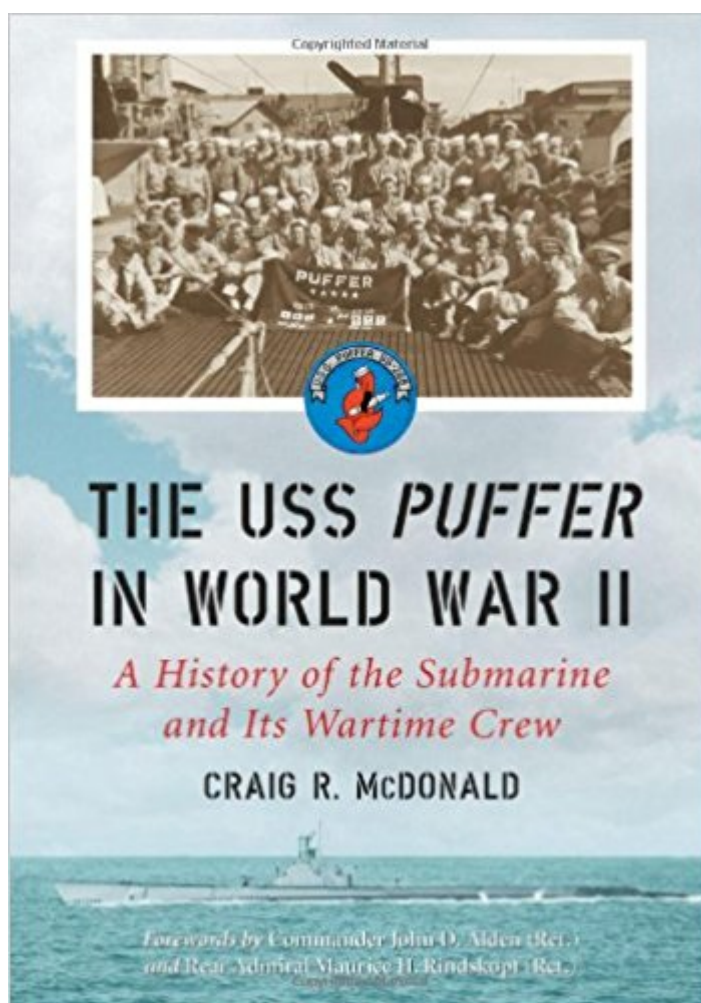


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The USS Puffer In World War II: A History Of The Submarine And Its Wartime Crew



Synopsis

Submarines were responsible for about 55 percent of the tonnage of the Japanese fleets sunk during World War II. The 22 percent casualty rate of U.S. submariners was the highest of the military services. This volume traces the career of the submarine the USS Puffer from the laying of her keel and her commissioning on April 27, 1943, until her departure for the scrap yard in late 1960. Compiled from interviews with former crew members, including the author's father, Donald B. McDonald, as well as other contemporary sources, it follows the crew of the Puffer through nine war patrols. Events recollected include the First War Patrol, which resulted in a record-setting 38 hour submergence because of enemy fire; the dangerous transfer of torpedoes while surfaced in enemy waters; and the wild bombardment of Japanese shore installations with the 5-inch deck gun. There are numerous wartime photographs and appendices providing a list of awards earned by the crew and a summary of claimed successful attacks. Brief biographies of the seven commissioned officers are also included.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Craig R. McDonald is director of information and data services within the University Division at Indiana University in Bloomington.

If you look thru my other reviews WWII USN and submarine books are a favorite reading subject for me. After having read many and having something to compare to I am sorry to say that I would rate this book as an average read at best. Although it covers a subject that I enjoy its just not very

engaging as a written work. Like a number of books written on a ship's history it begins with an introduction to the role of submariners, the stresses of surviving on one and some of the main officers. Once the crew is assembled and trained the book basically covers the experiences of the sub and its sailors patrol by patrol til the war's end. However a good book cannot rely on just that but needs an author to expertly weave all of these experiences together into a single interesting narrative but in my opinion that is not achieved. The chapters regarding the patrols are a bit tedious and often times there are a couple of pages in a row devoted to just explaining what the submarine did down to the minute during an attack. 1141- took final bearing, 1142 shot first torpedo etc. A lot of passages are hardly more interesting than a skipper's patrol report. Chapters devoted to crew's experiences in between patrols are mostly mundane. There are a few episodes such as a sailor getting arrested to provide some color but for the most part it just talks about them drinking beer or servicing the boat. If you've read other sub books I don't think you'll read about anything particularly new. The part of the book that shines the most is the pages describing the Puffer's long submergence and depth charging on one of her first patrols. Here the author pulls together several former sailors' experiences and how they felt the crew was affected which I thought was interesting. Typically sub histories will characterize the crew of the Puffer as being deeply shaken by that experience but that does not seem to be the case. All in all I would only suggest this book to someone who has to read them all otherwise if you are looking for a similar type of book that is truly a five star I would suggest Ostlund's Find Em, Chase Em, Sink Em. Great subject but the writing is flat and very pricey.

like the others, I was quite reluctant and hesitant to shell-out \$45 for a softcover book. However having a lifelong penchant (and weakness) for written accounts on WW2 submarines I bit the proverbial torpedo and have now just finished reading this fine WW2 history of the USS PUFFER. FIVE STARS all the way and a successful war patrol (clean sweep! tie the broom to the periscope shears!)! the chapters are well-segmented from the construction inception, through each successive war patrol, to final de-commissioning and disposition. Ironically the bulk of the text are not of the author's...but verbatim WAR PATROL REPORTS...and several inclusions of former PUFFER crewmember veteran's oral histories, anecdotes, and especially rather lengthy FPO letters home written by an PUFFER officer (to his wife during the war). Besides the postwar memoirs (by actual veterans) and or history texts (by noted historians), books of this ilk, are usually the product of a baby boomer seeking to learn more of his/her father's past WW2 service. This work is no different, as the author attended several PUFFER reunions, interviewed PUFFER crewmembers, researched the archives, etc etc in his quest to understand his father's role in the Silent Service. Having

amassed reams of research material...a book was a natural outcome (otherwise his oral history interviews would have never come to light). what aspect i especially appreciated was the overall narrative of a WW2 boat that was not a headline glamor maru-killing ace sub, but rather an unsung workhorse representative of most of the WW2 submarines (it just happened his father served on her). all former PUFFER crewmembers including their WW2 USN serial numbers are listed which for me renders this work an invaluable resource index. the author's obsessive effort to disclaim the longheld notion that PUFFER's crew was completely disbursed after the horrifying first war patrol could have been abbreviated as well as the sections on physiologic & psychologic aspects of life aboard a diesel boat. one minor error: enlisted submarine personnel did not wear the silver TWIN DOLPHINS qualification badge during WW2 (it was instituted in 1956)...instead wore a TWIN DOLPHINS cuff striker on their liberty blues and or summer whites. during WW2 commissioned officers were the only ones authorized the wear the GOLD TWIN DOLPHINS quals badge. all submarine personnel, enlisted and officer, were allowed to wear the COMBAT PATROL PIN insignia (a combat battle star was added for each patrol deemed successful by the higher-ups). also interestingly enough, there is usually scant mention as to the real reason behind the (faulty) magnetic imploder (on the fishes)..as the author stated it was thought more effective to explode underneath the ship as to 'break the keel, ie., backbone'...when in truth it was devised to originally sink enemy man-of-wars which tend to have a thick armor belt which neutralized most contact exploders (that was the theory anyhow). for all WW2 submarine historians, aficionados, readers, etc...this book is a definite affirmative.

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