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## Warship 1990

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## 174 Naval War College Review

In *Cradle of Valor*, retired Major General Dale O. Smith, U.S. Air Force, presents an intimate look at the West Point of the interwar period. In his introduction, John Eisenhower describes the Military Academy as a time-honored institution that has provided leadership to the Army and Air Force through seven wars. Although West Point's role in defending the country is universally acknowledged, Eisenhower asserts that few institutions are less understood.

But this work is more than a chronicle of West Point cadet life between the world wars. It is also an intimate look into the life of the American family that sent the nineteen-year-old author to the Military Academy in the summer of 1930. Preserved in numerous letters to his family, Smith's account of his plebe year is as captivating as it is entertaining. What emerges from these pages is the tremendous pride and personal satisfaction associated with attendance at West Point. Graduates from any of the service academies will thoroughly enjoy this book.

As a member of the graduating class of 1934, Smith was too young to share the exalted rank of some of his predecessors in the war, but he was old enough to serve at mid-level command positions. His class provided numerous brigade commanders and a few brigadiers by the time the war ended. Although Smith achieved the rank of major general, he derived his greatest satisfaction on the sunny afternoon he received his commission

on Trophy Point. It was the culmination of an experience that taught him to behave with confidence, gave him training in manners and morals that never left him, and imbued him with a self-discipline that he could never have found elsewhere.

Smith realizes that change is inevitable, but cautions reformers to be wary of changing the system unless recommendations are tempered with the understanding of what it takes to create a successful and loyal officer corps. Like most "old grads," he regrets the passing of the West Point of his generation, but takes immense pride in the institution that has produced the military leaders who have won our nation's land wars and preserve the country's lofty principles. Whatever the future brings, quotes Smith, West Point will continue to develop leaders who extol the military virtues of Duty, Honor, and Country.

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Gardiner, Robert, ed. *Warship* 1990. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1990. 255pp. \$32

A book that is essentially a collection of articles of varying quality and subject matter—even within an area apparently so specialised as warship design and history—is not easy to review. *Warship* 1990 is no exception. Its contributors are from six different countries, and the topics range over two centuries and several continents—

from Swedish naval reconstruction programmes of 1780 to the Canadian *St. Laurent*-class frigates, by way of the battleship *Oregon*. The subject matter is both catholic and, largely, original.

Some articles are better written than others, and some subjects more interesting, but the work as a whole is carried by its remarkable photographs, some of which cannot have been in print before. One feature that should not have been included is "The Naval Year in Review," which duplicates the mass of journals and books that deal with contemporary issues in a less than timely fashion. Considering that the Conway Maritime Press has access to the wealth and variety of the photographic archives, it would have been far better if the energies devoted to the "Review" were diverted to a similar exercise for a selected year from the past.

The value of the book to the naval historian is debatable. The real objection is that the majority of articles do not delve sufficiently deep into the complicated but important technical issues which they raise. There

are a few exceptions that offer useful commentaries, such as D.K. Brown's and Philip Pugh's essays on "ramming," and R.D. Layman's discussion on the *Engadine* at Jutland. Nevertheless, the emphasis in this work is largely on description rather than comprehensive analysis. For this reason, *Warship* must be considered valuable for the subjects which it raises, not the questions it answers. It is therefore something of a "primer." The book provides an attractive means of interesting newcomers to the field in the complexities of warship history, and it is welcome to the expert through its photography and its laudable record of covering hitherto unknown subjects. Perhaps the best shorthand description of the book is that it is the sort of thing every naval historian would like to receive as a Christmas present from an indulgent great aunt—or that could be given to an intelligent grandchild who is developing an interest in the subject.

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