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Bluewater Sailor: The Memoirs of a Destroyer Officer

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Most notably, Martin has radically altered the standard account of *Constitution's* engagement with HMS *Java*, showing that Captain William Bainbridge had been caught off guard and allowed *Java* to rake *Constitution*.

Equally interesting, Martin describes *Constitution's* several cruises in the Mediterranean, its round-the-world cruise in 1844–1846, its years with the Naval Academy in Newport during the Civil War, and even its very brief service as flagship for Commodore Stephen B. Luce's Apprentice Training Squadron in 1881. Those associated with the Naval War College will be interested to learn of the ship's repeated returns to Newport, from its first visit in 1798 to its last under sail in November 1881, when the ship caught fire and went hard aground on Goat Island. It visited Newport again, under tow, in 1931.

Martin's account of the various efforts to restore the ship and return it to its appearance at the time of its most famous battles is an interesting saga in itself, revealing much about the development of historical restoration as well as the change in attitudes about the service. Perhaps the most interesting insight of all is that the most recent dry-docking and restoration (1992–1995) revealed that the ship had been originally built with diagonal riders to strengthen its hull.

Scholars will regret that this beautifully produced new edition lacks the author's extensive quotations from original documents, detailed footnotes, and full bibliography. In the interests of economy, these are preserved only in a manuscript edition of the book, available to interested researchers at the USS *Constitution* Museum in Boston.

Nevertheless, this is a carefully researched study and a model of the genre that is often termed "ship biography."

JOHN B. HATTENDORF
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Sheppard, Don. *Bluewater Sailor: The Memoirs of a Destroyer Officer*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1996. 334pp. \$24

Bluewater Sailor presents a warm and personal story of a mustang (ex-enlisted) junior officer aboard USS *Henshaw*, a fictitious *Sumner-Gearing* destroyer, in the late 1950s. For the hundreds of thousands who served in this type ship, the story makes a generous contribution to reliving the exciting days of yesteryear. Those who have never been to sea can receive vicariously the experience of doing so. The author takes the reader aboard with the character Ensign Stoddard as he reports to his first duty station after receiving his commission. The reader grows and matures with the ship and crew during Ensign Stoddard's initial tour. *Henshaw* is the author's creation, but it is no less real for that; the supporting cast members are easily recognizable as human. The ship is strong and secure and never lacks for human warmth within its steel sides. *Henshaw* is typical in configuration but like all ships unique in its personality. The officers and crew, with their idiosyncrasies, failings, and strengths, are not fictional but big as life. Once on board, Stoddard sails through the predeployment preparations for *Henshaw's* western Pacific deployment. He develops into an outstanding department head, the *Henshaw* into a mission-ready ship

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of the line, and the recently enlisted reader into a sailor. Using the traditional hallmarks of destroyer operations—can-do spirit, smart shiphandling, and precision maneuvering—against a backdrop of post-World War II tactics and *Sumner-Gearing* equipment, the author captures the essence of destroyer operations. The reader experiences the excitement of alongside replenishments, antisubmarine warfare, life at sea, and liberty ashore. Over the course of its deployment, the ship and crew come to work together as one. The successful deployment ends, personnel transfers begin, and *Henshaw* enters the shipyard for modernization and rehabilitation. Ensign Stoddard, now a lieutenant, leaves for another duty station. The reader's cruise has ended.

Hulls like the *Henshaw* are no longer active, but the excitement of destroyer operations still abounds. Technological and tactical advances have marked the end of an era when high-speed steaming at close intervals, bent-line-screen reorientations, management of superheated steam, and a lack of stand-off weapons were routine. Each of these added to the excitement of daily operations. Today operations are more dispersed and distant.

Ensign Stoddard is a remarkable officer, even considering his prior enlisted service. As the hero in the novel, he stands more than head and shoulders above his contemporaries. In this regard, Sheppard's portrayal of his character is flawed. The duties, responsibilities, tactical acumen, and leadership role attributed to Ensign Stoddard are disproportionate to his experience and years of service. The officers, crew, events, and equipment depicted are more true to life than the central figure. As Sheppard states in his opening note, "Techno buffs may find fault with too much or too little description, but this is a story of men, the equipment is used as a backdrop." In general, however, and aside from a few minor details, the author's story is in the main how I also remember it, forty years later.

With Lieutenant Stoddard's departure from *Henshaw* the story should have ended. The remaining few pages are anticlimactic. The cruise is over. The adventure gone. The fun is over. Stoddard is no longer a part of *Henshaw*, but *Henshaw* will always be a part of us.

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