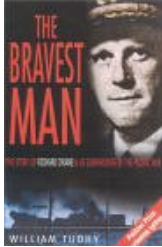


**The Bravest Man:  
The Story of Richard O'Kane  
& U.S. Submariners in the Pacific War**

by William Touhy



The title of *The Bravest Man* refers to Richard O'Kane, the most successful American submarine commander in the Second World War. While this book focuses on O'Kane's wartime career on the submarines USS Wahoo and USS Tang, it also examines the careers and exploits of other successful American submarine commanders in the Pacific War. A reader might wonder why another book on O'Kane's career is necessary, given the availability of O'Kane's own book, *Clear the Bridge* in 1977, as well as Clay Blair's *Silent Victory* and Theodore Roscoe's *US Submarine Operations in World War II*. The justification for a new book on O'Kane is provided both by the style and the manner in which the author chooses to deliver this story. Unlike other accounts, which tend to be rather meticulous but dry, the author succeeds in painting a wartime sea saga on a vivid canvas, with the protagonist contending not only against the enemy, but the sea itself, an interfering shore-based naval bureaucracy and even defective torpedoes. In these pages, O'Kane and his peers appear as human beings, not just ciphers in a tonnage-sunk chart.

O'Kane started his rise to prominence in the submarine community while serving as executive officer under the legendary "Mush" Morton in the USS Wahoo in 1943. Morton was one of the first sub skippers to break with the over-cautious, unimaginative pre-war US submarine doctrine and embrace a more freewheeling and aggressive combat style. Tenacity was Morton's trademark, and O'Kane later adopted this mindset when he was given his own command on USS Tang. The author effectively demonstrates the deadly efficiency of the Morton - O'Kane combat team on Wahoo; the real weapon system was the well-trained and aggressive crew, not the submarine itself. After O'Kane left Wahoo for his own command on Tang, Morton's efficiency declined and he began to take more chances. In October 1943, Wahoo was lost off Japan and O'Kane's mentor was gone. However, in five patrols on USS Tang in 1944, O'Kane more than avenged the loss of Morton by sinking 27 Japanese vessels. The author details how O'Kane was innovative as well as brave, introducing efficient tactics for recovering downed US pilots at sea and daring shallow-water attack tactics. At the conclusion of his fifth patrol in October 1944, Tang was sunk off Formosa by one of its own torpedoes. O'Kane and eight of his crewmen were the only survivors and spent ten months in Japanese captivity. The final patrol of Tang is probably the best part of this book and the author details the sinking and incredible underwater escape of several crewmen in riveting detail. The brutal details of O'Kane's interrogation and captivity, which are usually not provided in other accounts, are revealed here. Interestingly, the Marine fighter pilot "Pappy" Boyington was in the same POW camp as O'Kane.

This account also addresses the torpedo malfunctions, command problems and doctrinal deficiencies that plagued the US submarine force in the first eighteen months of the Pacific War. It still seems incredible that the US Ordnance Bureau ignored repeated evidence of torpedo malfunctions for so long, and the bureaucratic obtuseness that blocked technical improvements now appears almost criminal. A divided command structure, based partly in Australia and partly in Hawaii, also degraded US combat performance. US pre-war submarine doctrine, which focused on

reconnaissance for the fleet rather than independent anti-commerce warfare, was another impediment to a successful submarine campaign. However, all the technical and bureaucratic hurdles had been overcome by 1944, which is when the US submarine force achieved its greatest results.

While focusing on O'Kane, the author also examines the exploits of other top US submarine commanders in this period. These men, mostly US Naval Academy graduates, are followed at sea and ashore to give a complete picture of the special type of independent leaders that were required for this most demanding form of warfare. Unlike their surface counterparts, the US submarine skippers usually fought alone and deep inside the Japanese Empire. The author notes that fully 30% of submarine commanders were relieved in 1942 and 15% in 1943. Even good skippers suffered "burn-out" from continuous combat patrols. Furthermore, more than 20% of US submariners were lost in action, which was the highest loss rate for any combat arm. However the leaders and crews that emerged from this crucible of war, like O'Kane, Morton and Ned Beach, were top-notch. While this book offers little new in terms of operational details about submarine operations in the Pacific, it adds a vital human dimension that is often ignored in more standard accounts. (Amazon.com review)

### [Gallant Lady: A Biography of the USS Archerfish](#)

By Ken Henry, Don Keith



She looked like just about like the other diesel powered, Balao-class submarines crafted in the '40s. But there the similarity ends. Because the Archerfish--named for a fish that kills its victims with a lethal blast of water from below--won a unique, heroic place in military history and the memories of her crew members.

Here is her story: from her assembly in New England, her dedication at the hand of Eleanor Roosevelt, her service in World War II, where she broke the back of the Japanese Navy and sank the largest ship ever sunk by a submarine, to the details of her critical role in the Cold War, crisscrossing the oceans for six years to foil Soviet naval intelligence.

Here too, is the story of her officers and enlisted men, who waited years to serve on the Archerfish. In their own words, these men tell how, against all odds, they sent a Japanese aircraft carrier to the ocean floor . . . served in peacetime in the Navy's only all bachelor crew . . . steered their ship into exotic ports all over the world . . . welcomed B-girls, Japanese war veterans, royalty, Playboy bunnies and a goat aboard ship, with equal hospitality. As they helped their sub outlast fires and even an earthquake, they worked hard, played hard and lived even harder.

An extraordinary real-life odyssey, Archerfish is a vivid, unforgettable portrait of submariners' life.

## **Silent Victory:**

### **The U.S. Submarine War Against Japan**

by Clay Blair



At long last . . .

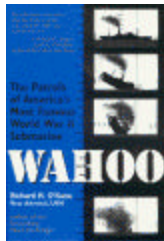
The re-release of the definitive resource of the US submarine operations in World War II. This edition is the softcover version of the acclaimed study of one of the deadliest of all naval conflicts. The appendix contains all records regarding the skippers, submarine patrols by location and date as well as total tonnages. A must have for any student of the subject.

---

## **WAHOO:**

### **The Patrols of America's Most Famous WWII Submarine**

by Richard O'Kane



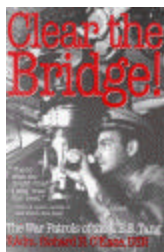
WAHOO tells the story of USS Wahoo (SS238) as told by her former Executive Officer. This is the story of the life and death of one of the best submarines and Commanding Officers that served in the Pacific Theater of Operations. Written by a man who would go on to glory as Commanding Officer of his own boat (USS TANG), Richard H. O'Kane tells a gripping and factual tale of how the boat went from being a nondescript boat to the best in one patrol. Dudley W. Morton, who took command of the Wahoo after her second patrol threw away the book of instructions and rewrote submarine doctrine for all the others to follow.

*Amazon.com review*

## **Clear the Bridge!**

### **The War Patrols of the USS Tang**

by Richard O'Kane



By the time of Tang's launch in 1944 most of the early war torpedo problems had been solved and better radar and tactics were in place. Submarine technology was state of the art, and the bright, aggressive officers like Dick O'Kane were the remaining element to gain ultimate success. "Clear The Bridge" provides a well written and concise chronology of the operations of the USS Tang. O'Kane personalizes Tang's history by including some of the stories of the men who served on her.

## [Thunder Below!](#)

### ***The USS Barb Revolutionizes Submarine Warfare in WW II***

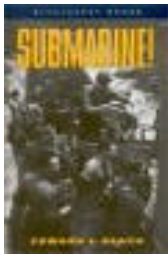
by Eugene Fluckey



If you read but one WWII submarine memoir, be it this one. Far from a dispassionate account of the exploits of a successful submarine skipper, with *Thunder Below*, you are there. I've read many a book about submarines; but Fluckey's lively and coherent style makes it much easier to understand life aboard a WWII sub. Most other books, O'Kane's for example, I'd recommend for students of history or submarine warfare. Not this one. Anyone who likes a good tale, be it fiction or non-fiction, could like this one. And it's not just his account he presents either; it's also richly filled with accounts from the Japanese, other American subs, and an illegal diary kept by one of his crewman. So a balanced, all around perspective is given that is lacking in other memoirs. Fluckey's presentation of an American wolf pack attack that decimated a Japanese convoy unknowingly filled with Allied POW's (and some of their subsequent rescue) is one of the most moving stories I've ever read. *Amazon.com review*

## [Submarine!](#)

by Edward L. Beach



Welcomed as the first book about American submarines in World War II to be written by a man who actually fought them, this compelling personal account of the war beneath the sea firmly established Edward L. Beach's reputation as a writer in the early 1950s. Given the survival rate of those in the silent service, it is a story many submariners did not live to tell. In fact, most of the crew of Beach's boat, the USS *Trigger*, were lost soon after he left for another assignment. A veteran of twelve war patrols, Beach's luck held out, and he authentically recaptures the moments of elation, desperation, and numbing fear that were part of the daily lives of these warriors as they hunted down the enemy in the Pacific.

Beach helped sink the *Trigger's* first ships and survived more than his share of exploding depth charges from avenging warships. In the book, he weaves the story of his own boat with equally thrilling tales of other battle-hardened submarines and the brave and determined men who fought them against the Japanese. Beach's readers share in the destruction of five destroyers in four days and join in the deadliest game of all--stalking other submarines. They also come to understand the terror and uncertainty of being at the other end of the pursuit, silently sweating out depth-charge poundings in a leaking boat. For an authentic account of what went on under the waves, this book remains one of the very best.

## Unrestricted Warfare

### ***How a New Breed of Officers Led the Submarine Force to Victory in World War II***

by James F. DeRose

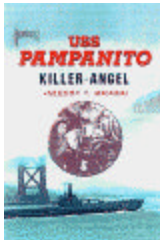


DeRose has a unique skill that transports the reader to a time and place that he or she can not imagine. When I entered the armed forces in WWII, serving on a submarine was easily on the bottom of my list. After reading "Unrestricted Warfare" I now better understand the rationale for my decision. DeRose draws a stark and honest picture of unrelenting stress, anxiety and vulnerability for the officers and enlisted men as they embark on their submarine patrols. The heroic stories of the lives of several submarines and their crews left me engaged, exhausted and thrilled. These men had to have been half-crazy to volunteer for such service. We do, however all owe them an undying debt of gratitude for their contributions to the defeat of the Japanese in the Pacific. DeRose's book is a must read.

## USS Pampanito:

### ***Killer Angel***

by Gregory Michno



There have been many books written about individual US Navy submarines during World War Two in the Pacific, but almost invariably they are written from the viewpoint of the commander or executive officer. "USS Pampanito: Killer-Angel" is different. This is a book which, for the most part, tells the story of a submarine at war through the eyes of her crew, the men who kept her engines running, who scanned the skies for enemy aircraft when surfaced, who strained to load the torpedoes into her tubes during convoy attacks. The book is well illustrated with maps of the combat operations plus numerous photographs of crewmembers, both as impossibly young men during their war and as elderly veterans visiting their boat during a recent crew reunion. "USS Pampanito: Killer-Angel" is an excellent look at ordinary men on an ordinary submarine during an extraordinary time.

## SUBS AGAINST THE RISING SUN

by Keith Milton



An encyclopedia of U.S. submarine activity in World War II Pacific Theater. Each of the 249 U.S. submarines that operated in the Pacific is represented by a photograph and charts detailing their Pacific patrols and victories. Tables ranking boats and captains for number of vessels and tonnage sunk are part of the Appendix. An extensive index provides easy reference to boats, captains, and names of Japanese vessels sunk. A must for every submariner and a valuable resource for researchers.