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200,000 Miles aboard the Destroyer

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fitting out in Kearny. Ultimately, he was assigned as assistant first lieutenant with a battle station at “Sky 2,” directing 40 mm anti-aircraft guns.

Cotten was quickly dispatched to the Pacific Fleet and began its combat career as part of Operation GALVANIC, the November 1943 invasion of Tarawa and Makin. The ship screened the escort carriers and performed antisubmarine warfare patrols.

While Robinson provides some historical framework to the ship’s operations, the strength of the book is the insight it provides into the daily life of a destroyer wardroom during this extraordinary time. As the war progressed, *Cotten* was assigned to Destroyer Squadron 50 and participated in the great Central Pacific campaign, continuing from Tarawa all the way to Okinawa. The ship performed all the classic destroyer duties, such as screening the fast carriers and steaming with the battle line, at the same time coping with weather, overdue maintenance, and, of course, an implacable and terrifying enemy. Robinson’s descriptions of depth-charging sonar contacts and engaging low-level torpedo bombers reaffirm the adage about war being “hours of boredom and seconds of terror.”

Robinson learned about the insularity of destroyer life, and he describes it well. He depicts how the world seemed to collapse into the restricted horizons of the wardroom and watch teams, and recalls vividly his quest to qualify as a fleet officer of the deck. He evokes some of the exhilaration of high-speed destroyer shiphandling in fleet operations, at a time when destroyer divisions maneuvered at a standard distance of five hundred yards and were constrained by

nothing except gross tonnage and the occasional floating mine.

Robinson ends the book with an epilogue that tells of *Cotten*’s Cold War service. He also includes appendices that discuss the characteristics of the *Fletcher*-class destroyers and the *Cotten*’s awards, as well as a glossary.

There is a minor error in one photo caption, and the maps could have been better, but these are minor quibbles. The book’s greatest strength is Robinson’s recollections of his experiences in *Cotten*, providing an evocative and accurate depiction of a valuable part of a great naval campaign. While the book is not quite the “DD version” of Bryan’s classic, it is well worth reading, particularly by destroyer veterans.

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Moretz, Joseph. *The Royal Navy and the Capital Ship in the Interwar Period: An Operational Perspective*. London: Frank Cass, 2002. 292pp. \$57.50

The Royal Navy is often held up as an example of a military organization that failed to innovate in peacetime. Its critics maintain that naval officers spent the interwar years preparing to refight the Battle of Jutland when they should have been thinking about the new operational challenges presented by aircraft carriers and U-boats. At the root of the problem, these critics argue, was an increasingly irrational devotion to the capital ship (a term that encompasses both the battleship and the battle cruiser). In recent years, however, historians have challenged the image of an intellectually stilted and hopelessly reactionary officer corps. *The Royal Navy and the Capital*

Ship in the Interwar Period builds on such work to present a more sympathetic picture of a service struggling with inadequate budgets, global responsibilities, and rapid technological change.

The Royal Navy emerged from the First World War with its faith in the supremacy of the capital ship largely undiminished. Battleships were clearly vulnerable to attack by aircraft and submarines, but as Joseph Moretz demonstrates, the naval profession believed that the risks to these ships would be manageable, a view that was confirmed by the experiences of the Spanish Civil War. With naval aviation still in a formative stage of development, there was as yet no reliable and tested alternative to the capital ship. Nevertheless, aircraft carriers were regarded as an essential and integral part of any British battle fleet, valuable not just for spotting and reconnaissance but also as a striking force. The main impediment to the development of naval aviation in the interwar era was less a lack of imagination than a constant shortage of funds, as well as the control by the Royal Air Force (until 1937) of the Fleet Air Arm. By the beginning of the Second World War, the Royal Navy's initial commanding lead in naval aviation had vanished.

Challenging the traditional view, Moretz argues that in this period the Royal Navy strove to overcome known deficiencies and meet future challenges through a sustained process of fleet exercises and experimentation. Its accomplishments in this area were mixed. As the author notes, the gunnery proficiency of British capital ships actually decreased through much of the interwar period, due in large part to budgetary restrictions and the problems of assimilating new technology. The service was willing, however, to consider such measures as night fighting and

new divisional tactics in its effort to retain a qualitative edge over its increasingly numerous prospective enemies.

Capital ships were also employed in such peacetime tasks as "showing the flag," providing aid to civil authorities, and deterrence. Moretz maintains that the capital ship's utility across the entire spectrum of operational activity bolstered the Royal Navy's case for their retention. The evidence produced to support this claim is unconvincing, however. Peacetime tasks were usually undertaken by smaller warships that were better suited to them. It was only in demonstrations of British power to deter aggressors in crisis situations that heavy ships were essential, but even here, Moretz suggests, their record was notably weak, given their failure to deter Japan in 1941.

Other chapters attempt to provide context for the Navy's capital ship policies, but the results are uneven. Moretz often seems out of his depth when he strays into broad questions of naval policy. For example, he attributes Britain's willingness to enter into a series of arms control agreements almost entirely to financial considerations, though other factors were often of equal or greater importance. This propensity to oversimplify complex issues is also obvious in the chapter on interwar naval strategy, which ascribes Britain's difficulties to the maintenance of the "one power standard" (which was *not* replaced by a two-power standard in 1938, as the author claims) and the Navy's unwillingness to divide its fleet between two distant theaters (which is precisely what it *did* plan to do for most of this period). Moreover, while Moretz correctly notes that the Navy developed different strategies for Europe and the Far East, he is not clear on what those strategies were. This problem stems from

insufficient research and a tendency to conflate fleet exercises with strategic planning.

Nonetheless, and while the background material that makes up a significant portion of this study is not always reliable, the book is of value to the specialist for the fresh perspective it offers on the Royal Navy's response to the operational challenges of the interwar period.

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Chisholm, Donald. *Waiting for Dead Men's Shoes: Origins and Development of the U.S. Navy's Officer Personnel System, 1793–1941*. Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 2001. 883pp. \$125

Donald Chisholm has provided us with an important book. It is the first comprehensive history of the development of the U.S. Navy's officer personnel system. Others have provided portions of the picture; Christopher McKee's *A Gentlemanly and Honorable Profession: The Creation of the U.S. Naval Officer Corps, 1794–1815* is an excellent treatment of the early years. But the Royal Navy, from which many American practices derive, is more thoroughly covered. Extensive coverage of the Royal Navy is to be found in Michael Lewis's *British Ships and British Seamen* (1940); *The Navy of Britain: A Historical Portrait* (1948); *A Social History of the Navy, 1793–1815* (1960); and *The Navy in Transition, 1814–1864: A Social History* (1965). William Laird Clowe's magisterial seven-volume *The Royal Navy: A History from the Earliest Times to the Present* (1897), although dated, remains impressive. Yet no one has provided for the U.S. Navy books of such depth and coverage

until now, with Chisholm's impressive work.

Chisholm's intent goes well beyond a historical recounting of events. His stated aim is "to explore how institutions are created and elaborated, to assess the usefulness of the problem-solving conception of decision for so doing, and to relate the previously untold story of the origins and development of the U.S. Navy's officer personnel system." Chisholm believes that the problems faced by the Navy's officer personnel system parallel in many ways those faced by other large-scale organizations. He is at least as interested in process as he is in outcome, and he draws with impressive scholarship upon multiple disciplines, including not only history but political science, sociology, strategic management, foreign policy, and public administration. Although Chisholm's vehicle is the detailed study of naval officer personnel management, he uses that as a means of studying organizational management in a broader context. In this he is successful. Extensively researched in primary sources and thoroughly documented, his book is a major contribution to organizational theory.

The author's intended audience is the community of naval officers—past, present, and future—congressional scholars, and students of American political development. However, an even wider audience will appreciate this study for its insights into institutional problem solving, modification, and growth. However, even a comprehensive study such as this must set its limits. To make things manageable, Chisholm chose to omit the staff corps and Marine Corps, the development of the reserves, the creation and modifications of the Naval Academy curriculum, and the enlisted personnel system.