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## Sea Battles in Close-up: World War II, Vol. II,

Jan van Tol

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shells splashed on both sides of *Sterett*. Our own tracers hit squarely on the forecastle of our target (the battleship). It was illuminated in a most unique way: the *Sterett*'s guns had been loaded with star shells for our first salvo and we had fired them to hit rather than to illuminate. Hit they did and when they detonated the star shells burned brightly on the deck of the target. She soon caught fire in the vicinity of number two turret. Seconds later, there came a second blinding flash. The whole gun director shook and we were showered with shell fragments. I could feel them and hear them bounce off my padded talker's helmet. One of them neatly clipped the telephone button out from under my finger leaving me just a stub of a pin to press in order to keep my microphone open. I asked whether anyone in the director crew had been hit . . . . 'Yes, I am . . . Yeah, I think so . . . Yes, in the back.' I asked if anyone felt they needed immediate treatment. Instantly, all three answered with a loud and definite NO. So we sat there more alert than ever, looking for fresh targets."

When a sailor meets the enemy face to face, be it in a small or global war, the challenge to personal courage and professional training is direct and immediate. Each hopes and expects to be equal to that challenge. Honest accounts like those of *Tin Can Sailor* depict what shape the challenge may take and reaffirm that the U.S. Navy has met those challenges and prevailed.

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Grove, Eric. *Sea Battles in Close-up: World War II, Vol.II*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1993. 224pp. \$24.95

In 1988 Eric Grove edited an updated version of a popular collection of monographs, originally published by Ian Allan, Ltd., in the early 1970s and entitled *Sea Battles in Close-up*, which dealt with ten significant naval battles of the Second World War. The motivation for the reissue is that significant new information has recently come to light—particularly relating to Ultra—which renders some of the original work inaccurate. The battles included in the initial volume were intended to "reflect accurately the changing nature of this most challenging of naval wars." In this second volume, the author has chosen nine more episodes. Seven involve sea battles, while two—the campaign against the *Tirpitz* and Operation NEPTUNE, the naval side of the Normandy invasion—concern important naval operations during World War II.

Grove's sustained theme in this series is that "World War II came at a time of decisive change in the nature of naval warfare." This volume focuses in particular on the idea that "the gun-armed warship was no longer supreme." However, as will cheer the hearts of surface warfare officers, "it was still important and sometimes decisive." In examining these propositions, Grove describes the battles of Narvik, Crete, the Java Sea, and Sirte, and various actions of the Malta Striking Forces, in which the roles of surface warships were particularly important. However, to emphasize the huge changes that had occurred in naval warfare since the start of the war,

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Grove finishes with the Philippine Sea and Leyte Gulf. In the case of the former, the traditional role of the surface combatant was almost completely supplanted by aircraft, while in the latter, the major roles played by surface combatants in some of the actions came not as a matter of operational intent but in large measure as consequences of egregious American errors.

Each battle or operation is described and analyzed in a separate chapter generously accompanied by excellent, and in many cases not commonly seen, photographs. A generally well done series of charts nicely complements the text. Short technical descriptions of some of the representative combatants involved in each encounter are given in separate boxes.

However, two things in this book are a bit curious. First, Grove's criticism of Winston Churchill's continual interference in operational matters, particularly as First Sea Lord, and his "fixation with a Mediterranean strategy" is almost strident. Churchill's competence as a strategist is a controversial, complex issue and would seem to be beyond the scope of a book that is primarily concerned with sea battles at the tactical and operational levels. Secondly, although the selection of battles was based primarily on the earlier Ian Allan publication, Grove has included original chapters on Pacific battles in both volumes, to illustrate better his underlying themes. But in this volume, dealing with battles in which surface ships were "still important," American readers must surely wonder why Grove did not include any of the classic 1942-

1943 surface actions in the Southwest Pacific.

Grove is a well known expert in naval affairs. He has been a lecturer at the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth and a visiting professor at the U.S. Naval Academy. His publications include *Vanguard to Trident* and *The Future of Sea Power*, and he is the editor of the latest edition of Corbett's classic, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*.

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Trimble, William F. *Admiral William A. Moffett: Architect of Naval Aviation*.

Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993. 338pp. \$29.95

I had the great privilege of interviewing General Jimmy Doolittle some years ago, and in his concluding remarks to me he compared General Billy Mitchell and Carl Spaatz. Though Spaatz himself would not have agreed, Doolittle asserted that Spaatz had done more good for the cause of airpower and national security than Mitchell. Doolittle likened Mitchell to an oak tree and Spaatz to the bamboo. When a hurricane came, he said, the oak stood for a long time, straight and tall in the midst of adversity, but ultimately it snapped and was useless; the bamboo, on the other hand, flexed with the wind, except on fundamental principles, and when the hurricane abated it sprang back, straight and tall, to resume the struggle. Spaatz's influence may have been less spectacular than Mitchell's, but his impact was long-lasting. Doolittle asserted that he and many other air