



The Box from Braunau: In Search of My Father's War

Jan Elvin

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As a small child, Jan Elvin thought very little about the tin box with the simple inscription her father had brought home from World War II. To her young eyes, it seemed ordinary enough, featuring a rough etching of a man and woman with the words, "Braunau 1944." What she would later discover is that the box had been a gift from an inmate at a German slave labor camp when her father was just a young soldier. And what it contained would start her on a long journey to uncover some of the fascinating and horrifying history surrounding the Second World War - as well as a search to understand the man forever haunted by its memories. The Box from Braunau is both a memoir of a father-daughter relationship damaged by the ghosts of war, and a chronicle of a World War II veteran whose return to civilian life was permanently scarred by nightmares of combat and concentration camps. We explore the lives of Bill Elvin and his daughter through excerpts from the diary he kept during the war and private letters, as well as newspaper articles he wrote as a journalist on his return. We follow him from his first days on the battlefield as a lieutenant in Patton's Army to his time at the Ebensee concentration camp where he witnessed first-hand the prisoners' sufferings brought about by Nazi atrocities. Through his life, we gain a new understanding of the War and its effects on the men and women who fought in it. Featuring exclusive interviews with family members and fellow soldiers, as well as with survivors of the camps, The Box from Braunau is an illuminating look at war through the eyes of one family.

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