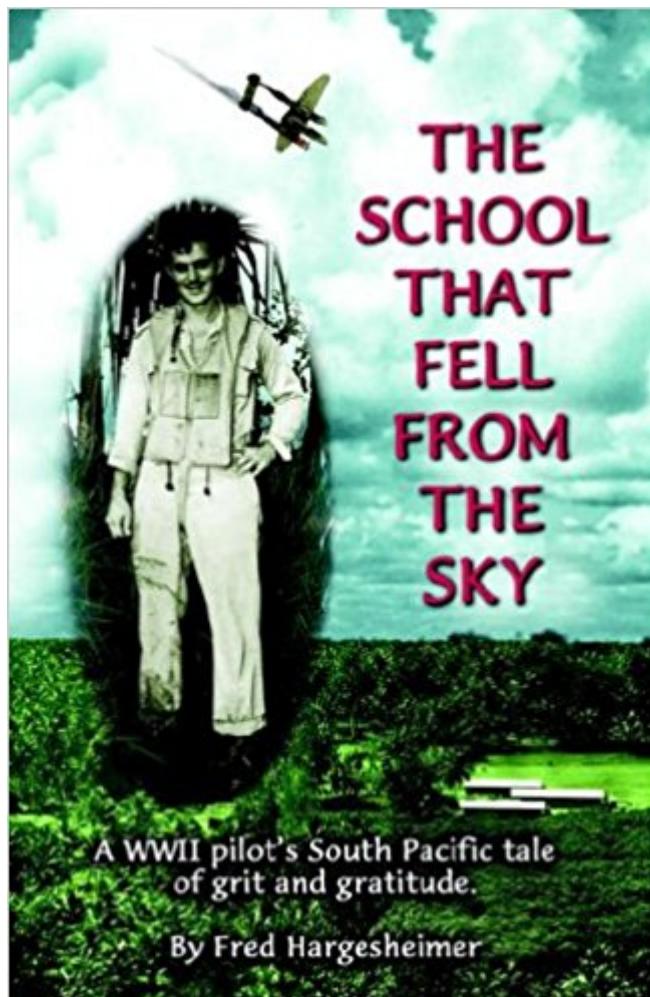


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The School That Fell From The Sky



Synopsis

This is the story of a Photo Reconnaissance pilot in WWII shot out of the sky over the rain forest of the island of New Britain in the South Pacific. After 30 days alone he was found by friendly natives. Hidden from the nearby Japanese soldiers and later taken to the camp of a team of Australian Commandos who arranged his rescue in a USA submarine. He returned to New Britain in 1963 with his son, Dick, to build a school for the natives who saved his life. Today, over 400 children attend the Airmen's Memorial School.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Very special autobiographical account of a real survivor and the amazing people in Papua New Guinea who helped Fred and the amazing way that Fred and his wife repaid that community. A heart warming, true story of grit and courage and giving from the heart.

I am Australian and have recently been near the region where Fred was shot down and after quite a long while struggling to survive alone eating snails, and then having malaria as well he was found by some local folk who cared for him. He was with them for quite a while and was eventually was returned to the USA. In return in later years with the help of other organisations he built a school when soon had 500 students and he had a close bond with the individuals who saved his life. The book has a lots of family background which would be of interest in US, but it is still a good read,

Good story of escape and evasion in the South Pacific area. Recommend if you are interested in escape and evasion in this area. Bill Sims

This is a very interesting book, and what Fred did to repay the people who helped him is wonderful. My brother had met this great man many years ago.

It is fantastic.

Fabulous story. I was shocked to find out he lived right here in my own home town. I only wish I could have known him.

This book was so interesting and contains a lot of historical facts.

In the 1980s cult classic, *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, an artifact of modern civilization, a Coke bottle, falls from an airplane into a primitive society, bringing about negative repercussions. In *The School that Fell from the Sky* (published 2005), a different type of modern artifact, American P-38 pilot Fred Hargesheimer, falls into a real life primitive society. In Hargesheimer's case, though, the result is ultimately positive, albeit unforeseen. Hargesheimer served in a photographic squadron, and in June, 1943 was on a mission to take pictures of Japanese activity on the island of New Britain. Without warning, a Japanese fighter set upon him and shot him down. Hargesheimer parachuted into the New Britain jungle, and thereby began a chain of events still in motion today, even after Hargesheimer's death in 2010 at the age of 94. Hargesheimer survived his first thirty days in the jungle without human contact, eating snails. After that lonely month, natives loyal to the Allies found him, and hid him from the Japanese. He became known among the natives as, "Masta Predi," a rendering in their native pidgin of "Master Freddy." He lived among these friendly natives for several months, during which time they fed and sheltered him, nursed him back to health when he fell ill, and eventually put him in contact with Australian coastwatchers. The coastwatchers took Hargesheimer in, and availed themselves for a time of his experience with radio communication. In February, 1944, the coastwatchers arranged for a U.S. submarine to pick up Hargesheimer, along with other downed Allied airmen, and return them to their duties. Years went by, and Hargesheimer left military service to take on a civilian career and raise a family. He remembered, however, these natives that had helped him during his darkest hours, and had probably saved his life. In 1960, he decided to return to New Britain to seek out the natives and thank them. He returned to the U.S.

after this 1960 trip and raised money for a school to be built for the natives. The school has expanded over the years and is still in operation today, and is known as The Airman's Memorial School. Hargesheimer and his wife even lived for four years in New Britain, and taught at the school. Hargesheimer returned several times through the years. The last time was in 2006, where natives carried him to see the wreck of his P-38 that had been found in the New Britain jungle. I first heard of Fred Hargesheimer from reading *Fire in the Sky* by Eric Bergerud. That led me to place *The School that Fell from the Sky* on my future reading list. In a broad sense, it is the story of a P-38 pilot, a paragon of our modern age, finding himself among primitive people, and having to rely on them even though he is from an advanced society. In a narrower, more personal sense, it is about a man longing to repay a debt of thanks. It is not chock full of technical details about the P-38, nor does it discuss at great length operational issues. It is first and foremost a human story that any reader should find interesting.

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