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Thomas C. Hone and Trent Hone. *Battle Line: The United States Navy, 1919–1939*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006. Appendices. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. 244.

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Battle Line represents the culmination of more than thirty years of research and analytical thinking conducted by Thomas Hone on the history of the U.S. Navy during the years from the end of World War I to the onset of World War II. Hone and his son Trent, who wrote the chapter in the book on battle line tactics, have produced a study that undoubtedly will remain the authoritative history of the interwar U.S. Navy for many years to come.

The book's initial chapter, entitled "The Three Navies" provides a brief comparison of the three aggregations of combat ships that comprised the U.S. Fleet in 1939—the battleships, destroyers, and submarines built before, during, and immediately after World War I; the group of heavy cruisers and aircraft carriers built or converted following the 1922 Washington Naval Treaty; and the mixed force of battleships, aircraft carriers, light cruisers, destroyers, and submarines constructed during the Depression under strictures imposed by the terms of the London Naval Treaty of 1930. This chapter provides a very useful short analysis of the myriad factors that impinged on the Navy's combat capability during the two interwar decades.

The topics that follow in subsequent chapters of the book delve into the nature of a ship as a fighting entity, the daily life of sailors on board Navy ships during the 1920s and 1930s, the world of naval officers, the nature of tactics in a battle line engagement, the development of naval aviation in these decades, the substantial improvements made in the Navy's submarine force during these years, how the Service was administered during the interwar period, the influence of the Marine Corps in the development of the U.S. Navy's nascent amphibious warfare capability, and aspects of duty in Chinese and Philippine waters for Asiatic Fleet sailors. Each of these chapters is filled with interesting detail as seen by some of the men who served in the Navy during these years. Thomas Hone provides this detail by quoting from the written and oral reminiscences of both enlisted personnel and officers. In the chapter on naval aviation, for example, a brief discussion of the airships *Akron* and *Macon* is set off by a reminiscence from Navy pilot Harold B. Miller, who used to fly F9C "Sparrowhawks" from those huge aerial platforms. This fascinating short account reminded me of my own spirited interview with "Min" Miller of his flying days in the early 1930s.

It will be apparent even to a casual reader that during his decades of researching the subjects that went into this book, Hone delved deeply into the records of the General Board and the correspondence files of the offices of the Secretaries of the Navy and the Chiefs of Naval Operations for the period. Nonetheless, his evident knowledge is borne lightly in this book. It is written in a manner that makes even the technical discussions in its pages completely comprehensible to the general reader. Moreover, the chapters are not heavily burdened with detailed endnotes, as academic studies often are. Of course, for those of us who enjoy reading through such material, this does have its down side. Nevertheless, by every measure, *Battle Line* is a pleasure to read; its content well structured its passages direct and unencumbered by unnecessary detail, and its illustrative anecdotes well chosen.

I was particularly taken by the book's carefully chosen photographs. These have been enhanced in the text by the authors' decision to provide them with informative captions that furnish the reader with sufficient information not only to identify the

subjects but also to put many of the photographs into a larger historical context. In this regard, Naval Institute Press is to be congratulated both for the composition and final look of the book.

Battle Line is highly recommended not only for general readers interested in the Twentieth Century U.S. Navy but also for naval historians. Even those of us who have more than a casual knowledge of the Navy of the 1920s and 1930s will find in it material of abiding interest.



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