Splinter Fleet: The Wooden Subchasers of World War II by Theodore R. Treadwell

A Non Veteran's Viewpoint

Hastily built at the onset of World War II to stop German U-boats from taking their toll on Allied shipping, the 110-foot wooden subchasers were the smallest commissioned warships in the U.S. Navy yet they saw as much action as ships ten times their size. In every theater of war these workhorses of the fleet escorted countless convoys of slow-moving ships through submarine-infested waters, conducted endless mind-numbing antisubmarine patrols, and were used in hundreds of amphibious operations. This book, written by the commander of one of the subchasers, defines their place in World War II naval history and gives readers a taste of life aboard the wooden warships. Ringing with authenticity, it describes the cramped quarters and unforgiving seas, as well as the tenacious courage and close bonds formed by the men as they sought out the enemy and confronted nature. Long overshadowed by the larger, faster warships and more glamorous PT boats, subchasers have been virtually forgotten in naval history, but this work restores the plucky little ships to their hard earned status as significant members of the fleet.

My Personal Review:
Imagine somewhere beyond a Pacific horizon, a World War II Navy destroyer, the size of a small stadium, is lobbing shells the size of small cars at an unseen enemy stronghold located on an island paradise. The shells are exploding at the rate and sound of a hellish, paradoxical nightmare. Imagine now that you are stationed on a smaller wooden Navy vessel 1/10 the size of the destroyer, and you are less than 1000 yards away from the beautiful beach that is being bombarded. Every sinew in your body is alive with fear, telling you, no imploring you, to turn your vessel around and get out of there. But, alas, you can't leave because you are a critical and strategic chess piece in the United States march to triumph in World War II. Welcome to "Splinter Fleet", a book so powerful with anecdotes that you will swear you are actually aboard these 110ft
wooden subchasers as Treadwell does a delightful job of unraveling a series of historic, and almost forgotten, stories that will make you laugh at the sailors' antics and cry at the devastation and horror that these brave men faced during the war. "Splinter Fleet" takes an important seat on the shelf next to other Naval History books, yet it stands alone as a comprehensive narrative on these hearty wooden boats that served this great country so hard and so well. Thank you for the trip aboard this ship, Capt., you allowed me to travel on your flying bridge, tasting the salt, smelling the smoke, trembling with fear and rejoicing at the many important victories that were enabled by the heroic efforts of the proud men in the "Splinter Fleet".

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