



Thunder Below!: The USS Barb Revolutionizes Submarine Warfare in World War II

By Eugene B. Fluckey

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The thunderous roar of exploding depth charges was a familiar and comforting sound to the crew members of the USS Barb, who frequently found themselves somewhere between enemy fire and Davy Jones's locker.

Under the leadership of her fearless skipper, Captain Gene Fluckey, the Barb sank the greatest tonnage of any American sub in World War II. At the same time, the Barb did far more than merely sink ships-she changed forever the way submarines stalk and kill their prey.

This is a gripping adventure chock-full of "you-are-there" moments. Fluckey has drawn on logs, reports, letters, interviews, and a recently discovered illegal diary kept by one of his torpedomen. And in a fascinating twist, he uses archival documents from the Japanese Navy to give its version of events.

The unique story of the Barb begins with its men, who had the confidence to become unbeatable. Each team helped develop innovative ideas, new tactics, and new strategies. All strove for personal excellence, and success became contagious. Instead of lying in wait under the waves, the USS Barb pursued enemy ships on the surface, attacking in the swift and precise style of torpedo boats. She was the first sub to use rocket missiles and to creep up on enemy convoys at night, joining the flank escort line from astern, darting in and out as she sank ships up the column.

Surface-cruising, diving only to escape, "Lucky Fluckey" relentlessly patrolled the Pacific, driving his boat and crew to their limits. There can be no greater contrast to modern warfare's long-distance, videogame style of battle than the exploits of the captain and crew of the USS Barb, where they sub, out of ammunition, actually rammed an enemy ship until it sank.

Thunder Below! is a first-rate, true-life, inspirational story of the courage and heroism of ordinary men under fire.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The USS Barb was the Navy's most successful submarine in WW II. Operating mainly in the South China Sea, the Formosa Strait and the forever mysterious Sea of Okhotsk, the Barb sank at least 29 Japanese ships and climaxed its final patrol with an audacious commando raid on land during which the crew destroyed a 16-car train. This was the sole U.S. military landing on Japanese soil during the war. Drawing on ship's logs, letters, interviews, diaries and his own memory, Fluckey, a retired rear admiral, reconstructs every attack by and against the sub from its eighth through its 12th and last patrol. This was the 15-month period when he served as the Barb's skipper, winning the Medal of Honor and four Navy Crosses for his daring exploits. Fluckey is a fine writer with a lively, colorful style. His book is packed with action and suspense and is rich in details about the day-to-day operation of a submarine in combat. Photos. Military Book Club main selection.

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From Library Journal

Medal of Honor holder Fluckey relates the story of his wartime command, U.S. submarine Barb, in a well-told and -researched narrative of undersea resourcefulness and courage. Barb set an unparalleled record of exploits in the naval war against Japan, and Fluckey has used both U.S. and Japanese naval records to re-create the vessel's story. The quality of his writing is far above the usual wartime memoir. This title will appeal to readers of both military history and Tom Clancy-style technothrillers. Highly recommended for World War II collections. Military Bk. Club main selection.-- Stanley Planton, Ohio Univ.

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Review

"A sprightly memoir by a young submarine captain in the Pacific war, written by an old man looking back as a retired admiral, perhaps a bit amazed at the feats of his reckless youth." -- Thomas E. Ricks, The Washington Post Book World

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Micheal McDonough:

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