

Sisters in Captivity

author: Colin Burgess

2026-07

Synopsis

author	Colin Burgess
readBy	Arianwen Parkes-Lockwood
inLanguage	english

The incredible account of Sister Betty Jeffrey OAM and the Australian war nurses who survived the bombing of evacuation ship SS *Vyner Brooke* in February 1942, and subsequently spent three years in Japanese prison camps in Sumatra.

During those perilous years surviving in squalid conditions, Sister Jeffrey kept a secret diary of day-to-day events which, after the war, was turned into a hugely successful book and radio serial: *White Coolies*. She would often write of the powerful sisterhood that evolved as the prisoners of war took strength from each other, even forming a vocal orchestra. *White Coolies* was a major inspiration for the 1997 film *Paradise Road*.

Sisters in Captivity builds on those diaries to not only re-live the years the nurses spent as POWs but also recounts the early life and influences that encouraged Betty Jeffrey into the field of nursing as a lifelong endeavour. A tireless advocate for returned nurses, she co-founded the Australian Nurses Memorial Centre with sole survivor of the Banka Island Massacre, fellow POW, and her longtime friend Vivian Bullwinkel.

Featuring 32 pages of photos including personal mementos of Betty Jeffrey, courtesy of her family, and her drawings from the prison camps, this is a powerful account of women's resilience amidst the devastating brutality of war.

Reader's comments

comment 1:

â€"â€" ()