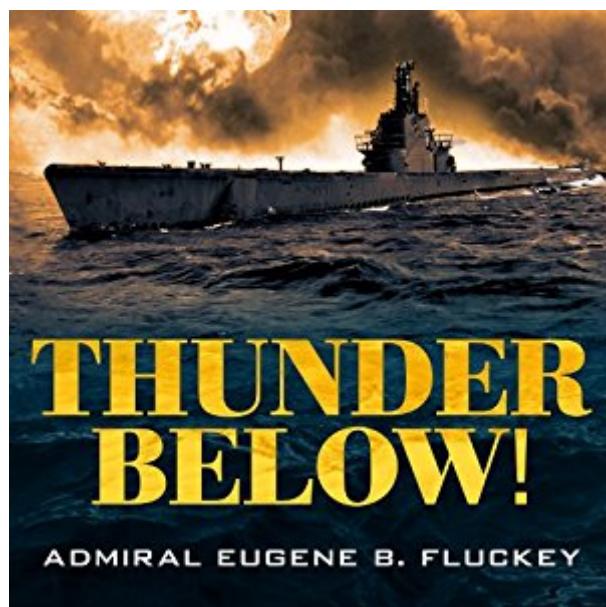


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Thunder Below!: The USS Barb Revolutionizes Submarine Warfare In World War II



Synopsis

The thunderous roar of exploding depth charges was a familiar and comforting sound to the crew members of the USS Barb, who frequently found themselves somewhere between enemy fire and Davy Jones's locker. Under the leadership of her fearless skipper, Captain Gene Fluckey, the Barb sank the greatest tonnage of any American sub in World War II. At the same time, the Barb did far more than merely sink ships-she changed forever the way submarines stalk and kill their prey. This is a gripping adventure chock-full of "you-are-there" moments. Fluckey has drawn on logs, reports, letters, interviews, and a recently discovered illegal diary kept by one of his torpedomen. And in a fascinating twist, he uses archival documents from the Japanese Navy to give its version of events. The unique story of the Barb begins with its men, who had the confidence to become unbeatable. Each team helped develop innovative ideas, new tactics, and new strategies. All strove for personal excellence, and success became contagious. Instead of lying in wait under the waves, the USS Barb pursued enemy ships on the surface, attacking in the swift and precise style of torpedo boats. She was the first sub to use rocket missiles and to creep up on enemy convoys at night, joining the flank escort line from astern, darting in and out as she sank ships up the column. Surface-cruising, diving only to escape, "Lucky Fluckey" relentlessly patrolled the Pacific, driving his boat and crew to their limits. There can be no greater contrast to modern warfare's long-distance, video game style of battle than the exploits of the captain and crew of the USS Barb, where the sub, out of ammunition, actually rammed an enemy ship until it sank. Thunder Below! is a first-rate, true-life, inspirational story of the courage and heroism of ordinary men under fire.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This wonderful book about the record breaking USS Barb is unique in its first person voice and story of naval heroics for which we can be forever proud. The leadership skills during WWII submarine patrols in the Pacific demonstrated every day by the captain (the author) and his officers were spectacular. The captain's abilities to communicate, teach, and inspire laced with compassion and a wry sense of humor were second to none; his receipt of the Congressional Medal of Honor commemorated his stunning achievements. The closely aligned teamwork inspired by this leadership was the best I have ever seen in print. This top rated sub managed to successfully coordinate torpedo, machine gun, 4 and 5 inch gun, and rocket attacks; they even successfully rammed an enemy ship for an astounding total of 30 major ships sunk and some 75 smaller vessels. Add to that a thrilling raid pulled off by a small team sent ashore to bomb a Japanese railroad and you have one of the greatest adventure books of the last 30 years. Told in the first person with quotes from diaries and letters added liberally, the book is nearly alive in your hands, complete with terrific maps and photographs. A living, breathing gem of a story.

This is one of the most heartfelt, real, and direct accounts of warfare in Wwii that I have ever read. The passion CMDR Fluckey felt for his ship and crew are easily sensed throughout the pages of his story. This story depicts honor and bravery in a barbaric and unimaginable theater of war. The Barb and her exploits are truly inspiring. I have been so moved as to visit the USS Drum in Mobile AL to further grasp the experience of these brave men. It is regrettable that the Barb was not preserved as a museum ship! I highly recommend this story as well as the USS Drum and USS Alabama memorials. God Bless America and Thank God for the USS Barb and her crew.

This is no Tom Clancy like novel, but a reasonably written account of submarine warfare. Reading this book makes me appreciate what members of the military went through during WWII. People today seem too detached to the sacrifices that were made in the past and only complain about the inconveniences of today. There is an entire generation out there that have no realization of what a sacrifice really is (nor could they emotionally handle it), but I digress. Written by a Medal of Honor submarine captain, it describes life during submarine patrols and (sometimes improvised) tactics used to win naval battles. At times a slow read, but it held my attention.

This page turner is the true World War II story about the submarine 'Barb' and her commander, Gene Fluckey. Captain Fluckey, at age 30, took command of this submarine in 1944 for its eighth war patrol and promptly sunk 5 ships (the record at that time for a sub) in hostile territory. Previously, the Barb had sunk only one ship from seven war patrols. Fluckey and the Barb go on to sink many more ships in subsequent patrols. Fluckey earned the Medal of Honor, the highest war time award given, for a risky and daring attack in shallow waters, taking out several ships at once. He maneuvered the Barb through uncharted waters (very dangerous) at 23 knots (a sub record for speed), being chased by several destroyers for many miles before the Barb was finally able to dive in waters that were sufficiently deep. In Captain Fluckey's last war patrol, he sent a team ashore from the Barb in very, very shallow waters to sabotage a train and track. The team rigged the track and blew up a Japanese train for a great fireworks display. This was the only land based attack by a submarine known up to this time. Five stars on this one.

I am one of those people who came along right after the Greatest Generation. I had an uncle in the Navy during WWII and my Pop was a soldier during the war. My thirst for any knowledge of the War leads me to read all manner of books of historical grade. "Thunder Below" fits that category extremely well. The battle scenes are described well enough that I can understand most of the reasoning of the boat's commander, Eugene Fluckey. He was, I believe, very lucky to get himself, his vessel and his crew on and off patrol without battle damage or any Purple Hearts being awarded. In some cases he seemed foolhardy but the luck of the Barb held and all made it back to base safely. Not all his decisions were "full steam ahead." It seems all of them were well-reasoned out but still dangerous. Of course, that was the case in most WWII endeavors. World War II veterans are my heroes. Unfortunately, we are losing them at a tremendous rate today, and those historical stories are disappearing with them. Please pick up this book, or any other work about that generation of fighting men and the women who backed them up. Sometimes the writing is a little rough, but the valor they all showed is always worth the effort to discover.

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