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South to Java

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good references. Others have scarcely any. Most, but not all, have excellent photographs and drawings. *Warship* has always catered to the enthusiast, and that policy still governs the selection of topics and the layout of the journal. Accordingly, there are, in *Volume X*, a number of excellent photographs, including a fine pictorial essay on the warships of the Royal Netherlands Navy since World War II. Browsing can be rewarding, even for those who, like myself, are not ship enthusiasts. There is always the chance that something important can be learned, whether from a discussion of ship design, ship operations, or the technology of naval warfare. *Warship*, like the American-edited *Warship International*, is an important periodical. It has weathered its tenth anniversary, and this reviewer hopes that we will see it celebrate many more.

THOMAS HONE
Arlington, Virginia

Mack, William P. and Mack, William P., Jr. *South To Java*. Baltimore, Md.: Nautical and Aviation Pub. Co. of America, Inc., 1987. 385pp. \$19.95

When war hit the Asiatic Station on 8 December 1941, Manila time, Lieutenant Junior Grade William P. Mack was already a veteran. He had served two years aboard the World War I vintage four-pipe destroyer U.S.S. *John D. Ford* (DD 228). She would be the only survivor of a four-

ship division, and one of the two out of a thirteen-ship squadron to win the Presidential Unit Citation. Her skipper, then-Lieutenant Commander J.E. Cooper, would be awarded two Navy Crosses, the Dutch equivalent Bronzen Kruis, and the U.S. Silver Star. It was upon this background experience that Bill Mack drew for *South To Java*.

The authors Mack employed a clever stratagem in combining romance with truth by setting their story aboard a fictional Asiatic Fleet four-piper, the "U.S.S. O'Leary (DD 200)," which, ghostlike, joins a division of the real Asiatic Fleet, the latter using the true names.

Any professional naval officer of 1941 could have stepped aboard "O'Leary," the fictional ship, and felt right at home. There is the usual wardroom mix of the good, the not-so-good, the stud, the straight man, the slightly ridiculous, plus in this case a suicidal skipper. The repartee and chatter of the enlisted men and their various reactions are genuine, four-letter words and all. Below decks, as in any Asiatic Fleet destroyer, were some hard-fisted pub trashers, plus the usual long-time, dedicated petty officers who were expert in their trade. And of course the inevitable brutish but effective chief boatswain's mate.

For the non-nautical reader there are simply worded, clear descriptions, casually inserted, explaining the mysteries of the power plant, armament, state of repair, and the ship's company. It should make fascinating reading for any 1988

destroyer man, a flashback to the near antediluvian past, as unreal as paddle wheels and muzzle-loaders, so immense have been developments in the span of two generations.

Basically, this is a gripping, accurate history of the life and death of the Asiatic Fleet, December 1941 to April 1942. History can be dull. But not this one. You get the totally accurate story, including the real names of ships and people, plus some piquant sauce. I know, because like the elder Mack, I was there. Romance on the Asiatic Station was a way of life, as it had been for a century. Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and Filipino girls captured many an American seagoing heart. The battles so accurately described were fought by obsolete ships with near-full wartime complements of really professional sailors, and nearly 100 percent of their officers equally professional graduates of the U.S. Naval Academy.

Battles start with the nearly complete loss of the Army's air force on the first day of war (an O'Leary officer just happened to be at Clark

Field!); then total destruction of Cavite Navy Yard on 10 December; the retreat to Java; our one small victory at Balikpapan, Borneo; the several wasting battles under the plucky Dutch Admiral Karel Doorman; and lastly, the final fallback of the shattered remnants to Australia.

Laced through it all are the wholly believable and touching romances involving both officers and enlisted men. Indeed, if all histories were so embellished, it is probable that there would be more enthusiasm in students of the humanities. Truth would be not only stranger but vastly more interesting than the fiction which all too often passes for fact in many school textbooks, written to the least common denominator, offensive to none, all American heroes, the enemy despicable, stupid curs.

South To Java is definitely in the "can't-put-it-down" category. Its paper is nonreflective, the print large and easily readable.

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R.M. Laske

Banks, Arthur S., ed. *Political Handbook of the World: 1987*. SUNY Binghamton, N.Y.: CSA Publications, 1987. 850pp. \$67.95

First published in 1928, this reference work has been published for the Center of Education and Social Research, SUNY Binghamton, New York and for the Council