

Book Review:

**Don Stephens, War and Grace: Short Biographies from the World Wars
(Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2005) Paperback, 288 pages, \$15.99**

This book is hard to put down! Thirteen gripping tales of God's transforming work in the lives of people both ordinary and celebrated, against the backdrop of the horrors of the World Wars. Nominated for the UK Christian Book of the Year Award 2006, Stephens' work brings to light many comparatively unknown Christian heroes whose exploits ought to be better known:

Mitsuo Fuchida was the Japanese aviator who led the attack on Pearl Harbor and was later converted through reading a tract by a survivor of the "Doolittle" reprisal raid on Japan (whose story is also covered in the book). Johanna-Ruth Dobscheiner was a German Jew who evaded the Holocaust and found Christ through the Dutch Reformed pastor who gave her refuge. Donald Caskie, the "Tartan Pimpernel", was a Scottish missionary-turned-secret agent in France who helped many Allied prisoners of war escape Nazi-occupied territory. Paul Schneider was a German Reformed pastor who withstood the Nazis and was executed in Buchenwald Concentration Camp. Charles Fraser-Smith was the creator of countless secret gadgets smuggled into POW camps, who inspired the "Q" character in the James Bond stories. Henry Gerecke was the Lutheran chaplain to Nazi war criminals at the Nuremberg war crimes trials, who testified to repentance and professions of faith from some of the most notorious killers of the century.

All these and others in the book led truly remarkable action-filled lives, and there are times when their stories, packed with drama, amazing "coincidences", narrow escapes, fearless determination, horrific torture and dauntless faith seem almost too incredible to be true. Yet here we see Christ in action, building his church and using the most unlikely of people at the most unlikely of times. The author does an outstanding job as historian and detective, making use of extensive source materials, including personal correspondence and meetings with the subjects themselves. The result is an engrossing, readable and well-illustrated account of many unsung heroes. Additional information is appended to each chapter for those wanting more in-depth biographical information, and a good thing too – you will be left wanting more!

David Whitla

