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## A Sailor's War

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Sam Lombard-Hobson

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and Nixon resigns his office under pressure. But despite a gnawing sense of helplessness, Judd holds his head high in the belief that, whatever one's opposition to the reigning political ethos, "loyalty to people and culture were the key to life."

Webb leaves not a minute's doubt which of these two characters is morally superior and to whose opinions he himself subscribes. Judd's political activities are an expression of loyalty to country; Dorothy's are a belated eruption of pent-up bile. Judd is handsome and manly; Dorothy ugly and unfeminine. He is faithful in his way to his family; she abandons hers.

Such blatant manipulation of the reader's sympathies can do no other than smother any attempt at nuance. Judd makes unexplained, passing remarks about people, events, and movements that go against his grain: the Vietnam Moratorium has "the undeniable media impact of a Hitlerian rally," McGovern is "the whiny South Dakota senator," and at the sight of bag ladies in Washington, DC, he mutters, "Women's lib hits the hoboes." These are, presumably, impressionistic strokes meant to create an image of the deterioration of American society in the sixties and seventies, but they are too general, sarcastic, and facile to do the trick.

What gets bypassed in the end is the heart of the tumultuous problems of that period. Red claims that if the Vietnam War was worth fighting it deserved an all-out effort—alright, but no one questions the if. The protestors are to Judd the spoiled

spawn of the baby boom years who never experienced war, yet he ignores the fact that many of them were indeed veterans. Attributing America's waning belief in itself primarily to antiwar activism, Judd skirts the issue of Watergate's own contribution: he dismisses that piece of foul play as merely "symptomatic of political abuses that have gone on throughout eternity."

It is unfortunate that Webb did not turn his attention away from characters debating and spouting their homespun philosophies to concentrate more on the Korean and Vietnam War sections. His own experience as a marine infantry commander in Vietnam has left him well equipped to picture a youthful America's brave but naive sons set loose in the dark and ancient labyrinth of Asian war. And, after all, showing the reader is always better than telling—or, in this case, lecturing—him.

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Lombard-Hobson, Sam. *A Sailor's War*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983. 175pp. \$12.95

*A Sailor's War* is a personal account of the naval career of Sam Lombard-Hobson, starting with his days as a cadet at the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth and ending with his last wartime command as a lieutenant commander in 1944.

Those who love the sea, those who are interested in the differences between the Royal Navy and the American Navy, and those who just

like a stirring account of life in small British warships in World War II will all find this book interesting. Other readers, even without these special interests will also find it hard to put down.

Sam Lombard-Hobson was obviously a fine British naval officer. He seemed to have a knack for finding himself and his ships in interesting and dangerous situations and then extricating himself and his ships in equally interesting ways. His descriptions of these events are the heart of the book.

Lombard-Hobson had as one of his executive officers (first lieutenants in the Royal Navy) Nicholas Monsarrat, probably with Melville, one of the finest writers of the sea in the last two centuries. Monsarrat drew heavily on his experiences under Lombard-Hobson in writing his book *The Cruel Sea*. He was instrumental in persuading Lombard-Hobson to write of his experiences, and expected to write the foreword for this book. Monsarrat's early death deprived him of this opportunity, and his widow Ann ably completed this task.

Lombard-Hobson's account begins with an interesting description of life as a cadet at Dartmouth in the late 1920s. There were parallels with the American Naval Academy in that a certain amount of physical and mental hazing took place in these years, and physical development and athletics were stressed. It is easy to see where the British Navy developed one of its fundamental differences from the American Navy. At

Dartmouth all cadets were encouraged to "mess about" in boats, to make mistakes, to run aground, to fall overboard, all with no questions asked. In contrast, such actions at the US Naval Academy would have brought demerits, disqualification for using boats, and many other penalties. These attitudes carried over into commissioned service in the two navies. As a young officer in the British Navy Lombard-Hobson describes escapades where he wrecked the captain's pinnace, many times left the ship without leave, and in general lived the life of a happy-go-lucky young naval officer. Further, the reader is left with the impression that his life style seemed to have been about average for young British naval officers. Again in contrast, an American naval officer caught in any one of Lombard-Hobson's escapades would have had his career ended quickly.

It is to the credit of the British Navy system that Lombard-Hobson survived his early career, including running a destroyer aground, for he became a splendid commanding officer of small ships. Nicholas Monsarrat, before his death, described Lombard-Hobson as: "tall, austere, highly efficient, totally self-disciplined, and devoted to his chosen career. He ran his ship, which was the best-kept, best-drilled, best-behaved corvette in Harwich Flotilla, with an unrelenting grip."

Lombard-Hobson's various assignments and commands enabled him to describe in fascinating detail the British Navy during peacetime, the

battle of the Atlantic, the retreat from Europe, the naval war in the Mediterranean, and the spread of the conflict into the Aegean. His account ends with the virtual loss of his command, the destroyer *Rockwood*, and his subsequent assignment ashore. Later Lombard-Hobson continued his naval career for many years, but none of his subsequent assignments, even that of ADC to the Queen, could have been as fascinating as his sea commands of small ships.

The events he describes range across a broad spectrum and all are unique. In the Atlantic, his ship came upon a life raft in which several survivors were floating. All were taken aboard except for one who presented unique problems. The young, naked, oil-covered girl was too exhausted to climb up the ship's sea ladder. Several willing volunteers climbed down to the raft to help her, but were unable to get a satisfactory grip on her slippery figure. Finally she was hoisted aboard in a canvas bag, and when she emerged from it she leaned back against the forecastle bulkhead to regain her strength. The result was a perfect outline in oil of an attractive female body on the bulkhead. The crew refused to clean off the oil, and over a period of months it solidified. Even longer preservation was assured by the construction of a glass frame around it.

The description of evacuation of British troops from the ports of France is the British Navy and Lombard-Hobson at their best. The

small ships of the British Navy were superb, and the author describes their feats in simple, understandable terms which make the tragic event come alive. This sequence alone "makes" the book.

One of the author's stories illustrates another difference between the two navies. When his ship entered the port of Algiers in which Admiral Cunningham, Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean, was located, the author decided to put on a good show for his senior. He manned the topside of his ship with all of his men in perfect uniforms except for shirts. He alone wore a shirt, Admiral Cunningham promptly sent for him, and castigated him for being out of uniform. Lombard-Hobson still had the presence of mind to observe Admiral Cunningham's manner and his office, and his resulting description of the encounter is priceless. The only item on the admiral's desk was a telescope; not a paper was in sight. Again, what a contrast with our Navy. No American admiral would have bothered to leave the business of the entire Mediterranean to observe the entry of a small ship in such great detail, and a mound of paper work would have been in evidence. There is a lesson somewhere here; people are important, not paper work.

Like Monsarrat's description of the author, this book seems a bit on the lean and austere side. What color and detail there is is excellent, but the reader might opt for more. Interesting to note is how Lombard-Hobson disagreed with his model,

Monsarrat. Where Monsarrat found the sea "cruel," Lombard-Hobson described it as "fascinating." The 175 pages of this book are all too few, and the reader will hope that Lombard-Hobson will try again. He is a superb story teller.

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Whitley, M.J. *Destroyer! German Destroyers in World War II*. London: Arms and Armour Press, 1983. 310pp. £12.95

This compact book should be in the library of anyone interested in destroyer design and operations. While there have been articles on German destroyers and torpedo boats, this is the first comprehensive English language accounting of those that participated in World War II (in German terminology, "torpedo boat" meant small destroyer).

The book is organized into three distinct sections. In the first 90 pages, Whitley covers design and construction. Here he provides ship plans and profiles as well as propulsion and armament diagrams, and he deals in detail with all critical design aspects. In the next 167 pages, he covers destroyer and torpedo boat operations from 1937 through the disposition of the few survivors in 1945. There are appropriate situation maps and numerous photographs of the ships. In this final part he provides technical data on each class of torpedo boat and destroyer, summary operational histories of all 40 destroyers and the like number of torpedo boats—including names of

commanding officers—armament details, boiler comparisons, mine-laying successes, ships sunk, and a relevant bibliography.

There is a bit of a mystery about the author, M.J. Whitley. There is no biography, not even a first name. One assumes Mr. Whitley is English. It is clear that he is technically oriented and obviously he had access to the German design and operational records. The book is a bit uneven since detailed descriptions of planned improvements are often followed by uncertainty as to which ships actually received them. It appears that the author made little effort to interview any of the surviving German design staff or those officers and men who actually participated in the operations he describes. Such additional effort might have moved this fine work into the category of truly great.

The big German destroyers, starting with the Type 34 of 1934, were conventionally arranged with five 127 mm single mounts and eight 21 inch torpedoes plus assorted 37 and 20 mm guns which steadily grew in number during the course of the war. At 3,100 tons and over, full load, these ships were far larger than their British contemporaries. They even exceeded the later US *Fletchers* which had similar armament. The Type 36A mounted the 5.9" (150 mm), the largest destroyer gun at that time anywhere in the world. But, it proved so unsuccessful as to force a return to the 127 mm in the later designs. Handling ammunition and accurate training