Robert Ballards Guadalcanal by Ken Marshall

An Incredible Journey Through A Graveyard Of Lost Ships.

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My Personal Review:
The work of Dr Robert D. Ballard knows no bounds and is truly inspirational to those of us who read of his exploits and seek to emulate his standards with much lesser shipwrecks.

Once again, just as soon as I took delivery of "The Lost Ships of Guadalcanal" I knew I had a 5 Star Book in my hands and, once again, I found nothing within it's 220 pages to make me take away any of those stars.

This book will stand the test of time as a literary work and outstanding account of one of the major naval battle zones of the Pacific in WW2. There are modern photographs including a number taken from the air, historic photographs (American, Australian, Japanese and local) of the places, the personalities, the ships, aircraft and soldiers, some incredible paintings of the night actions that took place, pictures of Ballard's crew as they go about their work and his advanced equipment being deployed and used. There is also a picture of a very young John F. Kennedy in his PT-109.

The first underwater pictures are enough to make the heart stop for just a moment as you realise this man Ballard has done it again - not once, but in this case several times. Commencing with the 9,850 ton Heavy Cruiser HMAS Canberra (the "A" stands for Australian) we no sooner see the first underwater photographs of this once magnificent ship - which went down fight in the opening minutes of the Battle of Savo Island, then we turn the page to find a 3-page open-out spread of Ken Marschall's painting of the entire wreck.
On the opposite side of that 3 page spread is another equally outstanding painting of USS Quincy followed by her own set of underwater photographs. As the story of Guadalcanal continues, so we find more details of US and Japanese successes and losses and the trials and tribulations endured by the forces of both sides as the author carefully draws us towards that part in the overall series of battles that will bring us to his next discovery and Ken Marschall’s next incredible painting - the USS Monssen.

With more underwater photographs of yet more of the "Lost Ships of Guadalcanal," and yet more paintings by Ken Marschall, the author skilfully brings the reader both to the end of the series of battles and to the end of his own journey of discovery. Whilst not one of the greatest works of art within the book, one of my favourite paintings is found on p.200. This is an aerial picture of the entire area called "Iron Bottom Sound" - painted as though the water had been removed and showing the location of no fewer than 13 warships, one aircraft and two beached freighters. As part of the caption states ".... that makes this one of the greatest submarine battlefields." Yes it is, and in this book it was all brought back to life by Dr Robert D. Ballard.

An excellent book by any standards.

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