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Admiral Bill Halsey: A Naval Life

John B. Hattendorf

Thomas Alexander Hughes

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against Germany or Japan without the industrial muscle, logistical support, and fighting power of the United States, even before Pearl Harbor. This dependent relationship against major opponents persists today and links to the evidence in this book that a continental power cannot expect to prevail against a major power on another continent without the ability to use the sea to its advantage and to deny its use to an opponent. One might be forgiven for thinking that an industrially charged China has absorbed these lessons.

CHRIS PARRY



Admiral Bill Halsey: A Naval Life, by Thomas Alexander Hughes. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2016. 544 pages. \$35.

Fleet Admiral “Bull” Halsey was the object of wide-ranging publicity during the Second World War. After the war, Halsey published his memoirs, and since then half a dozen biographers have told his story and many have visited his campaigns in thematic approaches. With so much already done, readers might tend to overlook this volume as just more of the same. Doing that would be a mistake. Thomas Hughes’s well-researched study of Halsey is a masterfully crafted, revisionist work that brings new insights to the understanding of one of the most complex and controversial commanders in American naval history. In this volume, Hughes draws a clear distinction between “Bull” Halsey, the wartime leader whom the press celebrated and made into a larger-than-life caricature, and the real Bill Halsey, whose story the author tells in this volume.

Halsey’s wartime career is well-known and continually debated, but few readers

have known much about his family background and earlier years. Hughes describes these aspects of life with great insight. Fleet Admiral Halsey liked to boast that he was descended from generations of hard-drinking, rowdy sailors and adventurers; this hardly was the case. The Halsey family had a distinguished heritage. On his father’s side, his ancestors had arrived in Puritan Massachusetts in 1638 and soon became large landowners on Long Island, New York. In the early nineteenth century, one of them, Charles Halsey, married the granddaughter of Rufus King, a signer of the Constitution, one of America’s first ambassadors to Great Britain, and a very wealthy man. Rufus King’s son Charles King married a daughter of Archibald Gracie of New York, whose stately home became the official residence of New York’s mayor. Charles King was publisher and editor of New York newspapers and became president of Columbia University. Charles Halsey’s son William married Anne Brewster, a direct descendant of Elder William Brewster, the primary author of the Mayflower Compact and the leading religious figure of the Plymouth colony. Their son was Admiral Halsey.

Before William Jr. joined the U.S. Navy, only a few of his Brewster ancestors had been seafarers, and none were of the swashbuckling variety. Admiral Halsey’s father and namesake entered the Naval Academy in 1869 and graduated in 1872. He retired as a captain in 1907 but continued to work for the Navy’s Bureau of Construction and Repair until 1919. While he was at sea in 1882 aboard USS *Iroquois* on the Pacific station, his son—the future admiral—was born at his wife’s family home in Elizabeth, New Jersey. During his career, William Sr. attended the summer course at the Naval War

College in 1897 and heard Theodore Roosevelt speak as Assistant Secretary of the Navy; but for the future admiral, the Naval War College became a much more important aspect of his career.

In the early part of his career, William Jr. served under William S. Sims in the destroyer flotilla, along with Dudley Knox and others. Knox may have been the key to the younger Halsey's assignment to the Office of Naval Intelligence in 1920 and six months later as naval attaché in Berlin, where he reported extensively on German naval developments in the early years of the Weimar Republic. In 1932–33, Captain Halsey Jr. followed his father's earlier example by attending the Naval War College. One of his classmates was another future five-star admiral, Captain Ernest J. King. Halsey and his wife lived in Jamestown and commuted daily across the bay to the College. Although no star student at the Naval War College, he was initially considered as a choice for the faculty. After some false starts with other orders, Halsey eventually went on in the next year to the Army War College, then located in Washington, DC, where his classmates included Jonathan Wainwright and a future Army five-star general, Omar Bradley. Again he did not distinguish himself academically, but his time there gave him unusual perspective as one of the very few to graduate from both the Army and Naval War Colleges.

However, that may well have been Washington's way of putting him in a holding pattern preparatory to going on to the aviation positions that Admirals Leahy and King had been recommending for him. In 1934, Halsey went to Pensacola for training as a flight observer, but soon bent the rules of the system to earn his pilot's wings as the oldest newly qualified naval aviator,

at the age of fifty-two. Thus, Halsey cleared the way for a series of aircraft carrier commands that eventually led to his wartime career in the Pacific.

Hughes has researched Halsey's wartime career carefully and writes judiciously and with great authority using his extensive new research. Among many interesting points, Hughes finds an explanation for the mysterious skin ailment that forced Halsey out of commanding the *Enterprise* Task Force just before the battle of Midway in 1942. While a fungal infection probably caused dermatitis, it likely was related to a bacterial infection in five of his teeth, all of which Dr. Warren Vaughan, a noted dermatologist from Richmond, Virginia, brought under control in early 1943 so that Halsey could return to command in the Pacific theater.

Controversies about Halsey as a combat commander undoubtedly will continue, and Hughes's excellent book will not be the last word on the subject, but there is no doubt that it should be the first book on the subject that one should consult.

JOHN B. HATTENDORF



The Chinese Invasion Threat: Taiwan's Defense and American Strategy in Asia, by Ian Easton. Arlington, VA: Project 2049 Institute, 2017. 406 pages. \$20.

Ian Easton examines and discusses in fair detail the difficulties that the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) would face during an invasion of Taiwan. He provides overall orders of battle for both Taiwan and China; explains which beaches on Taiwan are, or are not, suitable for invasion; provides monthly historical estimates of the