

Foreword

During the generation between the two World Wars, American military capabilities diminished as the policies of isolationism endured. When the U.S. began its support of Britain, the Merchant Navy became a primary asset in the shipment of goods into that struggling country, vulnerable to the U-Boats that saw the freighters as choice targets. The American Navy was limited to escorting the convoys and could not take aggressive action.

The entry of the United States into WWII was a game changer. Now American military leaders had to strengthen and expand a military response that required hugely diverse skills and equipment in all areas of war. The United States Navy, including Reserve Units, found itself not only operating the deep water fleets but also keeping ports open through dredging and salvage of damaged or wrecked ships. Old ships continued to serve, others were refitted for new duties and new tugs were built, some that were particularly well suited for operations in shallow waters.

Ports of the Mediterranean were proving grounds for the rapidly expanding tug and salvage navy. Commodore William A. Sullivan was the significant leader of the expansion and function of the salvage navy that was assembled largely of sailors who had little or no previous experience in this field. The men earned their stripes quickly with the amount of work that existed. By the time the war was over, thousands of men had stories to tell and skills that were important not only to the Navy but transferred to the commercial world of tug operations, salvage and diving. Such experiences and pride were not left behind when servicemen rejoined civilian life, as evidenced by the hundreds of ships that hold reunions and organizations specific to types of service.

When I entered the world of Navy salvage in 1967 with Harbor Clearance Unit One in Vietnam, I quickly developed respect for the men and enthusiasm for salvage work that has remained my primary interest throughout my life, both in the Navy and later in the commercial world. Commander Bruhn's account of the operations in Africa, the Mediterranean and Europe is not only the feature of the WWII era but is also the prologue to my career.

These lively accounts of tug and salvage operations reveal the spirit of the jobs as well as the logistics. Operations Torch, Husky, Avalanche, Shingle, Overlord and Dragoon are brought to life as no official reports can, and these are integrated into the greater context of the Allied war efforts. This comprehensive book provides an under-

standing of how the Allies succeeded as seen from the specific vantage point of tug and salvage operations. It is also a testimony to the many dedicated sailors who rose to the demands of the jobs and thus contributed to that success. It is important that this history be preserved and made available to upcoming generations. Good stories never get old and good men live on in memories.

Commander William I. Milwee Jr., USN (Ret.)

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Much has been written about the destroyers, corvettes and other escorts that protected convoys, task groups and invasion forces from attack by aircraft, surface ships and U-boats. However, where would such forces have been without the ships and men that fought flood and fire aboard stricken vessels, patched them up and then towed them, together with their valuable cargoes, to safe havens or, more importantly, saved thousands of naval and merchant marine sailors and civilians from a watery death or from being burnt alive?

Once again, David Bruhn has researched his subject meticulously before producing this highly readable and often vivid description of Second World War marine salvage and rescue operations, mostly in the European and Mediterranean theatres, and the events that made them necessary. Although his book deals chiefly with the actions of American ships, particularly tugs, salvage vessels and rescue ships, it also looks at units from other Allied nations, especially the British, because so many of them were involved in tasks achieving operational success or, in some cases, excruciating failure. In the pervading spirit of the time, British tugs were built in U.S. shipyards and U.S. tugs were built to British designs.

With his characteristic flair and painstaking attention to detail, David has documented and described hugely dramatic events ranging from operations involving hundreds of ships and aircraft to the fight for survival by individual ships and their men against a ferocious enemy and the unyielding forces of nature. In most cases, he has taken particular pains to identify and list the names, units and honours ascribed to such activities.

Shipwrecks are not the only detritus of war. As a former Minewarfare & Clearance Diving Officer in the Royal Navy with command experience of mine countermeasures vessels and diving teams, I was particularly pleased to see the comprehensive manner in which David has treated the clearance of beach obstructions, mines, demolition charges and booby-trapped obstacles off the beaches of Normandy and in the port of Cherbourg. I was also interested to read that the first U.S. Navy School for salvage divers was established as the direct result of inadequacies discovered after the troop transport USS *Lafayette*, the former French transatlantic liner *Normandie*, capsized in the Hudson River in 1942.

David's book is a welcome testimony to the valiant but untold efforts of thousands of service personnel and civilians and the awesome work of so many ships and men from various navies and

other organizations in fighting for survival, saving lives and generally clearing up after the carnage of war. I have found nothing else approaching its quality.

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