdruf, the first camp liberated by the Americans. And Phyllis Lamont Law, an army nurse at Mauthausen-Gusen, recalls the shock and, ultimately, the hope that you can save a few. From Bergen-Belsen in northern Germany to Mauthausen in Austria, *The Liberators* offers readers an intense and unforgettable look at the Nazi death machine through the eyes of the men and women who were our countrys witnesses to the Holocaust. The liberators recollections are historically important, vivid, riveting, heartbreaking, and, on rare occasions, joyous and uplifting. This book is their opportunity, perhaps for the last time, to tell the world.

From Booklist Over the past five decades, newsreels and army films showing the stacked bodies, gas chambers, crematoriums, and skeletal survivors have been viewed by millions, so graphic images of the horrors of the death and slave labor camps are not new. What makes this account so valuable is its effort to convey the sheer shock of those American, British, and Canadian soldiers who encountered these camps, often by accident, on their way to another military objective. This moving but unsettling book is the fruit of more than 150 interviews the author conducted with

soldiers who liberated these camps in the closing weeks of the war. Some of these men seem curiously detached in their recollections, but Hirsh points out that these were battle-hardened men who had already been exposed to the brutalities of war. But other witnesses, years after the war, still express their disgust and outrage and even their thirst for revenge upon the perpetrators of these monstrosities. An excellent addition to Holocaust literature. --Jay Freeman

"These eyewitness accounts are powerful, detailed and horrifying. Of particular note is the last chapter, in which some of the veterans record what happened to them after the war; decades later, many still struggled with nightmares and rage." USA Today

"The survivors of Nazi concentration camps can never forget and, as Michael Hirsh shows in his spellbinding work, neither can the young soldiers who liberated them." The New York Post

"Never forget is the message that these vets and survivors carry to schools, churches, and synagogues, and other places Hirsh's *The Liberators* helps [them] carry on that important work." Philadelphia Inquirer

"Hirsh should be commended for the diversity of his interview subjects, which include former GI and Ohrdruf liberator Charles T. Payne, President Obama's great-uncle, who gained fame during the 2008 presidential campaign. . . . A worthy tribute to these soldiers and a valuable historical document. A necessary history." Kirkus

"A fine and necessary addition to the lexicon of Holocaust literature. A powerful and emotional telling of the trials these soldiers faced." Roll Call

"Hundreds of often chilling, heartbreaking but ultimately exalting stories of ordinary soldiers from all across the country who banded together to not only defeat a great military threat to the entire world, but to battle for something even deeper: the very soul of humanity. An intimate look at the common men who had come from farms and factories, cities and small towns, to places such as Dachau." The Chattanooga Pulse

"The victory over Nazism is given a first class presentation by noted military historian, Michael Hirsh, himself a veteran of US military service in Vietnam. In *The Liberators*, Hirsh gives full vent to the searing experiences that our young and untutored American troops faced at the liberation of Buchenwald and numerous other Nazi slave labor camps in Germany during the closing days of the war. In a heart-rending series of biographical sketches and interviews with many of those GIs, the author graphically details the human and emotional trauma that many of them experienced and the horrific emotional and even spiritual toll this took on "our boys." The Jewish Star

"Hirsh allows us to see the terrible atrocities through the then young eyes of the Americans who rescued the survivors and buried the many dead, memories that remained vividly compelling years after the historical Allied liberation of Europe from Nazi control. By telling these dramatic untold stories of the first young American soldiers to discover Hitler's death camps, [he] has written a must-have addition to any library on the Holocaust, and another ringing rebuttal to the shrinking cluster of diehard Holocaust deniers." Peter Arnett, Pulitzer Prize-Winning War Correspondent and author of *Live from the Battlefield*

"*The Liberators* delivers a riveting reading experience. The memoirs are deeply personal: Sixty-five years after the end of World War II, the images, sounds, and smells as experienced by the Nazi-death-camp liberators provide compelling testimony to man's inhumanity to man and capacity for evil as well as good and kindness. This is an extraordinary book that is strikingly important in its ability to deliver the scope and gravity of the war." Thomas Tradewell, commander in chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars

"A striking catalogue of inhumanity." Richard C. Hottel, member of Edward R. Murrow's CBS Radio reporting team during World War II

About the Author: Michael Hirsh is a Vietnam combat veteran and the author of three previous military books, as well as the co-author (with Michael Schiavo) of the New York Times bestseller *Terri: The Truth*. During a forty-year career in broadcasting, he produced documentaries and specials for PBS, CBS, ABC, and HBO, receiving multiple awards, including the Peabody.