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Carl LaVO, *The Galloping Ghost: The Extraordinary Life of Submarine Legend Eugene Fluckey*, Naval Institute Press, 2007. 206 pp. Illustrations, bibliographic essay, index.

Review by Kathleen Broome Williams
Cogswell Polytechnical College

As Carl LaVO points out in the title to his book, Eugene Fluckey's life is "extraordinary." Fluckey, skipper of the submarine USS *Barb*, engaged in hair-raising and highly effective operations against the Japanese in World War II, arguably sinking more enemy tonnage than any other U.S. submarine commander. In the process he earned numerous presidential, military and congressional honors – including four Navy Crosses and the Medal of Honor. Inevitably, what LaVO has written will be measured against *Thunder Below!* - Fluckey's own vivid memoir of those same events - published in 1992. To be sure, LaVO presents a whole life, not just Fluckey's wartime record, in the process satisfying many remaining questions, particularly those regarding Fluckey's personal life and later career. But the adventure has already been told, and more compellingly.

In Part One, LaVO takes Fluckey's story from his youth in Washington, DC to his arrival at Pearl Harbor in 1944. Attending the Naval Academy from 1931 to 1935 Fluckey seemed a perfect match for the Navy. Even then, through a combination of intellectual application, fierce determination, and a quirky spirit of innovation, his ability to overcome obstacles was evident. Facing expulsion from the Academy for myopia, Fluckey studied the subject and, to the disbelief of navy doctors, reversed his condition by a rigorous regimen of eye exercises.

On graduation, Fluckey served on the battleship *Nevada* and then on the destroyer *McCormick* before switching to submarines. LaVO declares Fluckey a "perfect fit" for submarine duty because of his fascination with complex machinery and his easy sociability - well suited to the close quarters of life on a sub (p.32). Instead of riding the new fleet submarines in the Pacific though - the navy's answer to the growing threat from Japan - Fluckey spent the next years patrolling the Caribbean and the Pacific shores of Panama in old S-class and problem-plagued V-boats. Frustrating though this was, especially after the outbreak of war in Europe, Fluckey learned everything there was to know about keeping a submarine working. Finally, Fluckey managed to get out of Panama and into the Pacific war via graduate school in New London. In spring 1944 he reported to the submarine force at Pearl Harbor.

Understandably, the bulk of this book concentrates on the scant seventeen months in which Fluckey accomplished his most famous exploits. From March 1944 to August 1945 his five war patrols in command of *Barb* took him from Pearl Harbor, Midway, the Marshalls and the Marianas to the Kuriles, the Sea of Okhotsk, the Formosa Straits and the East China and South China seas. In the process, his daring hit and run tactics and seemingly magical ability to evade Japanese efforts to catch him earned him the nickname the Galloping Ghost. One of Fluckey's most memorable exploits was to blow up a Japanese supply train by sending crew members with explosives ashore in rubber boats at night - the only landing by US military forces on the Japanese homeland. His, too, was the idea to mount ballistic missiles on his sub, and then launch missile strikes on Japan. He earned the Medal of Honor – which he fittingly accepted in honor of his crew – by nearly obliterating a Japanese convoy at night in a protected inshore anchorage and then racing away on the surface, narrowly avoiding pursuers by weaving among anchored sampans and treacherous rocks and shoals. Alas, LaVO's account not only misses the immediacy and verve of Fluckey's memoir but also misses many significant details as well as the scrupulous planning that made the difference between acceptable risk and foolhardiness. What LaVO does make clear is Fluckey's deep rapport with his men; they were ready to follow him anywhere. None of these dangerous missions could have been accomplished without the full and willing participation of *Barb's* entire crew.

Part Three of the book covers Fluckey's post-war career during which he held increasingly responsible positions in the Navy, continuing to demonstrate his hands-on leadership, support for new technologies, and profound people skills. Fluckey eventually retired with the rank of rear admiral in 1972 after a stint in a NATO position in Portugal.

Eugene Fluckey's life revolved around his daring, his leadership qualities, his habit of subjecting problems to rigorous analysis, his optimism, and spirit of innovation. LaVO, an award-winning journalist, uses Fluckey's personal papers, interviews with the admiral and his family, and with *Barb* shipmates, to produce a competent biography. However, those hoping for the kinds of additional insights that might have been afforded by archival research and accompanying notes will be disappointed. LaVO's most important contribution is to put Fluckey's accomplishments in historical context. Fluckey's constant search for new tactics and novel use of weapons and technology revolutionized undersea warfare and, as LaVO explains, "laid the groundwork for the nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine fleet" of today (p. ix).



The Editors
International Journal of Naval History
editors@ijnhonline.org

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