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



Synopsis

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, Luckey 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, video-game style of battle than the exploits of the captain and crew of the USS Barb, where the 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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Customer Reviews

If you read but one WWII submarine memoir, be it this one.

Everybody rates this book EXCELLENT except for one reviewer on this web site who must be one of those sub skippers who kept his boat under at 60 ft day and night. I've read about 20 WWII submarine books and Gene Fluckey's book about the Barb is one of the best. It's the equal to Dick O'Kane's book on the U.S.S. Tang. Both were outstanding submariners and both later went on to become Admirals. BOTH skippers won the Congressional Medal of Honor, something awarded to only 7 WWII sub skippers out of more than 200, and 4 of the 7 were posthumous. Gene Fluckey was one of those who received the medal for daring and successful action, not for going down with his ship. They don't give the medal out lightly, especially in the United States Navy.

This book is the firsthand account of the World War II submarine, USS Barb, written by the skipper recollecting his 15 months of command. It is a fascinating account detailing the audacious exploits of his ship and crew. You are not going to find any plot twists and intrigue popular among fictional seagoing stories, but the book is filled with the details of real life characters and their bold and exemplary accomplishments. As I read this book I had to remind myself that this was a true story and these people were real. Fluckey's narrative is interlaced with other perspectives of the same incidents including the Japanese describing their reception of the business end of the USS Barb. The description of the crew members that paddled to shore to place a scuttling charge under the tracks to blow up a train was one of the most compelling sequences I have read. It was filled with light humor and suspense. This would have made extraordinary fiction if it had not actually occurred. The Japanese account of the incident included a report that some people thought they saw a man in a trench coat smoking a cigarette under a dock. When I read this I thought that they had been reading too many spy novels. Eugene B. Fluckey writes for his readers, filling the pages with fine points from all angles making the sequence of events appear to unfold as I am sure they actually did. He includes his personal feelings towards the crew, his boat and how his experiences shaped his life. There are many firsthand accounts of historical events, but few are captured so eloquently

and thoughtfully as they are in this book.

I bought this book from after reading the reviews here -- a big thank you to all you reviewers! Adm. Fluckey does a terrific job of recreating the tension and detailing the actions of his wonderful ship and crew; unlike more static narratives, this one comes alive with the voices of these heroes. Adm. Fluckey deserves special praise for the detailed research he did as well, tracking down even the Japanese radio messages to help illuminate his amazing story. A must-read!

I have just completed reading "Thunder Below" and "Clear the Bridge" back to back and being an ex-submariner the contrasts between the two commanding officers is remarkable. I couldn't put Thunder Below down until it was finished. Adm. Fluckey was a commanding officer every sailor dreams of serving under. I just missed serving under him when he was COMSUBPAC in 1966. The combination of the patrol reports and the illegal diary along with remembered conversations puts the reader in the middle of the action. The exploits of the Barb and her crew contains the ingredients of a great movie, and I understand Steven Spielberg has purchased the rights. This review is more of a salute to the Barb and her crew than a book review, and Adm. Fluckey's writing style is to be credited. Thanks Admiral for a great book.

This is the best first person account of submarine operations in the Pacific I have read to date. Adm. Fluckey does a great job of taking the reader through each of the patrols and how the Barb truly does revolutionize submarine tactics as well as strategies. If you own just one book on the Silent Service operating in the Pacific, then buy this book.

I have read Thunder Below ! twice and find it is hard to put down. I know that the book is factual because I was there, in fact I was one of the eight men that made the landing to blow up the train, and I served on the Barb for six war patrols. Admiral Fluckey was an outstanding skipper and his crew would follow him anywhere.

Thunder Below is the personal account of Commander (later Rear Admiral) Eugene Fluckey's adventures as skipper of the legendary WWII submarine, USS Barb. This is a wonderful book that reads more like a thriller than a naval history. I was hard pressed to put it down and only wish it could have gone on another 445 pages. Along with Admiral Fluckey's engaging prose, the book is full of photos of the Barb and her crewmembers, as well as charts of her various patrols and

engagements. Fluckey's good humor and enthusiasm permeate every page, all the more remarkable when one considers he was well into his seventies when he wrote it...and the old fellow is still alive and kicking! I've learned that *Thunder Below* has been optioned by Hollywood. This is unquestionably the kind of book that can make the transition to the silver screen. Hope it's done soon, for the sake of Admiral Fluckey, the remaining Barbarians, and all the men of the silent service.

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