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Battleships: United States Battleships

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compelling narrative that is must reading for anyone interested in naval aviation.

My compliments to the Kaufmans. They have produced more than just another coffee-table book; they have created a conversation piece.

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Webb, Thomas G. and Dulin, Robert O., Jr. *Battleships: United States Battleships, 1935–1992*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1995 (first edition 1976). 404pp. $65

This is an update of the first definitive book on U.S. World War II battleships. As in the first edition, the authors, both of whom are formally trained naval architects, rely heavily on official plans and data. The most significant change is a new chapter, "Return of the Dreadnought," which covers the reactivation and employment of four ships of the *Iowa* class—the last U.S. battleships and the only ones still available to the Navy. This is an excellent summary of the extensive updating and recommissioning of these ships from 1981 to 1988, and it includes details on many of the more ambitious design conversions that were to take place in subsequent years. Of course it was cost that limited the modifications to the bare (but still expensive) minimum, and none of the second-phase conversions studied was ever realized.

Webb and Dulin provide a thorough summary of the turret explosion on the USS *Iowa* in April 1989, as well as all the known facts about the case, but offer no conclusions. They do, however, criticize the newly reported captain of the *Iowa*, who was a missile and machinery specialist, for not paying closer attention to 16-inch turret-crew training. Ironically, the previous skipper, Captain Lawrence Seaquist, a gunnery specialist, had made *Iowa* "the best shooting battleship ever." Eventually, the entire class, but particularly the *Iowa*, achieved "deadly accuracy at any range with little shell dispersion." The book follows all four ships of the *Iowa* class operationally until their decommissioning, the last being *Missouri*, in 1992. The ultimate fate of these beautiful ships, favorites of the Marines, remains unresolved.

The first six chapters, which cover the other three battleship classes and the controversial battle cruisers of the *Alaska* class, remain as they were in the original, with some updated text and a few additional and more interesting photographs. The conclusions in chapter 8 have been suitably modified. The appendixes now include "President Roosevelt and His Navy" and "Preliminary Designs of *North Carolina* and *South Dakota*." Dropped from this edition, however, is the original chapter "The Tosa Experiments."

The *Montanas*, which would have had twelve 16-inch, 50-caliber guns in four turrets and displaced 68,000 tons of water, were never built. That is regrettable for the battleship enthusiast, for they would have been the size of the Japanese *Yamato* class, the world's biggest. It was the advent of the aircraft carrier and the realization of its potential that doomed the *Montana* class. Their complex machinery space arrangement did, however, survive in the *Midway*-class carriers, our most formidable at the time.

This work remains an authoritative reference, now fully updated. It will be of particular interest to naval architects, historians, and battleship buffs, especially when combined with Friedman's *U.S. Battleships*, also published by the Naval Institute Press. Line drawings from official plans, in sufficient detail for model-building, are included for every class covered, and there is good photography of all ten ships of the three battleship classes built in those years. This is particularly important for the *South Dakotas*, which saw lots of action but really existed only during World War II. Unfortunately, the ships' plans are no longer foldouts; they have been reduced to one page, which makes them more challenging to understand. Also, the inboard profiles of the *Montana* class have been inadvertently exchanged for those of the *South Dakota*.

Despite its substantial price, this is a book worth owning.

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Sumrall, Robert F. *Sumner-Gearing-Class Destroyers: Their Design, Weapons, and Equipment.* Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1995. 289pp. $59.95

In 1975, prior to the introduction of the *Spruance*-class (DD 963) destroyer, a phrase prevalent on the waterfront was, "When you're out of FRAMs, you're out of destroyers." In 1958, with the emergence of the post–World War II Soviet submarine threat and the introduction of high-performance jet aircraft, the FRAM (Fleet Rehabilitation and Modernization) program was introduced to preclude block obsolescence. It was the final alteration stage in the life of the class that also provided a "test platform" for the early versions of several missile and electronic countermeasures systems installed in destroyers today. The FRAMed destroyers of the *Sumner-Gearing* class, originally constructed for World War II service, became the mainstay of the surface force for thirty years following the end of the war. It was no wonder that the passing of this class was viewed as the end of an era by the hundreds of thousands of personnel who had served in the 168 units. Indeed, the *Sumner-Gearings* epitomized the general-purpose versatility of a naval warship and rendered yeoman service far above and beyond design expectation.

Robert Sumrall provides a worthy historical account of the political considerations and naval vessel design specifications that led to the commissioning of USS *Allen M. Sumner* (DD 692)—the first of the class—in January 1944. A requirement to increase cruising radius made an additional 160 tons of fuel storage necessary, which in turn caused the *Sumner* class to be lengthened by fourteen feet. The USS *Gearing* (DD 710), commissioned approximately one year later, although technically the first of its own class, was essentially a stretched version of DD 692. The short-hulled *Sumner* and the long-hulled *Gearing* were tactically identical and differed only in endurance.

There are three major components to this book: a general background of ship design that led to the *Sumner-Gear-*