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Daniel Madsen. *Resurrection – Salvaging the Battle Fleet at Pearl Harbor*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2003. 264 pp., photographs, drawings, map, bibliography, index. US \$ 36.95, cloth; ISBN 1-555750-488-1.

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“Pearl Harbor” means one thing to most people, including and perhaps especially naval historians: the Japanese attack on 7 December 1941 and the destruction of the battleship USS *Arizona*. The more historically minded will know that most of the damaged ships returned to service, but sorely neglected is the salvage effort itself. In *Resurrection*, Daniel Madsen tells the tale of this behind-the-scenes activity.

The book’s introduction states precisely what this book is about: it doesn’t provide a detailed description of the attack itself, nor a complete analysis of the damage inflicted. Rather, this is the story of how the Salvage Organization delivered “ships and equipment to the Navy Yard for disposition.” (p. xi). Madsen tells the story clearly, and his writing is good. A reader without a taste for engineering may find a few of the descriptions a little technical, but shouldn’t have any trouble understanding. In a few instances, it’s unfortunate that drawings weren’t included to make things clearer. For example, the various proposals considered with regards to the USS *California* (p. 78) would have been much easier to follow. Nevertheless, that’s a minor flaw in a very good book. There is a nice selection of photographs of the salvage, but unfortunately their impact (and some of the detail) is muted through their not being printed on glossy paper.

The emphasis, not surprisingly, is on the recovery of the ships – and the smaller ships get their share of the limelight. The efforts needed to raise the poor old *Oglala*, for example, are surprising. Much of the technology used – hardhat diving in particular – is now outdated. Though some of the salvage tools may seem quaint today, there are some important points worth considering. The first chapter recounts the initial damage control efforts in the battleships. In *California*, for example, there were a number of inspection hatches that were supposed to be dogged down, but the crew didn't manage to reach in time. This may serve as a lesson for designers working on the thinly manned warships of today.

The development of the Base Force Salvage Organization from next to nothing is also covered – a significant amount of work itself. Key to the salvage was the fact that their job was simply to get the ships over to the Navy Yard, a few hundred yards away. The Navy Yard would deal with any ship repair, while the Salvage Organization stayed focussed on their goal. The Base Force, the Navy Yard and the Fourteenth Naval District all were involved at the administrative end – challenge enough in peacetime. One tidbit: at one point, approximately one thousand man-hours were being lost every day just feeding the men (they were being ferried ashore), until packed lunches were arranged.

Most of those man-hours were expended on sheer hard work, under very difficult conditions. Some men were divers, stumbling about in pitch darkness with their air hose trailing behind them. Some had the gruesome job of recovering the bodies, and parts of bodies, of crewmen. Never a pleasant job, much worse when you remember the length of time some had been underwater. All the living spaces were full of furniture, rotting paper and books and clothing, covered in oil and silt. Tons of rotted meat had to be removed from the ships' freezers. Everything had to be extracted, and the compartments washed down. Explosive, toxic, gas from the decaying material was a constant hazard.

For this historian, much more familiar with the shoe string budgets of the Commonwealth Navies, the resources devoted to the salvage effort are surprising. The

number of men and the amount of material involved were substantial, but in truth a drop in the bucket when you consider the seemingly unlimited capacity of the United States. *Resurrection* is a matter-of-fact book which stays true to its objective in recounting the salvage. Some of the work was necessary, if only to clear the dry-docks and berthing spaces of sunken warships. Although outside Madsen's remit, there remains the question of the return-on-investment of the complete reincarnation of all those ships. Did the USN "get its money's worth" in reconditioning the battleships? The answer is probably, yes. There was, of course, the morale effect of working on and eventually succeeding, in bringing them back into commission. Nevertheless, enormous shipyard resources went into repair and refit. With hindsight, it's easy to think that the Allies might have better devoted those yards to the construction of more escort vessels. However, at the time, there was no way of knowing what the future would bring, and though no longer young, these battleships were a match for many of those in the Axis fleets. Their value was proven at Suriago Strait. No other country could have recovered and rebuilt these ships while fighting a two-ocean war, and *Resurrection* shows how it was done.



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