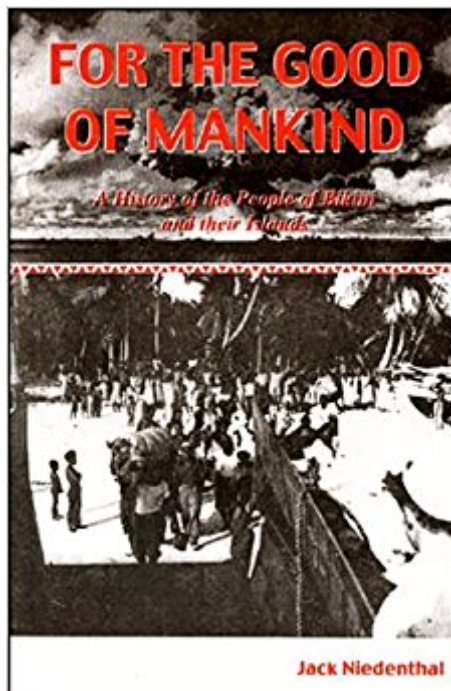




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For The Good Of Mankind : A History Of The People Of Bikini And Their Islands



Synopsis

An insider's look at the people of Bikini Atoll, site of 23 U.S. nuclear weapons tests from 1946-54, including the largest hydrogen bomb ever tested by the United States. Author Jack Niedenthal relates the history of the people he has lived with for almost 20 years via interviews and personal experiences. This is a view of history from the islanders' perspective. The book also contains historical information about the 67 nuclear tests conducted in the Marshall Islands by the U.S., and also information about the dive program and the ships at rest in Bikini Atoll's lagoon. A great guidebook for anyone visiting Bikini Atoll, filled with facts about the people, their islands, and their history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Jack Niedenthal Having lived, studied and worked in the Marshall Islands from 1981 until the present, he speaks fluent Marshallese. He spent six years in the isolated jungles of the outer islands of the Marshall Islands. His wife, Regina, is a Bikini islander. They have four children. He has published articles and photos about the people of Bikini and their atoll in World View magazine, the Health Physics Journal, the San Francisco Chronicle and others. He has translated in Marshallese for CNN, the New York Times, the Washington Post, ABC News, CBS News, the Wall Street Journal, National Geographic Magazine, Newsweek, and many, many others. The government of the Marshall Islands awarded him an honorary Marshallese citizenship in December of 2000.

In the depths of the lagoon of the island of Bikini, a ghost fleet of warships provides testimony to a long ago war that saw atrocities committed, and atrocities defeated. Swimming among them, teeming ocean life and invading humans with the quiet "whoosh" of air bubbles from the latest diving gear, speak a different, 21st Century tale. But it's the voices of those that have since gone silent --

their stories, legends, and myths -- that haunt the reader of "For The Good of Mankind." The book, written by Bikini Trust Liaison Jack Niedenthal, captures the imagination from the first page of this story of nuclear exodus of the people of Bikini. Bikini is a lush, tropical island that's part of an atoll by the same name in the Marshall Islands. The Marshalls are situated north of the equator in the Pacific, an area of strategic military importance to both the Japanese and Americans. From 1946 to 1958, the U.S. government tested nearly 70 atomic bombs on Bikini and Eniwetok. Niedenthal, an American by birth and the first American bestowed with Marshalese citizenship, has been "out there" for over 20 years. While the facts about the testing of the atomic bomb after World War II are compelling to study, it is the texture of island life through the storytelling of the elders that is a treasure beyond compare for readers, the descendants of the original Bikinians, and historians. Their story conveys beyond words the true impact of losing their home, watching while it was destroyed over 12 years of time, facing starvation, living in exile, and a relationship with the U.S. government that could only be described as trust turned to a mournful betrayal. That story was almost never told. When Niedenthal first came to work with the Bikinians as a teacher after a 3-year stint on an outer island for the Peace Corps, he found a culture with primarily an oral history. Not content to let these stories die, he undertook interviews with elders who had been there from the beginning. The beginning. Atomic testing code-named Operation Crossroads. Niedenthal's title partially quotes the famous meeting between Commodor Ben Wyatt, the military governor of the Marshall Islands (of which Bikini Atoll is a part), and King Juda, then leader of the Bikinians. The February 1946 meeting took place after church. The Commodor took the opportunity to ask if the U.S. could begin testing the atomic bomb for "the good of mankind and to end all wars." King Juda responded with what became part of the Bikinian flag: "We will go believing that everything is in the hands of God." The other part of Niedenthal's book documents the testing that took place from 1946 to 1958, and included one blast, Bravo, that was the equivalent of 1,000 times the strength of what was dropped on Japan. For that, the scientists cheered. Others, saw it a bit more clearly. "As soon as the war ended, we located the one spot on earth that hadn't been touched by the war and blew it to hell," commented Comedian Bob Hope. Indeed, the continuing story of the Bikinians could be described in such terms. After one attempt to bring the Bikinians home resulted in high levels of radioactivity in those living there, the Bikinians sued and won trust funds from the U.S. government to study cleaning Bikini. Then there are those Bikinians living in exile in Kili, who have suffered famine, and a loss of livelihood among other things. Kili, a small rock of an island with no natural harbor for fishing, is the current residence of the Bikinians. While science is finally catching up to the devastation it has wrought, the Bikinians have recognized that there will be no going back to the old

ways. Even though the produce of the land is still contaminated, the ocean rebounded in the 43 years since testing ended. Ships sunk during the blasts, many of them quite famous and still containing live ammunition, have made the waters off Bikini a top dive destination and an incredible study of military history. The Bikinians have also opened the waters to fisherman. With an average temperature of 85 degrees year-round, tourism is becoming a possibility to eventual self-sufficiency. After reading "For the Good of Mankind," the temptation to undertake a pilgrimage to Bikini, an island where the beaches whisper of breathtaking natural beauty and the waters detail the mystery of human destructiveness, is irresistible. King Juda had it right all those years ago. Only the hand of God could come close to restoring this perfection. Now all that's needed is a final remedy for the land that could provide the way home. And it's still in His hands.

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