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Thomas J. Cutler, *A Sailor's History of the U.S. Navy*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005. ISBN 1-59114-151-6

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This isn't your typical history book. A typical history book works chronologically from the subject's origins on forward. In addition, a typical history book has citations, bibliography and a bibliography—and this book does not to its discredit. However, the author, in his introduction [p. xii], explains that this is an “informal history.” Actually he argues that he “tried to make it a *heritage* book instead of a history book.” Cutler explains: “To me history is the stuff that scholars study for the good of the world. Heritage is the stuff that makes me stand a little taller and walk with a bit of swagger.”

The book is misnamed. Relabeled *A Sailor's Heritage of the U.S. Navy* the book works spectacularly well. Any Sailor, having read this book WILL experience a spurt of height and strut down the gangway with a bit of pride.

Part I of the book centers on three chapters that focus around the Navy's core values: Honor, Courage, and Commitment. He uses a series of historical vignettes to illustrate these values starting with the amazing story of Doug Hegdahl, a seaman apprentice in USS *Canberra* stationed off North Vietnam in 1967 who, through misfortune, wound up at the Hanoi Hilton. Despite his captivity, Hegdahl maintained his

honor and that of his service and country. Cutler then tells of two ship actions, two centuries apart, where Sailors defended the nation's honor by defeating the enemy.

It takes courage to attack aggressively. Cutler cites a PBR engagement in the Mekong Delta in 1966 and the famed battle off Samar in 1944 where destroyers and destroyer escorts helped fend off Japanese battleships and cruisers. But courage is not necessarily a characteristic that has to be associated with combat. Cutler tells how Pharmacist's Wheeler Lipes saved the life of a shipmate by performing surgery to remove an appendix. He also told the story of Carl Brashear who fought to stay on active duty as a diver after losing part of a leg in an accident.

As for commitment, Cutler takes time to discuss life in the age of sail, as if saying to the reader, "...If you think life at sea is tough today!" He finishes the chapter with a well-written account of the *Bon Homme Richard-Serapis* engagement.

Part II of the book features a troika of chapters under the heading "Traditions." To illustrate the significance of ship names, he spends a whole chapter tracing the eight manifestations of *Enterprise*. In doing so he captures how the Navy's mission and capabilities have evolved over time. A chapter titled "Don't Tread on Me" serves as a vehicle to tell of the revenge of the Pearl Harbor battleships at Surigao Strait and of Decatur's daring raid to burn *Philadelphia*. His "Don't Give Up the Ship" chapter highlights tales of heroism in the saving of *Cole*, *Forrestal*, and *Franklin*, as well as the crew of the sunken submarine *Squalus*.

The third part, titled "A Unique Profession" opens with a chapter called "Transitions" which ably covers the topic of technological advances with a series of case studies including the introduction of *Monitor*, submarines, and naval aviation. This is followed by a chapter dubbed "War Words" which sets out to explain concepts as strategy, tactics, and logistics, using the Battle of the Coral Sea and Spanish-American clashes as examples. His final two chapters titled "Strange But True" and "Lucky Bag" offer a smorgasbord of interesting stories that must have been on the cutting room floor at

the conclusion of the first eight chapters. Tales of the Bermuda triangle and factoids such as the *John F. Kennedy-Belknap* collision coming a dozen years after the assassination of President Kennedy didn't impress me. Perhaps the space could have been better utilized with the insertion of an updated naval term glossary similar to that found in *Naval Customs, Traditions, and Usage* series that is also published by the naval Institute. For reference the book does conclude with a chapter discussing U.S. Navy Battle streamers.

Whether a history or heritage, the book should have had citations or at least a bibliographic discussion so that those Sailors whose appetite is whetted by this wonderful heritage could be encouraged to learn more. In a book that doesn't use a chronological format, an index is that much more important.

Otherwise this is a welcome addition to any Sailor's seabag. Since the Navy has agreed to purchase a copy for every enlisted Sailor graduating from boot camp, this indeed will be the case. While this initiative is welcomed, there is no provision to provide copies to Sailors who will be entering the service with officer commissions. Having to cringe several times while witnessing the Vice Chief of Naval Operations botch the pronunciation of important names at a recent Battle of Midway ceremony, extending the distribution of this fine heritage book cannot occur soon enough!



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