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First Line of Defense: The U.S. Navy Since 1945

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survivors is a classic survival story of man against nature.

The inclusion of Admiral Byrd's name in the subtitle and his continuous presence in the narrative is a disservice to the reader, however. Byrd's role in *Highjump* was not critical to the actual operation. Day-to-day responsibilities were vested in Rear Adm. Richard H. Cruzen and his Task Group commanders—Capts. George Dufek, Charles A. Bond, and Delbert S. Cornwall and Cdr. Clifford M. Campbell. Byrd was somewhat the senior citizen, concerned primarily with land-based flying late in the expedition. He was again flown over the South Pole, but even Rose admits that the flying program from Little America was a minor part of the entire operation and not really productive. Byrd, at this point in his career, was well-beyond his prime and might have grown old gracefully. Byrd is clearly Rose's hero and his treatment clouds the fine work done by Cruzen and others.

Additional problems of fact characterize this book. Rose says that Amundsen made his first trip to Antarctica in 1910-12 but Amundsen was first mate and a critical member of the *Belgica* expedition (1898). The American Lincoln Ellsworth did not establish a base in the "American Highland" in 1939; Ellsworth flew from his ship *Wyatt Earp* and the American Highland is in the interior of Antarctica, not along the coast. And the U.S. Antarctic Service Expedition of 1939-40 was not "quasi official"; it was a full-fledged government sponsored and conducted expedition.

These misunderstandings of polar history are minor, though, when compared with Rose's flawed view of Richard Byrd. Byrd was a complex person, as Rose points out, but he was not motivated by the grandeur of Antarctica. Byrd was motivated by a continuous need for fame and recognition as well as a strong need to continue

proving himself. Rose's treatment of Byrd's drinking is a sham. No pilot or navigator can perform to the best of his abilities if he has "a few drinks to calm his nerves" before a dangerous flight. Rose's analogy of a passenger on a commercial airliner makes the case for Byrd much worse.

Assault on Eternity, hindered by uneven chapters and poor integration of information at times, is nonetheless an important record of Antarctic operations by the U.S. Navy in 1946-47.

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Ryan, Paul B. *First Line of Defense: The U.S. Navy Since 1945*. Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1981, 224pp.

The typically glowing dust-jacket prose on this slim but meaty book states that "*First Line of Defense* analyzes the events and errors that, step-by-step, have threatened the status of the U.S. Navy as the world's undisputed maritime power." Most readers will detect in this opening statement at least three implicit assumptions that weaken the text's value as *analysis*. The second statement, "It is a history of . . . the political changes, the individuals, and the international events that contributed to American naval decline" is much better but the book is not really good *history* either, if one seeks balance. The acknowledgment pages thank 24 Navy admirals and a Marine general, plus assorted captains and colonels, for their oral and other contributions. The only civilians so cited, however, are those employed by the Navy at its various archival and educational centers or those who helped with manuscript preparation and review.

So much for what *First Line of Defense* claims to be. What it turns out to be is an absolutely first-rate account of the last 35 years from the institutional

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Navy's point of view. This is a perfectly respectable undertaking. It has not been done before, certainly not with the sweep, continuity, and style the author has packed into this modestly scaled book. Paul Ryan, a retired Navy captain and research fellow at the Hoover Institution, first came to public attention as a conservative spokesman in 1977 with the publication of his widely read *The Panama Canal Controversy*. It is fair to say that he has done it again in *First Line of Defense*.

Predictably, in covering more than three decades in a volume of this size, both depth and reach suffer. To author Ryan's credit, however, he has at least touched on nearly every major event and development to preserve a sense of flow. He addresses in greater and more reassuring detail the truly significant—and endlessly recurring—issues of the nature of seapower, proper roles and missions, centralized control, and civilian accountability. Heroes and villains are identified, not only as individuals but also as systems and processes.

There is little new in the treatment of the McNamara years, the Vietnam conflict, and the Carter administration—three large chunks of the book—but the material is both well-organized and crisply documented. After reviewing these segments, one has little doubt about the problems and people the uniformed Navy was fighting. Many readers will enjoy learning of Adm. Robert Dennison's furious advance opposition to the Bay of Pigs fiasco, seeing Adm. "Oley" Sharp's judgment vindicated by subsequent failures of Washington-guided Vietnam combat policies, and finding Graham Claytor recognized as a superbly able and most perceptive Secretary of the Navy. Much of what Paul Ryan says is far from conventional wisdom, in terms of public and media understanding, but he is very close to what the Navy regards, with a good deal of justification, as truth.

There may be no real continuum from national goals through strategic concepts and command organizations to military forces and operations but there are clearly relationships between objectives and means that cannot be ignored. *First Line of Defense* is a tight provocative recital, from a U.S. seapower perspective, of what happens if those relationships are not understood or deliberately subverted to other interests.

HUGH G. NOTT

Smith, P.C.F., ed. *Seafaring in Colonial Massachusetts*. Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1980. 240pp.

This volume contains the proceedings of a conference held by the Colonial Society of Massachusetts in November 1975. Five years is a long time to wait for the publication of these papers, but despite the inordinate delay, they have retained some value. A book of this type does not present a coherent study, but rather it elucidates a number of fascinating aspects that have been touched upon in the standard work on the subject, S.E. Morison's *Maritime History of Massachusetts*. The contents of this volume will interest both naval and colonial historians.

The colonial historian will be interested in the well-illustrated article on "Vessel Types of Colonial Massachusetts" by W.A. Baker. In addition, there are two pieces on maritime aspects of colonial commerce. Donald Chard has written on "The Price and Profits of Accommodation: Massachusetts-Louisburg Trade, 1713-1744" and tells us much about the little known trade between the French and English in North America. Richard Kugler has written on the candlemaking industry that centered in Newport, Rhode Island, in his article, "The Whale Oil Trade, 1750-1775." In another brief piece,