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We Will Stand by You

William P. Mack

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Potter, E.B. *Admiral Arleigh Burke*. New York: Random House, 1990. 494pp. \$24.95

Professor E.B. Potter is well-known for his biographies of Admirals Nimitz and Halsey. This latest work on Admiral Arleigh Burke, the navy's last living icon from the glory days of World War II, should prove no less popular. It is not, however, the comprehensive account that Admiral Burke's career certainly merits.

Potter begins with a description of Admiral Burke's wartime exploits and concentrates on his actions as a destroyer squadron commander in the 1943 Solomon Islands campaigns and later as Task Force 58 chief of staff. This is followed by Burke's postwar activities, many of which are widely known but are undoubtedly more important in their impact than his glorious but not very significant small-unit actions in the Solomons.

Among other things, Burke was involved in the late 1940s with the drastic and hasty postwar cuts in naval readiness and the severe interservice rivalry over missions. He played an important role in the introduction to the fleet of radical new technologies such as nuclear submarines, sea-based ballistic missiles, large-deck carriers, and guided missiles during his three terms as chief of naval operations. Burke's detailed views on these matters would have been of particular interest and relevance; the issues now emerging of major postwar armed forces shrinkage, service missions and roles, and of the dramatic impact of new technologies on warfighting bear a

strong resemblance to those Burke and the navy confronted in the late 1940s and the 1950s.

Potter writes in a folksy, conversational style, and so this biography fails to satisfy. It has been said that the best biographers are conscientious enemies of their subjects: scrupulous when sifting evidence, unenthralled, and disposed to suspicion. In this work, Professor Potter is clearly a "company man," wholly sympathetic to his subject and the navy.

Admiral Burke was associated with many controversies involving important issues during his long career. Those who did not agree with him often had valid reasons for opposition. A historian or biographer ought to examine those disagreements critically.

Potter states in his preface, however, that rather than write a multi-volume comprehensive work, he chose to write "a sensitive, one-volume biography . . . to attract general readers, acquainting them with Arleigh Burke's character, his major achievements, and his contributions to the navy and to his country." This he has done. However, a career as distinguished and controversial as Arleigh Burke's still awaits a comprehensive, dispassionate examination.

JAN VAN TOL
USS *Gallant* (MSO 489)

Mason, Theodore C. *We Will Stand by You*. Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1990. 269pp. \$24.95
"We will stand by you" was the message sent by the commanding officer

of the fleet tug USS *Pawnee* when the torpedoed cruiser *Houston*, under her tow, was again torpedoed by Japanese aircraft and was in imminent danger of sinking. The *Pawnee* might well have been dragged to the bottom of the Pacific by her long towline had the *Houston* suddenly abandoned her nearly impossible fight to stay afloat.

The *Pawnee* served in the South Pacific where she salvaged damaged ships and towed them to safety, sometimes under exciting circumstances. Her most important mission was off Formosa in October 1944 when she assumed the tow of the battered *Houston*, barely afloat, with tons of seawater sloshing in her broken hull. Their destination was the relative safety of the mid-Pacific where the *Houston* would be transferred to another tug. It was during that voyage that the Japanese attacked again and the *Pawnee's* captain determined to remain with the *Houston*.

Radioman First Class Theodore C. Mason served in the *Pawnee* during most of her life. He has done an excellent job of combining autobiography and the history of the *Pawnee*, from her commissioning to her breaking up.

The *Pawnee* was large and powerful, as big in tonnage as most destroyers of the time, and she carried depth charges and a sonar system which allowed her to serve as an escort. However, her capabilities were not always used properly. Mason criticizes many naval officers who failed in this respect, and extends his criticism about strategic and tactical matters to many senior officers, from Admiral Kimmel to Admiral

Callaghan. Perhaps the author's purpose might have been better served if he had limited his criticism to those events about which he had full knowledge.

Mason offers an excellent description of the wartime life of an enlisted man. Obviously the view of the war from the mess deck was far different from that in the wardroom or on the bridge. Former enlisted men will enjoy this aspect of the book. Former officers will not only enjoy it but may gain a better understanding of the enlisted man of wartime vintage. The present generation of officers will also profit from this book; in its pages they will find many practical examples of leadership, good and bad.

WILLIAM P. MACK
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
Annapolis, Maryland

Gailey, Harry. *The Liberation of Guam, 21 July-10 August*. Navato, Calif.: Presidio, 1990. 231pp. \$16.95

This book recounts the invasion of Guam by United States forces that occurred in July and August 1944.

Harry Gailey offers a brief history of Guam that led up to its assault and capture by the Japanese against pathetically inadequate forces on 10 December 1941. The U.S. assault three years later was triggered by Guam's strategic location, which made it ideal for Nimitz's Pacific command headquarters and for launching air strikes on Japan.

The U.S. assault was a marine-run operation, with General H.M. Smith