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Battle Station Sickbay: Navy Medicine in World War II

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The United States and its navy cannot afford to allow the U.S.-Japan alliance to weaken or disappear. Consequently, managing the alliance so as to continue to meet the security requirements of both nations will call for an increased interest in, and understanding of, Japan's security requirements and future roles and missions. Green has made a major contribution to the understanding of Japan's defense needs, and his work should be read by every sailor and Marine who intends to sail into the western Pacific.

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Herman, Jan K. *Battle Station Sickbay: Navy Medicine in World War II.* Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1997. 250pp. $34.95

Saving Private Ryan and *The Thin Red Line* may not have won the Academy Award for best picture, but both films left indelible marks on their audiences. Like no other before them, they stripped away the romance and myth of Hollywood's battlefields and replaced them with the stark reality of the blood and gore that actually washed the beaches of Europe and the South Pacific. There are plenty of veterans who understand the awful truth of combat, but perhaps none have a more detailed knowledge than the doctors, nurses, and corpsmen who faced the full range of horrors that war can wreak on the mind and body.

Like these hugely successful films, Jan Herman's fifth book, *Battle Station Sick Bay: Navy Medicine in World War II,* has captured the true experiences of the dedicated professionals of the Navy Medical Department during the last world war. Herman, editor of *Navy Medicine* magazine and historian of the Navy Medical Department, based this book completely on interviews with naval medicine veterans of Pearl Harbor, Corregidor, Guadalcanal, Peleliu, Normandy, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. The book is quite interestingly arranged in first-person accounts, as if the reader is being given the solemn privilege of seeing the war through the eyes of a battleship surgeon, or of a corpsman under fire with "his" Marines. This book has some terrific stories: the Herculean effort to save lives in the wake of the attack on Pearl Harbor; the pharmacist's mate who performed an appendectomy aboard a submarine using kitchen utensils for retractors; the harrowing Iwo Jima amphibious assaults; the combat medic who would earn the Medal of Honor for his life-saving efforts; and the doctor who survived years of torture and starvation in Japanese prisoner of war camps. This work honors the memory of all those who fought the battle to save lives. It is a deeply moving book, told in poignant memories, sometimes with humor, but at all times a dark reminder that war deals in the brutal business of human suffering. There are no MacArthurs or Halseys here—only ordinary men and women who accomplished extraordinary things at a time when their nation needed their services most.

"Lest we forget" has become a catch-phrase of the nineties as more and more of the veterans of the last world war pass on. To those in the Navy and Marine Corps who experienced

the healing touch of the doctors, nurses, and corpsmen of the Second World War, there is no forgetting. As one corpsman noted when the brutal fighting at Iwo Jima finally ceased, "One of the things you constantly had on your mind . . . were constantly asking yourself, am I doing the right thing? Am I doing enough for them?" I would guess that the ghosts of a hundred thousand sailors and Marines would answer, "You sure did, Doc, thanks. You did fine. You did plenty." For anyone who really wants to appreciate all that Navy medicine has done, this book is a *must* read.

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McIntosh, Elizabeth P. *Sisterhood of Spies: The Women of the OSS.* Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institnte Press, 1998. 320pp. $29.95

If you were a young, adventurous woman who wanted to become part of the action in World War II, you probably could not have done better than join the newly created Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Of course, neither you nor anyone else would have thought of you as a woman—"girl" was the universally accepted descriptor—and you were almost certainly going to end up in a supporting role, doing office work. OSS's founder, General William P. Donovan, could say without drawing criticism that the women were the "invisible apron strings" of the organization. That was the norm in the 1940s. As the war evolved, however, OSS women were sent abroad and became increasingly involved in significant intelligence operations. Even so, from the beginning few women played key roles.

Elizabeth P. McIntosh has written an enlightening and entertaining history that entwines the individual stories of several dozen women in a broader discussion of major OSS activities. She is ideally qualified to do so. After several years as a journalist, she signed on with OSS in January 1943, serving in Washington, India, and China. Then she worked for the Voice of America and on assignment to the Department of State before joining the Central Intelligence Agency, where she was an operations officer from 1958 until her retirement in 1973. McIntosh effectively uses her writing talent and sense of humor to give the reader a serious yer enjoyable discussion of major facets of wartime intelligence.

A few of McIntosh's characters are interesting enough, and had jobs significant enough, to earn extended treatment. Among rhese is Amy Thorpe Pack, who turned her love of adventure, and men, to the service of her country by stealing codes from the Vichy French embassy in Washington, D.C. Another is Virginia Hall, a well-to-do Baltimorean with an artificial leg who spent almost the entire war in occupied France working with resistance teams—first for the British Special Operations Executive and later for the OSS. Gertrude Legendre also gets a chapter to herself. Having been captured while on an unauthorized visit to the front from her office job in Paris, she gained distinction by resisting German interrogation efforts for over six months.