

**Newsletter Volume 1 No. 2 Fall/Winter 2019**

**T**his newsletter is a collaborative effort by the directors and members of the Western Naval Historical Association. Its purpose is to promote membership, provide content, and share news of our activities and efforts. It remains a work in process and we welcome suggestions and/or contributions to future editions.

**I**n this issue the big news continues to be the 2020 Symposium. We are pleased that the major nautical/historical institutions in San Diego, and indeed the United States, the USS Midway Museum and the San Diego Maritime Museum are supporting us with their facilities and staff and helping us publicize the event. The other major piece in this newsletter is a contribution by Allyn Nevitt, a name well-known to anyone with interest in the history of the Imperial Japanese navy of the Second World War. He relates how the Long Lancers Japanese destroyer tabular records of movements (TROMs) came to be written. I remember, personally, discovering the Long Lancers TROMs sometime in the 1990s. It was (and is) a treasure trove of detailed, accurate information available nowhere else.

**W**e also include information regarding histories published about the Second World War at sea in 2019 with an emphasis on works published by members and information about volumes of the Japanese official history of the war that have been translated into English.

**T**he 2020 Symposium is on schedule and shaping up to be a memorable event. Richard B Frank will be the keynote speaker. He is the award winning author of *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle* (1990), *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (1999), and *MacArthur* (2007). *Tower of Skulls, a History of the Asia-Pacific War, Vol. I: July 1937-May 1942*, the first of Frank's major new trilogy on the Pacific War will be available at the symposium



**The Western Naval History Association (WNHA)** is a nonprofit membership organization open to all individuals with an interest in naval history through academic or professional affiliation, publications, interests in ship modeling, naval war gaming, or association with family or veterans, or through personal interest.

Write [info@wnha.net](mailto:info@wnha.net) or see [wnha.net](http://wnha.net) to learn more

# WNHA 2020 SYMPOSIUM

## Expanding Naval History II

**Saturday, 29 Feb. - Sunday, 1 Mar. 2020.**  
**USS Midway Museum**  
**910 North Harbor Dr. San Diego CA 92101**



Dr. Craig Symonds addressing the WNH 2019 Symposium

### Speakers and Activities

**Keynote Speaker: Richard B. Frank**

**Dr. Bernard Cole**, National War College.  
Author of the *Great Wall at Sea*, .

**Mark Fiorey**, Deputy Director, Hattendorf Historical Center. "U.S. Navy and Operation Passage to Freedom during the partition of Vietnam, 1954-55."

**Dr. Charles MacVean**, Captain USN (ret).  
"Recollections of a Cold War sub skipper."

**Stephen McLaughlin**, author of *Russian and Soviet Battleships*. "Russian SIGNIT in World War I"

**Dr. David J. Ulbrich**, Norwich University.  
"USMC & the Dawn of Amphibious Operations."

**Dr. Sam Tangredi**, Director of the Institute for Future Warfare Studies at the U.S. Naval War College. Topic TBA

**Dr. Cynthia Watson**, National War College.  
"How History Vivifies Joint Professional Military Education".

**Discussion: Topics in Cold War Naval History**  
Rear Admiral Michael McDevitt (USN Ret) Karl Zingheim, Sam Tangedi, Bernard Cole, Charles MacVean

### Workshops

**Lonnie Gill**, Designer of *General Quarters*.  
"Naval wargaming and demonstration games"

**Richard Russell**, Director of the Naval Institute Press, and **Richard Lature**, editor of *Naval History Magazine*: "Writing for Naval Institute"

**Vincent O'Hara**, author of *Torch*. "Making maps for publication."

**Robert Stern**, professional photographer and author of *Scratch One Flattop*. "Photography to illustrate books and articles."

**Karl Zingheim**, Director of History, USS *Midway*. "Naval dioramas and modeling."

### How to Attend the 2020 Symposium

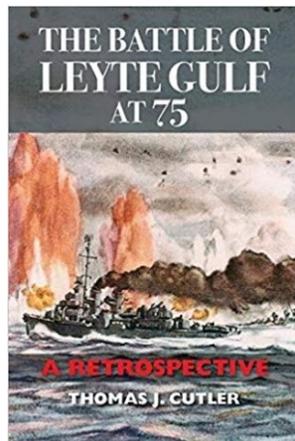
Join the Western Naval Historical Association by contacting us. Membership is \$50/year and includes admission to the annual symposium. Students may join for \$30.

Please contact the WNHA at [info@whna.net](mailto:info@whna.net) or send a check for \$50 payable to WHNA, 631 East J Street, Chula Vista, CA 91910. Please include name, address, email, and telephone.

**ATTENDANCE IS LIMITED**

## Recent Books: World War II at Sea

Cutler, Thomas J., editor. ***The Battle of Leyte Gulf at 75: A Retrospective.*** Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2019. ISBN: 9781682474617. \$29.95. This includes eleven original chapters on aspects of the battle contributed by authors including WNHA members Karl Zingheim, Vincent O'Hara, and Trent Hone. There are also thirteen articles from the Naval Institute archives.



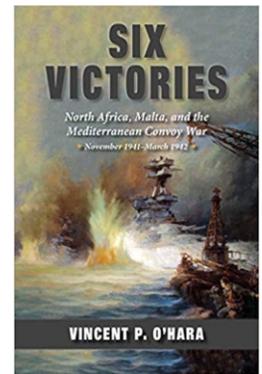
Mawdsley, Evan. ***The War for the Seas: A Maritime History of World War II.*** New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019. ISBN: 9780300190199. \$32.50. An overview of the entire naval war that argues command of the sea was the central issue that shaped and defined World War II. No arguments here.



Stern, Robert C. ***Scratch One Flattop: The First Carrier Air Campaign and the Battle of the Coral Sea.*** Indiana Univ. Press, 2019. ISBN: 9780253039293. \$45.00. WNHA member Stern's most recent work is part of IUP's Twentieth-Century Battle Series.

Garzke, William H., Jr., Robert O. Dulin Jr., and William Jurens. ***Battleship Bismarck: A Design and Operational History.*** Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2019. ISBN: 9781682474761. \$95. Oversized publication, glossy paper. Twenty-six chapters with roughly 30% ship's characteristics and historical context and the rest about the Rheinübung Operation. There is room for immense, sometimes repetitive detail. The visuals are very good.

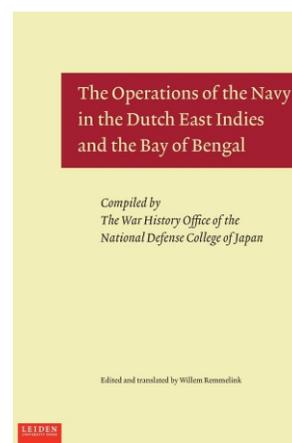
O'Hara, Vincent P. ***Six Victories: North Africa, Malta, and the Mediterranean Convoy War November 1941-March 1942.*** Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2019. ISBN: 9781591145691. \$29.95. WNHA member O'Hara's new book examines both sides of the convoy and intelligence battles during a critical period in the Mediterranean naval war.



Raven, Alan. ***British Cruiser Warfare: The Lessons of the Early War, 1939-1941.*** Barnsley, England: Seaforth, 2019. ISBN: 9781526747631. £35. Oversized, glossy paper and very well illustrated. The first half is a detailed chronology followed by thirty "summaries" on topics ranging from SIGINT, tactics, and communications.

War History Office of the National Defense College of Japan. ***The Operations of the Navy in the Dutch East Indies and the Bay of Bengal:*** Leiden, the Netherlands: Leiden University Press, 2018 ISBN: 978-9087282806. \$89 (but PDF is a free download on the Leiden University Library website.) This is Volume 26 of the *Senshi Soshō*. It was released last year but it seems appropriate to include it here both because of Mr. Nevitt's article on Long Lancers and because of its general value. Volume 3, which covers the Occupation of the Dutch East Indies, is also available and an additional volume on the air war is in preparation. The Australian War Memorial has also translated portions of volumes 14 and 28 and published them as:

***Japanese army operations in the South Pacific Area New Britain and Papua campaigns, 1942-43.*** This is also available for free download on the War Memorial web site.



# Launching the TROMS

Allyn D. Nevitt



“Tabular Records of Movement (TROMs): These are day-to-day records (similar to ships' logs) of each individual ship ...”

--- Paul S. Dull, *Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy (1941-1945)*, p. 371

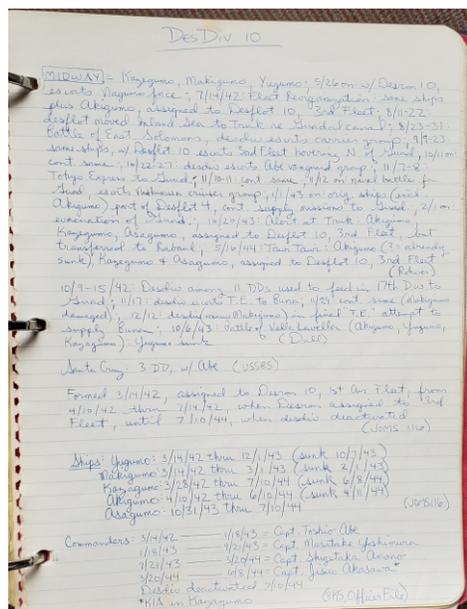
The publication in 1978 of the late Dr. Dull's book cited above is what inspired me to compile TROMs for Japanese destroyers. Dull for the first time revealed to me the existence of the official Japanese war history Senshi soshō (or BKS) as well as the actual IJN Tabular Records of Movements and other primary sources (most on microfilm) and where and how to get them.

The movie *Sink the Bismarck* jump started my interest in naval history when I was 12; it also seems to have fired my curiosity about the enemy's side of the story. I was reading Fuchida's *Midway* and Hara's *Japanese Destroyer Captain* soon thereafter along with Morison and the many other English-language books on the naval war and warships then available.

About 1980 I also became aware of the Japanese-language *Maru Specials* on Japanese Naval Vessels and began acquiring all I could. Then I learned that the nearby San Diego State University library actually had the full 102-volume BKS, and that they even circulated five volumes at a time. This was the clincher: I knew I had to get at and do something with all this

new-found information. I felt that while the larger, more familiar warships were either engaged in battles which I already knew enough about (“If it has a name it's been done before”) or sitting in port between them, only the destroyers could take me anywhere and everywhere, from rivers to shipping lanes to the battlefields, and on any type of mission, while usually taking the others with them, in a way no other warship-type could claim. Thus destroyers, though not my favorite type (that would be cruisers) became my focus and guides to all the rest. I chose Long Lancers as a working title, for the torpedo most were armed with and their legendary effectiveness in using it. It stuck, and when an early Google reviewer later referred to them as not-to-be-missed and “provocatively-named” it pleased and amused me greatly.

I began with a simple 3”x5” card file which morphed into a large 3-ring binder, initially one card becoming one page then several per ship. Jentschura became my primary source for technical specifications while also epitomizing my chief complaint about every ship reference book available: they only listed what the ships were and nothing about what they did (besides being sunk) while I sought something more along the lines of the *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*. Dull became my authority for the correct transliteration of the destroyers' names (because he was the only one to explain his own Japanese source) and a huge 1942 National Geographic wall map of



Page from TROM 3-ring binder

the Pacific for the place names. I then went back through such references as Dull, Rohwer & Hummelchen, Anthony Preston and many other English-language sources page-by-page, noting every reference I could find to every destroyer. Only then did I tackle the Japanese sources.

Of course using the BKS, the Maru special editions and the microfilms would require considerable language skills which I in no way possessed, but I was fortunate in having a Japanese co-worker who helped me as best she could while also teaching me to recognize and decode the most oft-repeated terms, ships' and place names, etc., on my own. Eventually I hired a string of Japanese SDSU students as well (I could never afford a professional) but with mixed results as all would have difficulty with the military and naval terminology involved. As with our wartime code-breakers, it was part translation, part extrapolation from other known facts: while I could not have done it without them, neither could they have without me. But such translations (or decoding as I preferred to think of this work) represented a hugely-significant breakthrough nonetheless.

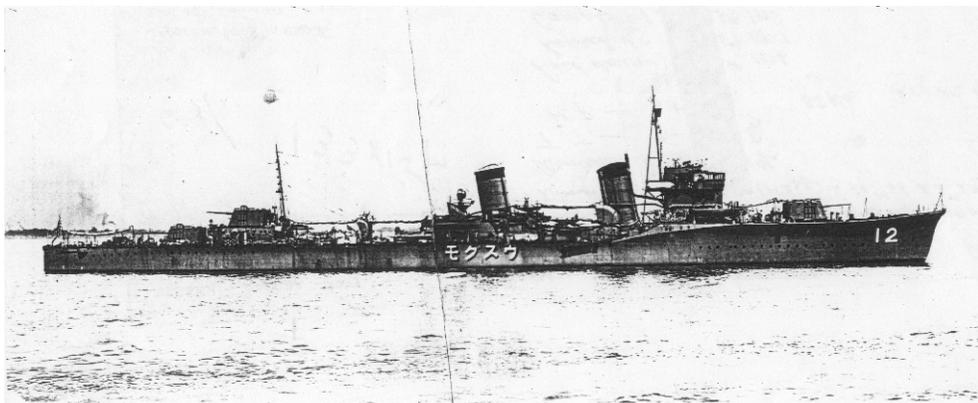
First the abbreviated TROMs from the *Maru Specials* became the skeletons, thereafter filled-out from information gleaned from printouts of the microfilms and BKS. Regarding the latter, I eventually photocopied entire volumes and indexed each, again page-by-page, for IJN destroyer names, which I came to be as familiar with as my own. I was truly off and running, translation notes and info tidbits now piling one upon another, and this is where I began losing track of some of the sourcing – which I and others have regretted to this day.

It should be emphasized here that all of my research on these TROMs heretofore had been using books and microfilms only, initial notes and drafts all with pen and paper, the Internet back then only starting to grow towards its current dominance. I had

certainly made full use of word-processing programs, and the copy-and-paste feature especially came into its own while building the TROMs, but I had never thought to or been able to use the Internet for research on my early computers.

As the extent and value of my information grew, the question became, what to do with it. I had always been considered an able writer by school teachers and others so of course now I was going to have to write a book. Here my concentration on individual ships' histories worked against me, as I had little knowledge of the larger issues of running a navy such as prewar developments, administrative issues and doctrine, as would later (1997) be revealed in Evans & Peattie's masterful *Kaigun*. But unit histories of various regiments, divisions and squadrons, etc. were by then becoming much in evidence so my initial prose-style Long Lancers tackled one destroyer division (desdiv) per chapter. The Naval Institute Press (NIP) and the “independent scholar” to whom they sent it for evaluation took four months over the winter of 1986-87 to consider then reject that first submission while encouraging me to reorganize and then re-submit it but with no further guidance.

This is when I began converting Long Lancers to tabular records. My longtime friend and noted “guru” of wargame-designers Gary Grigsby, had pushed for this approach from the start. For my next submission I intended the TROMs to make up the main body of text accompanied by sidebars on



The Japanese Fubuki class destroyer *Usugumo*, a typical Long Lancer.  
(US Naval Institute Photo Archive)

major battles, leaders and other related subjects extraneous to the TROMs themselves. This time (1993) NIP took seven months (and two outside scholars) to consider then reject it, one of the readers declaring it “only the bare bones of history.” This time they requested I write a full history of the IJN destroyer service like Theodore Roscoe's United States Destroyer Operations in World War II, which I had never felt capable of doing. While disappointed I tended to agree with the validity of the criticism. I was at a loss and an impasse. And this brings us back to the Internet.

A friend stood over my shoulder to guide me the first time I attempted a search on a newly-installed high-speed Internet platform towards the mid-1990s. “I'll give it something it won't find anything about” were my exact words as I entered “Imperial Japanese Navy” in the search box – and it went directly to Jon Parshall's Combined Fleet website (combinedfleet.com). I was absolutely stunned! By Jon's own later admission the site at that time comprised little more than the usual ships' technical data illustrated with model box-top art and a few of his own essays but was very impressive nonetheless and I wasted little time in reaching out to him with heartfelt congratulations. I soon shared a few of my TROMs with him, he agreed to post them on the site, and the rest as they say is history.

I truly had no idea what I had started. I just hoped that my contribution might be of some interest and use to my betters in education, writing and book-making abilities, while hardly imagining the extent to which that later became the case. I only ever desired recognition or crediting for my work in return and when I began to see that in more and more works by authors and historians I had always highly respected I felt more than fulfilled and still do.

The updating and correcting of the destroyer TROMs was and remains ongoing ever since, though no longer by me as my longtime collaborator and friend Anthony Tully, the first to reach out to me after my TROMs went online, agreed to take that over for me some years ago. My last big “surge” of updates, focused primarily on adding skippers, armament, and radar upgrades,

was in 2002, at which point I attempted to recognize and thank many who had helped and supported me while surely overlooking many others to whom I offer my sincerest apologies.

I have always tried to stick to Dull's TROM definition very literally and (along with the Long Lancers title) stubbornly. The many other TROMs that have followed mine on everything from battleships to auxiliaries represent great effort, fine work and enjoy much popularity but by my estimation include far too much extraneous detail to be appropriate in an individual ship's record; I was hardly immune to such scope-creep myself but always tried to resist it. I point this out less as criticism than explanation for my own intransigence. I heartily salute all of those scholars and contributors and am proud to have led the way. ---Allyn D. Nevitt 2019



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