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## Frogmen: First Battles

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People survived such conditions and, as other photos show, there were flat calms, too. Whatever the weather, people fought whenever the enemy came within range. That those on both sides were successful is evident from the toll. Among ships alone, the Germans lost 37 warships, the Allies 29 warships and 98 merchantmen.

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Schofield, William and Carisella, P.J. *Frogmen: First Battles*. Boston: Branden Publishing, 1987. 191pp. \$15.95

Admiral Charles E. Morgan, Royal Navy, pinned the Italian Gold Medal for Valor on the tunic of Italian Navy Lieutenant Luigi Durand de la Penne in March 1945. The citation? Lieutenant de la Penne, steering a two-man torpedo and wearing a frogman outfit, had sunk the British battleship HMS *Valiant* in December 1941 when Morgan was her skipper!

Five warships, seven tankers, twenty cargo ships, two subs, and some small craft—that was the box score of ships, mostly British, sunk by the Italian 10th Light Flotilla. The scene of action was the Mediterranean and the Straits of Gibraltar, between March 1941 and August 1943. The sailors were career seamen of the Italian Navy, augmented by a specially recruited levy of competitive swimmers serving in the wartime army.

Authors Schofield and Carisella have interviewed survivors and participants to reconstruct this chapter of naval warfare in World War II. They tell how Italian engineers produced the E-boat, a speedboat that was half bomb and half engine, and the two-man submarine whose crew rode astride the torpedo-rigged hull wearing wet suits and oxygen tanks. Less than fifty of these frogmen challenged the mighty Royal Navy for command of the Mediterranean, culminating with the midnight raid on Alexandria that left the battleships HMS *Queen Elizabeth* and HMS *Valiant* out of action for months.

In April 1942, Prime Minister Winston Churchill told the Parliament in closed session how the Royal Navy had not one operational capital ship in the Mediterranean. He lauded the valiant Italian frogmen. Two months later, Italian Navy Commander (Prince) Valerio Borghese briefed Admiral Karl Dönitz, Commander in Chief of the German Submarine Fleet, on his plans for another frogman attack that also would have strategic consequences. What target was proposed by the commander of Italy's 10th Light Flotilla? New York Harbor. The means of attack? Two-man subs, mounted to the decks of Italian and German U-boats for the transatlantic journey.

Allied antisubmarine war-fighting measures became effective just in time to prevent the 10th Light Flotilla from trying out their plan. And frogman operations went over

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to the Allied forces as over-the-beach sappers who cleared the way for landing craft flotillas. Yet the 10th Light Flotilla lives in the 1980s as the Ayatollah Khomeini's surface attack squads continue to savage world shipping in the Persian Gulf, occasionally under the noses of mighty warships.

Schofield and Carisella have illustrated this action story with photographs that show clearly how a few determined frogmen, properly equipped, can create havoc on a strategic level for the world's sea powers. The authors are first-rate naval historians, and the reader of *Frogmen: First Battles* will experience the feel of air bubbles in dark water, gray steel hulls exploding, and men swimming for their lives amid burning oil slicks.

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Galantin, I.J. *Take Her Deep: A Submarine Against Japan in World War II*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: Algonquin Books, 1987. 262pp. \$17.95

O'Kane, Richard H. *Wahoo: The Patrols of America's Most Famous World War II Submarine*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1987. 345pp. \$18.95

A number of fine World War II submarine histories by former commanding officers are now appearing in the bookstalls. *Take Her Deep* by Admiral Pete Galantin, and *Wahoo*

by Rear Admiral Dick O'Kane, certainly rank high as adventure stories. O'Kane's earlier volume, *Clear the Bridge*, on the exploits of the U.S.S. *Tang*, became a best-seller; he was executive officer for the six Pacific war patrols of *Wahoo*, having been detached before she was lost in action on the seventh. Galantin's *Take Her Deep* covers the last five combat patrols of the U.S.S. *Halibut*, under his command, ending with a near fatal depth charging in Luzon Strait in November 1944, which damaged her so badly she had to be withdrawn from service. A heroic story of a close-knit fighting team, the book was written at the urging of "Captain Pete's" wartime crewmen.

Pete Galantin took command of *Halibut* at Midway Island in August 1943. A modern fleet submarine, approximately a year old, she had compiled an excellent combat record in five previous patrols. Galantin was ten years out of the Naval Academy, having served seven years in submarines, including two previous commands in vintage boats and had made one war patrol as a prospective commanding officer in *Sculpin*. His first *Halibut* patrol, conducted off northern Honshū and Hokkaidō, soon brought the heartbreak of erratic or dud torpedoes foiling two well-conducted attacks on a *Shigure*-class destroyer. During the resultant depth charging by an undamaged and thoroughly aroused surface enemy, ship and crew paid the price of peacetime penury and bureaucratic stupidity. *Halibut* soon got her