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"Subchaser to Sicily," "A Leaf Upon the Sea: A Small Ship in the Mediterranean 1941-1943"

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force: the naval debacle in Oran harbor, the French strafing of American paratroops at Tafaroui airport, the chaotic situation at Port Lyautey, and the disorganized landing at Cape Fedala near Casablanca, to mention but a few examples. After four days of sporadic warfare and urgent diplomacy, French resistance collapsed. The cost was 1,434 American casualties (556 killed, 837 wounded, 41 missing); for the British, 330 casualties; for the French, 2,500 casualties (700 killed, 1,400 wounded, 400 missing). The French air force lost many pilots and planes, and their navy scuttled the fleet at Toulon and other ports in southern France. In the last analysis, as Breuer points out, it was fortunate the French chose to fight. As a result, Operation Torch became a "gigantic combat laboratory" where untried troops learned bitter lessons before having to face the seasoned Wehrmacht. The landing was a success, but as General George Patton later admitted, "only through the intervention of Divine Providence."

Breuer does not use footnote or endnote citations. His sources include 54 books, mostly biographies and memoirs written between 1945 and 1980. The bulk of these accounts were published in the 1950s and 1960s. He also lists four titles under "unit and campaign histories." One of them, George F. Howe's *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1957), of the famous "Green Series," was probably indispensable to the writing of *Operation*

Torch. Breuer may have also consulted Matloff and Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1953), but does not list this valuable work. For those who need a quick, readable summary of Operation Torch, this book is ideal; but for deeper treatment and guidance to primary sources, one should go elsewhere.

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Naval Historical Center
Washington, D.C.

Stafford, Edward P. *Subchaser to Sicily*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1988. 320 pp. \$17.95

Stead, Gordon W. *A Leaf Upon the Sea: A Small Ship in the Mediterranean 1941-1943*. Vancouver, Canada: Univ. of British Columbia, 1988. 185 pp. \$27.95

These are two great books! Those who go down to the sea in small ships will find them particularly interesting. Both books are warmly and personably written with an easy flowing style. They are hard to put down once started.

It is remarkable that two so similar works would be published in the same year—one by an American reservist, the other by a Canadian recounting his service with the Royal Navy. Both were young men thrust into command of a small warship as their nations geared up for the full fight of World War II. In the

American case, LTJG Stafford took command of USS *SC-692*, a wooden subchaser: 110 feet in length, 18 feet abeam and 106 tons displacement. In LT Stead's case it was called a motor launch, HM *ML-126*, but was roughly the same size and had the identical mission—chasing submarines—which neither did very much of. But they did do a great deal else.

As was the custom in those days, when shipbuilding was outrunning personnel training, both ships were manned with a few seasoned enlisted ratings and filled out with reservists and new recruits. So both skippers faced the challenge of working up their crews in a new class of ship while developing their own sense of command. Fortunately, both were blessed with a good sense of humor and were experienced in navigation and seamanship as a result of earlier days in sailboats.

After an initial workup and local operations, both vessels undertook lengthy voyages from home waters to the Mediterranean theater where both continued to operate throughout the war in one form or another. It was during these transits that what had been not much more than large yachts took on a toughness that characterized them as warships thereafter. The story of this transition is compelling reading. I could not help but be amused at how quickly during the transit senior officers in both navies adopted the practice of using these small ships as messengers between the larger ships in the formation. These days we have

a tendency to do the same thing with ASW helicopters.

Once in the Mediterranean the experiences of the two vessels differ somewhat and then converge again. Since *ML-126* arrived more than a year earlier than *SC-692*, and was stationed at Malta, she saw considerably more action.

The most gripping parts of *Leaf Upon the Sea* come from the section on those desperate days before the Allied victories in North Africa. Once in Malta *ML-126* found that sweeping mines had a much higher priority than chasing submarines, so they became expert at that hazardous task. One memorable afternoon *ML-126* was pounced upon by three Messerschmitts while the RAF was busy elsewhere. As I read this account, I could not help thinking that most modern warfare analysts or war game umpires would consider that the little ship was outgunned by more than 3 to 1 and what guns she could bring to bear were manually controlled, and would then declare a clear victory for the attacking aircraft. In the real world of 1942, the outcome was markedly different: *ML-126* 3, Messerschmitts 0.

Because *SC-692* arrived in the Med in May 1943, her early days were less dangerous, if not less busy, as she ran east and west along the North African coast on one mission or another. Within a matter of months, however, she found the mainstream of the war and participated in the invasions of Sicily and Italy. Here the stories of the two small ships come together as both are

caught up in these momentous events. Both books provide unique and exciting views of these operations. Particularly moving is an incident after the capture of Sicily: The prudent mariner in LTJG Stafford declined a convenient berth in a nest alongside a quay wall in Palermo for a more dispersed position in an offshore anchorage; an air raid that night sunk the two SCs that remained in the nest. Throughout this phase, the pace of both books is fast and action filled. Then, remarkably, the two authors are relieved within 6 days of each other in October 1943 and head back to North America for some well deserved leave and reassignment to duty in larger ships (destroyers and destroyer escorts).

Both books are personal memoirs as well as accounts of the authors' ships and crews. The writing is free-flowing and technically correct, making them enjoyable reading for civilian and naval personnel alike. I commend them highly to those with an interest in going to sea in small ships, those looking for a new perspective on naval operations in the Med during World War II and to those just looking for some exciting reading.

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Berry, Henry. *Hey Mac, Where Ya Been?: Living Memories Of The U.S. Marines In The Korean War*. New

York: St. Martin's Press, 1988.
 323pp. \$22.95

This is the third book written by Mr. Berry dealing with the experiences of the American combat soldier during this century's major wars. Having previously dealt with the marines fighting in the Pacific during the Second World War, Berry now turns his attention to Korea. As in his previous work, the story is told in the words of the marines who fought in Korea. The viewpoints presented and the memories recalled do not deal with the art of high strategy and policy. There is little here to explain why the war was fought as it was. Those looking for such insights are probably better off seeking answers in other recent efforts. For those interested in understanding the war from the viewpoint of the average marine, this work presents a different insight into the nature of the land war.

It's all too easy with the passage of time to forget the human aspects of fighting in Korea in the summer and winter of 1950. The lack of readiness to fight again so soon after the trauma of World War II and the massive demobilization that followed tends to be forgotten today in the flush of the Reagan defense buildup. But the reminiscence of many marines vividly brings home the experience of moving rapidly from a carefree peacetime existence to the early confusion of landing in Korea. The widespread feeling that the North Koreans could be easily handled was rapidly dispelled as the South Korean and U.N. forces were