

# QUARTERDECK



CELEBRATING HISTORICAL LITERATURE & ART

## *Inside*

Stephen Coonts

Eric Jay Dolin

David Dyer

Reviews

New Releases

March / April 2016

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MARCH / APRIL 2016

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## QUARTERDECK

A BI-MONTHLY JOURNAL



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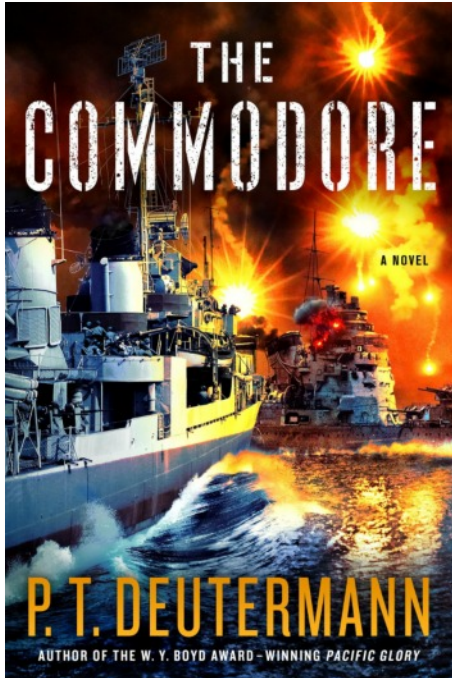
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### ON THE COVER:

South Haven, Michigan  
Light during the gales  
of November (photo by  
George D. Jepson)

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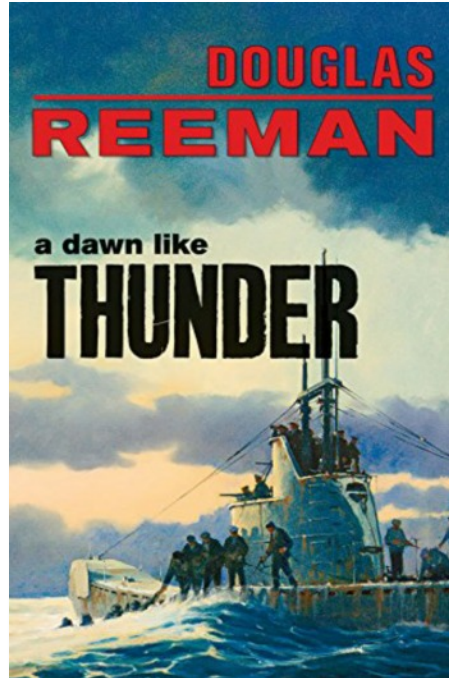


### P. T. DEUTERMANN

American novelist P. T. Deutermann's previous novels about the United States Navy in World War II – *Pacific Glory*, *Ghosts of Bungo Suido*, and *Sentinels of Fire* – have been acclaimed by reviewers and readers for their powerful drama and authentic detail.

In *The Commodore*, which will be launched in August, the Navy in 1942-1943 is fighting a losing battle against Japan for control of the Solomon Islands. Vice Admiral William "Bull" Halsey is tasked with changing the course of the war.

Halsey, a maverick, goes on the offensive and appoints a host of new destroyer commanders, including a wild-card named Harmon Wolf. An American Indian from a Minnesota reservation, Wolf has never fit in with the traditional Navy officer corps. But under Halsey, Wolf's aggressive tactics and gambling nature bring immediate results, and he is swift-



ly promoted to Commodore of an entire destroyer squadron. What happens next will change Wolf's life, career, and the fate of his ships forever. This epic story of courage, disaster, survival, and triumph culminates in the pivotal battle of Vela Gulf.

### DOUGLAS REEMAN

McBooks Press will launch two new trade paperback editions of Douglas Reeman novels in its Modern Naval Fiction Library this year. *The Pride and the Anguish* (see page 21) will be published in April and *A Dawn Like Thunder* in July.

### ERIC JAY DOLIN

Eric Jay Dolin, whose *Brilliant Beacons: A History of the American Lighthouse* (see page 12) will be published in April, is currently working on a popular narrative history of America's pirates during the Golden Age of Piracy, from the late 1600s to the mid-1720s.

## NEW BOOK LAUNCHES 2016

US (United States)  
UK (United Kingdom)  
TPB (Trade Paperback)  
PB (Paperback)  
HB (Hardback)  
EB (Ebook)  
NF (Nonfiction)

### APRIL

*The Winds of Folly* (USTPB)  
by Seth Hunter

*Brilliant Beacons* (USHB)  
by Eric Jay Dolin

### MAY

*The Pride and the Anguish* (USTPB)  
by Douglas Reeman

*Valiant Ambition* (USHB)  
by Nathaniel Philbrick

*Fatal Thunder* (USHB)  
by Larry Bond

### JUNE

*Ice Station Nautilus* (USHB)  
by Rick Campbell

*Liberty's Last Stand* (USHB)  
by Stephen Coonts

### JULY

*A Dawn Like Thunder* (USTPB)  
by Douglas Reeman

### AUGUST

*The Flag of Freedom* (USTPB)  
by Seth Hunter

*The Commodore* (USHB)  
By P. T. Deutermann



# The Gift

ON MY DESK sits an inelegant, dark-brown brick, with a chip on one corner. The recent addition to the mementos in my study came to me as a complete surprise.

On a snow-blown Sunday morning in December, Amy and I sat in the stands at our local ice arena watching our eleven-year-old grandson, Nick, skate for his hockey team. As the final horn blew, signaling the end of the game, a couple approached us.

Mike and Natalie Mason, parents of Nick's teammate, Sean, handed me a weighty Christmas gift bag. Inside, wrapped in red-and-green tissue, was the brick. A strange gift, you might say, but it immediately tugged at my heart strings. It represented my boyhood "rock," the school for which I have had an abiding affection since a September morning in 1951.

Entering the second grade that autumn, just shy of my seventh birthday, I embarked on an eight-year journey at Milwood. Dedicated teachers, with at least one who ruled with tough love and an ever-ready ping pong paddle, taught us reading, writing and arithmetic and, most importantly for me, United States history, a subject which seems to be sorely lacking in early education today.

Each morning we recited the Pledge of Allegiance, standing smartly before Old Glory. The emphasis placed on American history in my classes ignited flames that still burn within me. I became a regular in the school library, where I found books that related the story of our coun-



try.

Landmark Books, an imprint of Random House featuring stories about American heroes and institutions, were favorites. I read about George Washington, Ben Franklin, John Paul Jones, the Erie Canal, the Pony Express, Old Ironsides, the U.S. Naval Academy and West Point, and much, much more. These books made history fun.

Independent book dealer Dan Glaeser in Modesto, California, says, "Landmark Books are perhaps the most sought after out-of-print children's books by home schooling families. Written in a novelistic style, these biographies and histories are geared for mid-range readers in from the third to sixth grade. I am currently trying to read the entire series and enjoying them immensely."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 33

# STEPHEN COONTS

**S**TEPHEN COONTS BURST onto the fiction scene in 1986 with the launch of *Flight of the Intruder*, which spent twenty-eight weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list. Three decades later, the book, which introduced young Navy Lieutenant Jake Grafton, remains in print and recently has been released in a new paperback edition by St. Martin's Press.

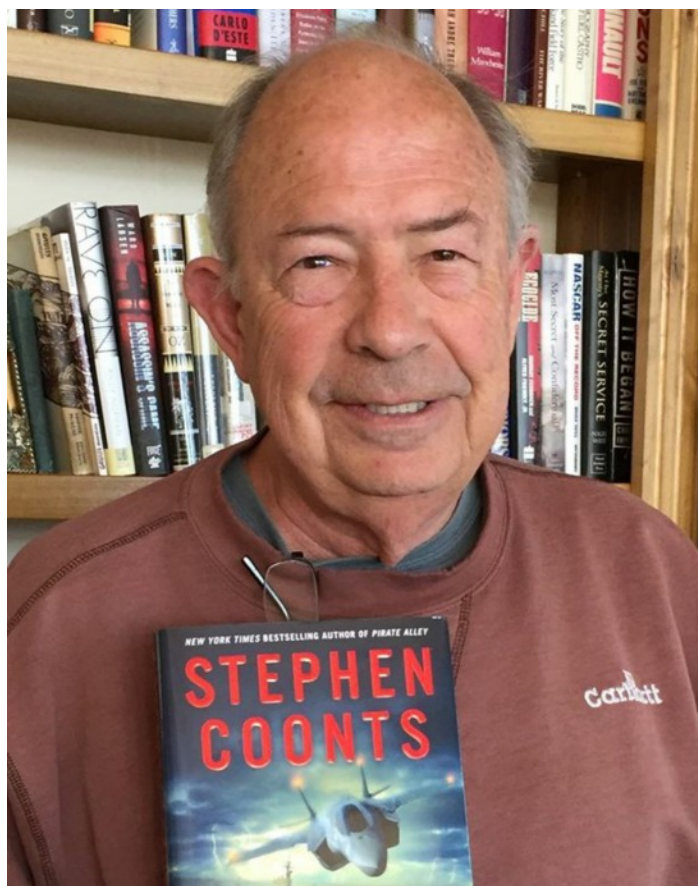
*Flight of the Intruder* launched Coonts' writing career like an A-6 Intruder catapulting off the deck of an aircraft carrier. In eighteen novels to date, Coonts chronicles Grafton's career from a young carrier pilot during the Vietnam conflict to a retired two-star admiral serving with the CIA.

Along the way, Coonts created an engaging new character in Tommy Carmellini, who first appeared with Grafton in *Cuba*, and eventually spun off into his

own series. In his latest novel, *The Art of War* (see review on page 9), Grafton and Carmellini face a treacherous plot to cripple America's naval capabilities.

Besides the Grafton and Carmellini series, Coonts co-authored The Deep Black series about a covert CIA team that battles bad guys around the world. A science fiction series features tales of flying saucers.

He has also written several other works, including *Cannibal Queen*, his first venture into non-fiction, detailing his cross-country flight in a 1942 Stearman open cockpit bi-plane with his fourteen-year-old son.



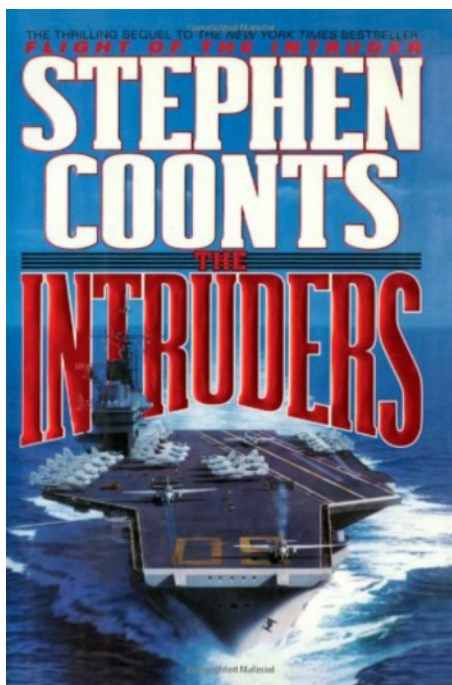
Stephen Coonts

Photo by Deborah Jean Coonts.

The author discusses his writing career in this interview with *Quarterdeck*:

**What was the spark that ignited your passion for flying? Did you always have your sights set on naval aviation?**

Reading *Fate Is the Hunter* by Ernest K. Gann convinced me that flying would be a great adventure. The Navy offered a program that would allow me to complete Aviation Officers Candidate School while in college (the program is long gone) and guaranteed to send me to flight school when I got my degree. So I joined the Naval Reserve while I was a sophomore in college.



publishers before the U.S. Naval Institute picked it to publish as their second novel, after *The Hunt For Red October* by Tom Clancy.

Were you surprised at the overwhelming success the novel generated?

Not surprised, flabbergasted. Amazed. Stunned.

Was Jake Grafton, your now well-known protagonist in *Flight of the Intruder* and in subsequent novels, including *The Art of War*, based on any one in particular from your experience in the Navy?

In the twentieth anniversary edition of *Flight of the Intruder*, you wrote in the preface that the idea for the novel “occurred to me while I was flying A-6 Intruder attack jets from the flight deck of the USS *Enterprise*.” Was this the first time you had considered writing fiction?

Essentially, yes. I quickly found I didn’t have the craft, nor a plot. So I scribbled at flying scenes for ten years, and finally thought up a plot for my flying story. After a divorce in 1984, I found I had the time and no money, so I got seriously into my story.

Once the idea took hold, how long did it take to complete the *Flight of the Intruder* manuscript? Did you have any difficulty in finding a publisher?

I had a manuscript in about six months writing nights and weekends. It was rejected by thirty-two

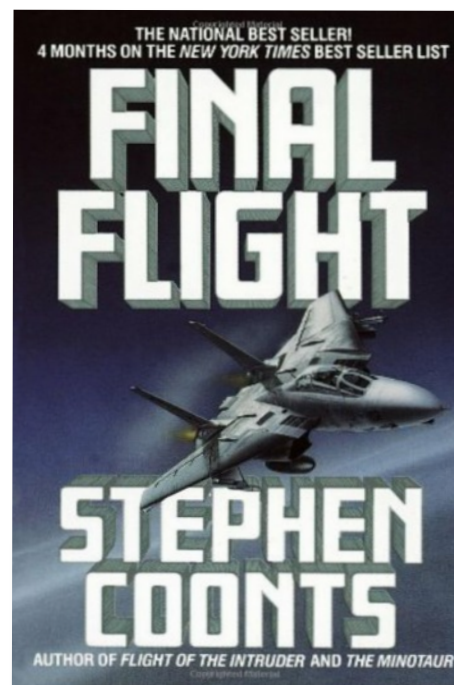
No. He was a character I created to tell *Flight of the Intruder*, and as such was an amalgam of all the guys I knew in naval aviation.

At what point after *Flight of the Intruder* was launched did you decide

“... I scribbled at flying scenes for ten years, and finally thought up a plot for my flying story.”

to write full-time? Had you started a second novel?

The out-of-the-ballpark success of *Flight of the Intruder* raised the possibility that maybe I could write for a living. My oil company employer was on the skids, and I was going to have to do something to earn a living. So when they laid me off, with all 2,200 other employees, I took my severance pay and started



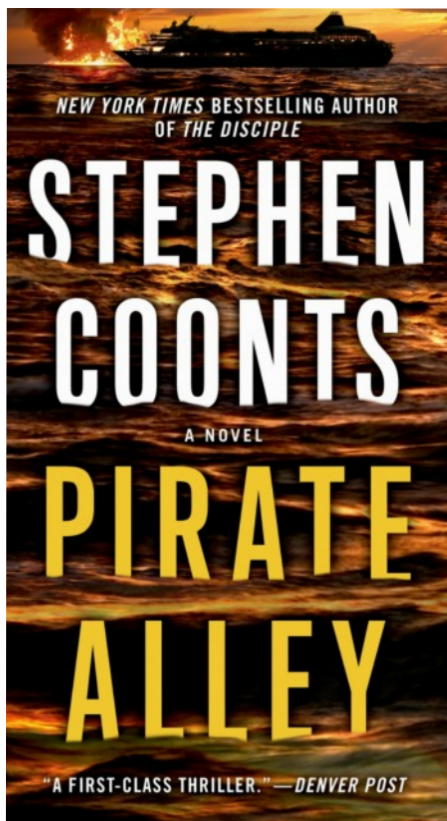
writing the book that became *Final Flight*.

Once you set a course to write full time, did you find it difficult to come up with new story ideas?

The difficulty is not dreaming them up, it’s getting New York publishing editors excited about them. They want you to do the same book that just sold well with different characters and a different setting, but the same plot, essentially the same dynamic that Hollywood producers face. Recycle the plot. It’s enough to make you tear your hair out, and I don’t have much left.

Tommy Carmellini initially appeared in the Jake Grafton novels beginning with *Cuba*. Why did you spin him off into his own series?

I felt like I needed a new, young, hip hero, and I wanted to try first-person narration, so Tommy was a



natural counterpoint to Jake Grafton. I tried out the new formula in *Liars and Thieves*, and thought it worked rather well.

What was the genesis of the *Saucer* novels?

I needed a break from thrillers, and liked the idea of taking you, the reader, flying in a flying saucer. What would it be like? Who would the characters be? What is the plot? I had a lot of fun with all three books.

The Deep Black series is written with co-authors Jim DeFelice and William H. Keith. How does the collaboration work?

We did nine books, and that was enough. I am still not sure exactly how we did it. I worked with the late Martin H. Greenberg, the book

packager who invented the co-authored novel for Tom Clancy. The publishers wanted more than one book a year, and that was the only feasible way. It's a very popular format now. Clive Cussler has three or four co-writers, and James Patterson has turned writing fiction into a cottage industry of scribblers producing six books a year.

Once started on a novel, do you review a previous day's work and re-write? Do you write a certain number of words per day? Is there generally more than one complete draft?

I am not sure how I do this, either. I write scenes, with the goal of one a day. Some days I am lucky to do a paragraph; on rare occasions I get a whole chapter. Getting started is the difficult part. I have written as many as five beginnings for the same novel, trying to get it right. *Liberty's Last Stand*, due out on

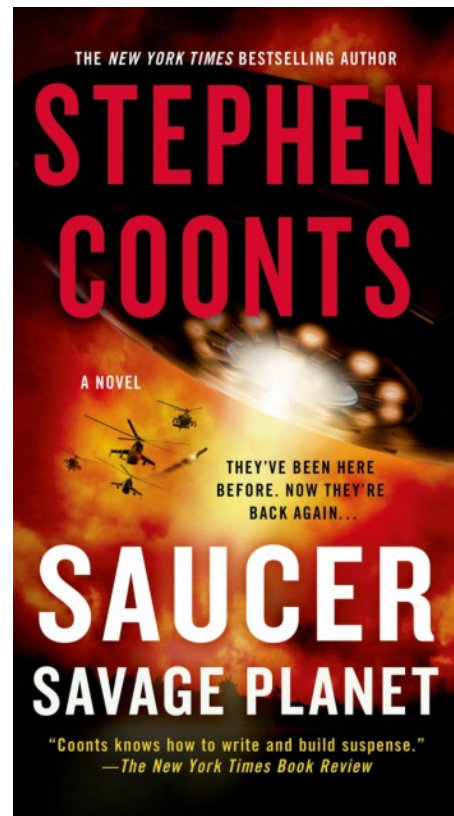
**"Some days I am lucky to do a paragraph; on rare occasions I get a whole chapter. Getting started is the difficult part."**

June 13, had three beginnings and two endings before the publisher and I were satisfied.

How do you research your novels?

On the Internet, if possible. Asking questions of experts, if necessary.

Do you maintain a reference library?



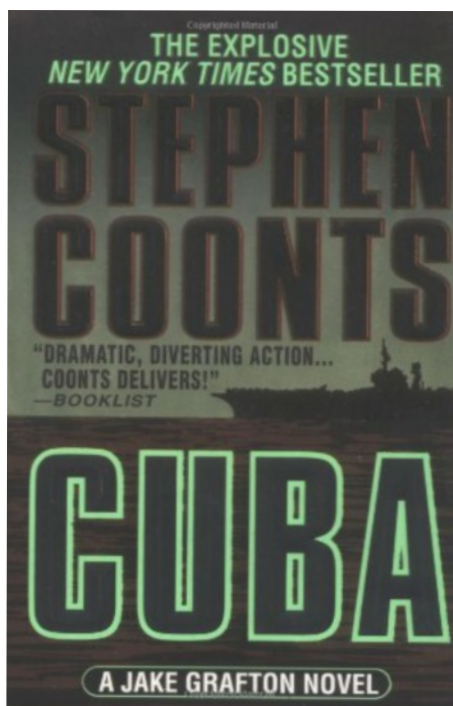
Well, I owned ten tons of books until the last move, when common sense (and my wife) finally agreed enough was enough.

Please describe where you write?

At my desk in my office. Big book shelf, overloaded, and two deer and two antelope heads. Windows. A little patio beside it to smoke a cigar while contemplating my literary sins and my toes.

What has been the greatest influence in your writing career?

Fighting the war on poverty. I make my living doing this, and like Churchill, am always satisfied with the best. So my wife tells me, "Write faster."



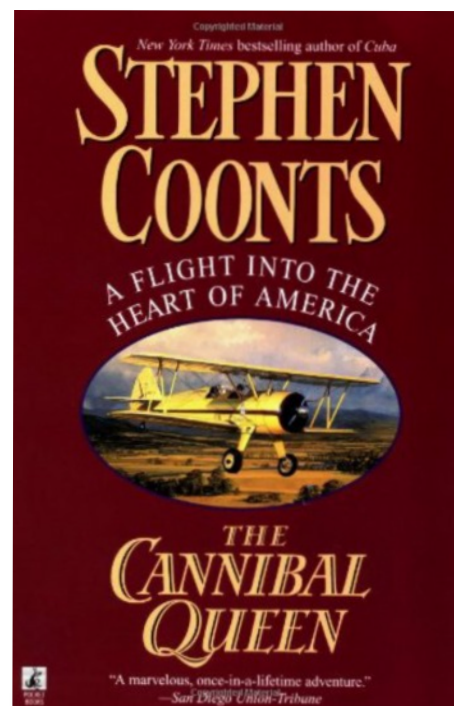
*the Intruder* in my hands, with my name on the dust jacket, did it for me. I was hooked. I decided then and there that I would do this as long as I could make enough money to eat. So far, so good.

Name three historic figures, living or dead, with whom you would enjoy chatting over dinner.

George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and U.S. Grant. And Jesus, if he could spare the time.

Is there anything else you would like to share with our readers?

Reading fiction is the way we live adventures that won't fit into our lives. Books allow you to swing through the jungle with Tarzan, float down the Mississippi with Huck Finn, fly jet fighters with Jake Grafton, fight sea battles on wooden ships in the age of sail, fly spaceships between the stars, solve



come out only at night to eat dogs and children. In fiction, anything is possible. I feel sorry for people who tell me they don't read fiction.

They are missing entire worlds.

Fiction is the most personal of the art forms. It is the only art form that takes place between your ears and nowhere else. You read the words and see the characters, the scene and the action. The story is merely ink symbols on paper or symbols on a computer screen, and they stimulate your brain. A writer writes not for theater audiences or to create something for a museum, but just for you in a one-on-one relationship, trying to stimulate your imagination with those little symbols. Kinda cool, isn't it?

Visit Stephen Coonts online at: [www.coonts.com](http://www.coonts.com) or on Facebook.

Do you re-read your novels? Do you have a favorite title?

Occasionally. Not often. I know how they end. As for my favorite, it's always the next one. Right now that is *Liberty's Last Stand*, out on June 13, 2016.

What's next for Jake Grafton and Tommy Carmellini?

They save the nation in *Liberty's Last Stand*, which may well be the most politically incorrect book of the twenty-first century. I found out that making good action-adventure out of politics is a rough road to drive, which is probably why so few writers try it.

When you look back over your career, is there one moment that stands out as having been particularly exhilarating?

Holding the first copy of *Flight of*

***"Holding the first copy of *Flight of the Intruder* in my hands, with my name on the dust jacket, did it for me. I was hooked."***

mysteries with Hercule Poirot and Chief Superintendent Maigret, outshoot the bad guys on a dusty western street, and (for those so inclined) have fantastic romances with rich, hunky men, all without leaving your armchair. You can do S&M, save the planet from aliens or evil politicians, *be* an alien or evil politician, or fight to the death with creatures that live in the sewers and

# THE CHINESE DRAGON

by George Jepson

**T**HE CHINESE DRAGON is flexing its muscles in the South China Sea, alarming American allies, while quietly launching a sinister operation against the United States.

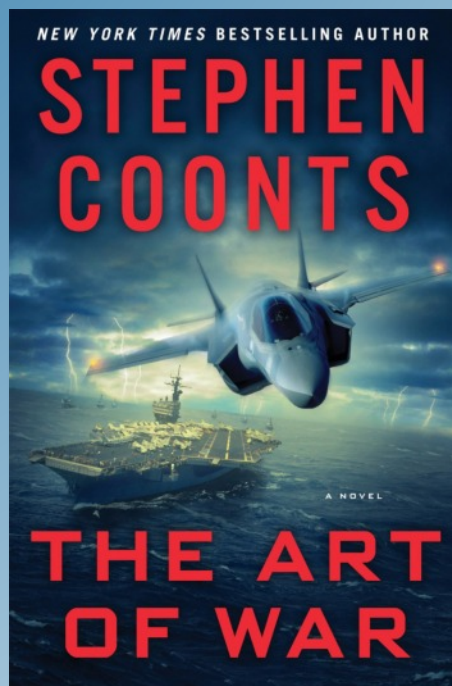
As usual, Stephen Coonts' fiction does not stray far from reality. It's no secret that China seeks to stiffen its territorial claims by constructing islands in waters far off its own coast, including areas claimed by Vietnam and the Philippines.

*The Art of War* is Coonts' latest thriller featuring retired U.S. Navy two-star Admiral Jake Grafton, and CIA operative Tommy Carmellini.

When the director of the CIA is assassinated early on a Saturday morning at his cottage on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, the president appoints Grafton interim director.

Two more high-level murders and the crash of Air Force One have official Washington spinning. Grafton is uncertain who to trust, other than Carmellini. Precautions to protect the new interim director and his wife, Callie, are taken, with the motive behind the killings anything but clear.

Meanwhile, Chinese agents imbed a nuclear bomb near the U.S. Naval base at Norfolk, with the knowledge that five Atlantic Fleet



## THE ART OF WAR

St. Martin's Press, \$27.99,  
U.S. Hardback /  
\$14.99, Kindle and NOOK

aircraft carriers are scheduled to make a port call over the Christmas holiday. It's an opportunity for another Pearl Harbor, crippling America's naval capabilities.

If all goes well, China will be able to deny involvement by creating the illusion that a tragic accident caused the blast aboard a U.S. Ship, assuring that America will never be the same again.

Coonts is at his riveting best, involving the reader in an internation-

al race against a ticking clock, as a weapon of mass destruction lays hidden. While Grafton and Carmellini work feverishly to solve a murder mystery, they have no idea that a catastrophic event of unbelievable magnitude is fast approaching.

Whose fingerprints are on the killings and the downing of the president's plane? Russia? China? It makes little sense, but when Carmellini connects with a Russian contact in Zurich, Grafton senses the real possibility of a nuclear threat.

A cold-blooded killer is on the loose. Two seemingly innocent Chinese men spend their days fishing from a small boat within sight of Naval Base Norfolk and the shipyard at Newport News. High ranking Chinese officials in Beijing observe everything from afar.

In Washington, Jake and Tommy connect the dots, while someone within the government clearly wants the investigation to fail, sacrificing the lives of millions.

Once again, Stephen Coonts asserts his mastery of the thriller genre, with lively page-turning prose, punctuated with shocking twists and turns, that are certain to keep reading lights burning late into the night.

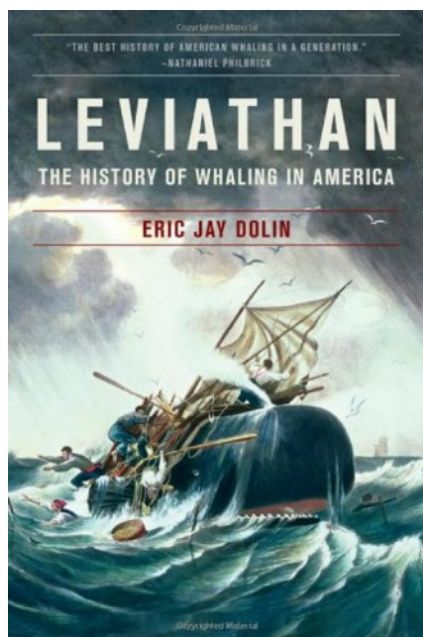


Credit: Kimberly Dooks Photography

Massachusetts-based author Eric Jay Dolin

# ERIC JAY DOLIN

by George Jepson



IN THE PAST DECADE, ERIC JAY DOLIN has written three significant works of American history – *Leviathan: The History of Whaling in America*; *Fur, Fortune, and Empire: The Epic History of the Fur Trade in America*; and *When America First met China: An Exotic History of Tea, Drugs, and Money in the Age of Sail*.

In April, Dolin's latest work, *Brilliant Beacons: A History of the American Lighthouse* (see review on page 11) will be published by Liveright Publishing (an imprint of W. W. Norton).

The award-winning author, who lives in Marblehead, Massachusetts, with his wife and children, discusses the winding road to his writing career, as well as the story behind *Brilliant Beacons*, in this interview with *Quarterdeck*:

You studied biology and marine ecology at Brown University.

What sparked your interest in American history?

I have always loved stories about the past, especially early sea voyages and the travels of explorers. However, my main interest throughout school, and for most of my career, was marine biology and the environment. Besides my science degree from college, I have a master's degree in environmental management from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, and a PhD in environmental policy from MIT. I have also held a variety of environmentally-related jobs, including stints as a fisheries policy analyst at the National Marine Fisheries Service, a program manager at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, an environmental consultant stateside and in London, an American Association for the Advancement of Science writing fellow at *Business Week*, a curatorial assistant in the Mollusk Department at Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology, and an intern at the National Wildlife Federation, the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management, and in the U.S. Senate.

Throughout my educational and professional career, one thing remained constant – I enjoyed writing and telling stories. While working on my dissertation (on the role of the judiciary in cleaning up Boston Harbor), I realized I had the most fun researching and writing about the long history of the degradation and cleanup of Boston Harbor. I was less interested in the

policy issues and the testing of hypotheses related to how the courts and the government worked or didn't work. About that time, in the mid-1990s, I started writing books that focused on history, while at the same time working full-time. In 2007, I quit my day job and became a full-time writer of history books, which I couldn't have done without the unreserved support of my wife and family.

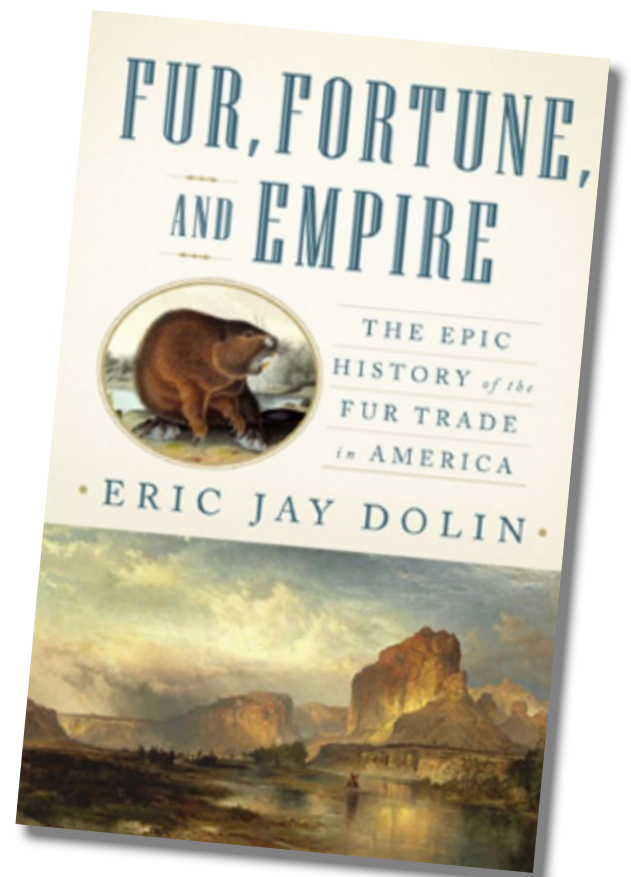
That's a long way of saying that there is no one thing that sparked my interest in history. Instead, slowly over time, I realized

**"Leviathan was my first history book with a major publisher, but before it came out I had written eight books . . ."**

that history, especially American history, is the topic that fascinated me the most.

Was *Leviathan: The History of Whaling in America* your first foray into writing history?

*Leviathan* (2007) was my first history book with a major publisher, but before it came out I had written eight books, all which



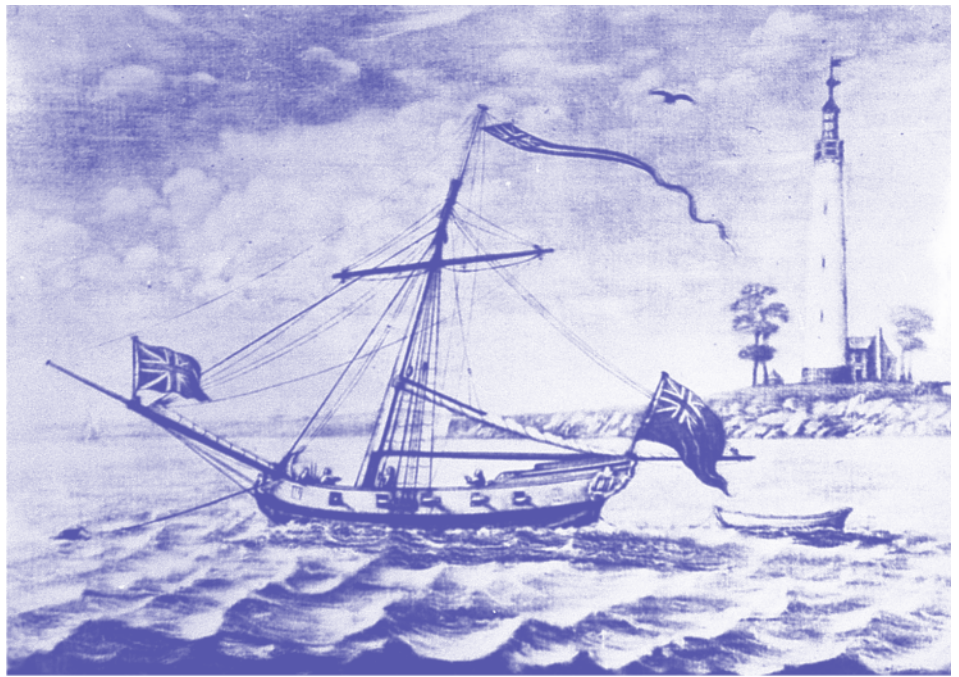
focused on history one way or another. My earlier books ranged from the *Smithsonian Book of National Wildlife Refuges* and *The Duck Stamp Story: Art-Conservation-History*, to a book that has a ridiculously long subtitle: *Political Waters: The Long, Dirty, Contentious, Incredibly Expensive but Eventually Triumphant History of Boston Harbor – A Unique Environmental Success Story*. By the way, that subtitle was the editor's idea.

What drew you to maritime-related historical topics in your recent books, from *Leviathan* to *Brilliant Beacons: A History of the American Lighthouse*?

My interest in maritime history is a direct outgrowth of my love for the

ocean. I grew up near the coasts of New York and Connecticut, and since an early age, the natural world fascinated me, especially the saltier realms. I spent many days wandering the beaches on the edge of Long Island Sound and the Atlantic, collecting seashells and exploring tide pools. When I left for college I wanted to become a marine biologist or, more specifically, a malacologist (seashell scientist). At college I quickly realized that although I loved learning about science, I wasn't cut out for a career in science, mainly because I wasn't very good in the lab, and I didn't particularly enjoy reading or writing scientific research papers. So, I shifted course to study environmental policy. However, my love of the ocean remained, and that, more than anything else, is what pointed me in the direction of maritime history.

I came up with the idea for *Leviathan* just after my family moved from a suburb of Washington D.C. to Marblehead, Massachusetts. I had recently finished my book on Boston Harbor, and I wanted to write another book that had something to do with the ocean, especially since I was now living in a coastal town with a wonderful maritime history. I got the idea for *Leviathan* from a large, oval box in my house, which is painted with a primitive, powerful whaling scene. The image shows a whaleship with its sails unfurled, three whaleboats filled with men, and two whales who appear to be unnaturally buoyant, seemingly floating on top of the waves. Many times, I gazed at that



Boston Light engraving, circa 1729, from *Brilliant Beacons*

painting and wondered what it was like actually to go whaling. I thought it would great fun to write a book on whaling, and it was.

For the lighthouse book, the inspiration was different from that for my other books. It wasn't my idea. I was casting around for a

nothing about lighthouses. So, I went off for about a month, read a bunch of books on lighthouses, and fell in love with the history; then, I submitted a brief proposal, and the book was born. Although I prefer coming up with my own ideas, I am very thankful that my editor and the head of sales gave me this gift.

**"I got the idea for *Leviathan* from a large, oval box in my house, which is painted with a . . . powerful whaling scene."**

book topic, and had submitted a few to my editor at Liveright (an imprint of W. W. Norton), but he wasn't particularly enamored with any of them. While I was generating more ideas, my editor and the head of sales and marketing for Norton asked me if I would be interested in writing a book on the history of American lighthouses. I wasn't sure, since I knew almost

**Do you consider yourself a historian or writer first?**

Even though many people refer to me as a historian, and I have won a few history book prizes,

I sometimes have a tough time calling myself a historian, since I usually associate that word with people who have a Ph.D. in history (and, of course, more than a few Ph.D. historians would no doubt also find it difficult to call me a historian, as some of them have told me over the years). However, in the broader sense of someone who writes about history, then, of

course, I am a historian. Still, I think of myself more as a storyteller and a writer who happens to love telling stories about history.

**How did you research *Brilliant Beacons*? How much time elapsed from the project's onset and writing the first words?**

I work on books iteratively, researching then writing, then researching again and writing, until I finish the book. I begin with chapter one (the intro always comes last), and then keep on going until the last chapter, doing each one sequentially. It is not completely linear, however, and I often go back and forth, adding to or cutting from chapters for which I already have a rough draft. For *Brilliant Beacons*, I began writing the first chapter about six months after I signed the book contract. A little less than a year later, I finished the manuscript to the point that it was ready to be sent to reviewers. In other words, it took me about eighteen months to research and write the book.

**Has your approach to research changed since you began writing?**

I have tried to become more selective. With all my books, since they cover so many years and so much history, the biggest potential problem is being overwhelmed with sources. The greatest difficulty, therefore, is figuring out what I need to read to tell the story I want to tell. With practice, I have gotten better at deciding what to read, and what to ignore. However, I still end

up reading a lot that is not particularly useful in the end. Other than that, my approach to research has stayed pretty much the same. I still try to read the classics or seminal works in an area first, then branch off from there, always on the lookout for interesting and unusual stories.

**Do you have a regular writing routine? Are you a rapid writer?**

I don't think I am a fast writer, but I am not a slow writer, either. I guess that I am average, although I don't say that with much conviction since I know very little about how fast or slow other people

**"I work on books iteratively, researching then writing, researching again and writing, until I finish the book."**

write. As for a writing routine, the only constants are that I listen to classical music and do almost all my writing in my home office – I never have been able to write at a library or a coffee shop. I try to write every day during the week, and usually part of the weekend. Some days, I work for long stretches, and other days, I work in shorter bursts. Every weekday during the school year, I am on kid duty, picking them up at school or shuttling them to activities, although this will soon end, with my daughter having begun college this year, and my son having only a bit more than two years until he too leaves home. So, in the near future, I will have more

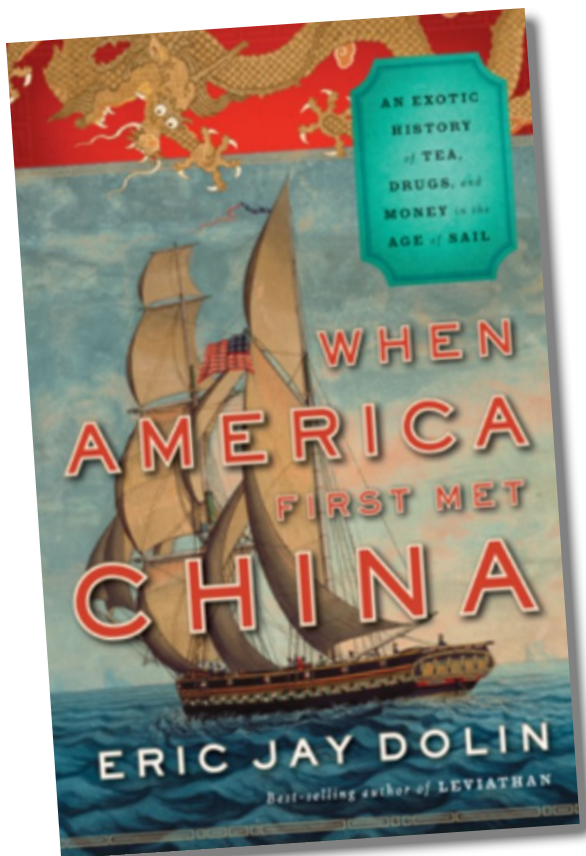
time to devote to writing.

Sometimes, my writing really flows, and I can pump out a lot of pages, but other times I struggle over a few sentences or paragraphs. I do, however, try to end each day of writing with a good idea of where I am heading, and I even like to have some rough notes or guides that make the first few sentence of the following day not that difficult to envision. That way, I can start work the next day with some momentum, feeling good.

All I said above applies to my writing life since 2007, when I became a full-time writer. Before that, I always had a full-time job, and had to fit in writing when I could. Most often this meant waking up at three or four in the morning, and writing before going to work, and then writing again at night, and during the one day of the weekend my wife gave me to do nothing but write. When I was with the government, I used flex-time, working longer days so that I could take off one day every two weeks to write, and not lose pay. And for a short stretch, I had a very supportive boss who let me take one day a week off without pay to write, but that ended when the head of the agency found out about it.

**Was it difficult finding your writing voice? Has it evolved from book to book?**

I know this is not a particularly good answer, but I have no idea where my writing voice came from, or exactly what it is. I write the way I speak, and many people have said



my writing has a conversational tone. Perhaps I shouldn't admit this, but the last English class I took was in high school, and I have never taken a writing class. My writing skills, such as they are, were built up over years of doing research papers, and writing a lot of articles for newspapers and magazines, both at the schools I attended, and for outside publications. If I had to do it all over again, I would have taken more English classes, and a few on writing. In the end, however, forging ahead and writing articles and books, getting feedback from reviewers and good editors, and critically looking at my own work are the elements that have helped me develop as a writer. I'm not sure my fundamental voice has changed that much from book to

book, but I know that the fluidity and quality of my prose has improved over time. However, I still have a long way to go.

**Do you have others read your manuscript draft as your work progresses?**

My wife, Jennifer, is my first reader, and she reads each chapter when I have a complete rough draft. For some of my earlier books, I sent chapters to my dad, but he is no longer capable of being a reviewer. Once I finish the entire manuscript, I send it out to a small

group of people (usually three to five) who are knowledgeable about the topic. I also typically ask my mother-in-law, and sometimes a

**“Since I almost always pick book topics about which I know very little, I have to do a lot of research . . .”**

friend or two, to take a look. Once I incorporate comments from these reviewers, I submit the manuscript to my publisher.

**Which do you enjoy more, research or writing?**

Usually research, because I enjoy tracking down sources, learning about the topic, and just taking notes without the pressure of

crafting sentences, or organizing my thoughts. And I also like the surprises along the way, whether it is an exciting quote, or a particularly good story. I find writing more difficult, although I enjoy it too, especially when I get to the point that I really like what I have written, and it reads smoothly. That's a great feeling.

**Do you have a personal research library? Does it grow with each succeeding project?**

Since I almost always pick book topics about which I know very little, I have to do a lot of research just to get the point that I am comfortable telling the story. To help me get to that point, I typically create my own personal research library, which usually is between forty and eighty books, which are all related to the book's topic. Many of the books are out-of-print, and I order them on-line or buy them at used bookstores; others I buy new. I keep these books in my office, and refer to them often. Of course, I also take many books out of area libraries, and I make great use of Google books and the HathiTrust to read digitized versions of old books.

There are a lot of books in my house and not a lot of space. So, when I am done with a book, I donate most of my research library if I can, only holding onto the books that are classics or the ones I enjoyed the most and might want to refer to again one day. For *Leviathan*, and *Fur, Fortune, and Empire*, for example, I was able to donate most of my whaling and fur

trade books to the Massachusetts Historical Society, where many people can benefit from them.

Are you able to set a manuscript aside while you're working on it or is it always in your subconscious?

I can set it aside, for example, if I go on vacation or have to do another, shorter project, but even while I am not physically working on the book – researching or writing – I will often think about it. Sometimes, while musing, I will come up with a good idea or sentence that will cause me to rush to get a pen and paper to write it down.

Why did you settle your family in Marblehead?

Jenn grew up here, her parents are still in the area, and we love it here. Even when we moved to D.C., then Maryland, after I got my doctorate, we always knew we would end up in Marblehead. And this is where we will stay. My two kids love it as well.

What sort of reader were you as a boy? Are there childhood books and authors that have remained with you over the years?

I wasn't much of a reader, and when I did read for fun I read comics and books and articles about marine biology, shells, sharks and other ocean creatures. One of my favorite books was *The Kingdom of the Seashell* by R. Tucker Abbott. I also remember greatly enjoying many of Jacques Cousteau's books, including *The Silent World*. In fact,

if you had asked me when I was ten years old what I wanted to be when I grew up I would have said an ocean explorer like Cousteau.

Do you read only books or articles that are relevant to your research? Do you read fiction?

Since I pick topics I am unfamiliar with, out of necessity, most of my reading is related to what I am working on at the moment, so that I can learn what I need to know. One pleasant exception is when people send me books to blurb; almost all these are histories. I also read books for pleasure, mainly nonfiction, but not nearly as often

**"I admire virtually all writers . . . it takes a fair bit of courage and determination to . . . put your work out there . . ."**

as I would like. Although I enjoy fiction, I rarely get a chance to read it. I realize that is probably not a great thing to admit when being profiled in a publication devoted to historical fiction, but it's true. Who knows, maybe someday, I will start reading more fiction, and maybe even write a book of historical fiction myself.

What is the last book that you read for enjoyment?

The last two were *Far From the Tree: Parents, Children and the Search for Identity* by Andrew Solomon and, in a lighter vein,

*Smoke Gets In Your Eyes: And Other Lessons from the Crematory* by Caitlin Dougherty.

Who are writers you most admire?

I admire virtually all writers, because I think it takes a fair bit of courage and determination to write and put your work out there for anyone to read, but some of the writers I particularly admire are Samuel Eliot Morison, Erik Larson, Robert Carse and David McCullough.

What do you plan to read next?

*Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates*, by Robert Ritchie.

Are there books in your library that you find yourself returning to again and again?

Morison's *The Maritime History of Massachusetts; America and The Sea: A*

*Maritime History* by Benjamin W. Labaree et al; and Oxford's *Atlas of the World* and *Atlas of World History*.

Name three historic figures, living or dead, whom you would enjoy chatting with over dinner.

Samuel Eliot Morison (I would ask him how he knew so much, and could write so fast, so well); Theodore Roosevelt; and Rachel

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[ericjaydolin.com](http://ericjaydolin.com)

# AMERICA'S MARITIME ICONS

by George Jepson

**L**IGHTHOUSES ALONG America's saltwater and Great Lakes coasts have warned mariners about hidden dangers close to shore since the first Boston Light was raised on Little Brewster Island at the entrance to Boston Harbor in 1716.

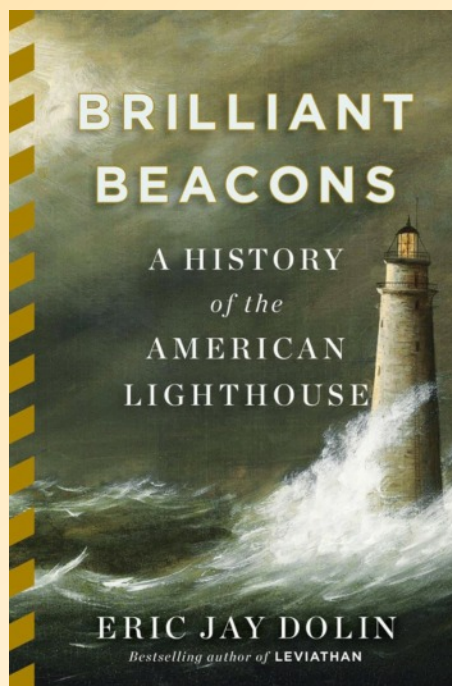
Early seafarers learned that the closer to shore, the greater that the danger was, as they sailed the seven seas and America's Sweetwater Seas. Rocky shoals, sandbars, shallows and shipwrecks lurked beneath the water's surface, while fog, smoke from forest fires and stormy weather reduced visibility.

Until Boston Light was erected, there were no formal navigation aids in the British colonies that would become the United States. Ship masters had only their experience, untrustworthy charts and intuition on which to rely as their vessels approached land.

In *Brilliant Beacons: A History of American Lighthouses*, author Eric Jay Dolin chronicles the evolution of the maritime icons. These unique structures served sailors well into the twentieth century.

Although lighthouses have largely been replaced by the Global Positioning System (GPS), they remain "among the most beloved and romanticized structures in the American landscape," says Dolin. "It is not difficult to find evidence of their hold on the public's imagination."

Even as they have become obsolete in the face of new technology, millions visit lighthouses every year. Civic



## BRILLIANT BEACONS

Liveright Publishing, \$29.95,  
U.S. Hardback /

\$14.16, Kindle / \$14.99, NOOK

minded groups raise funds to save, and rehabilitate, the lights which are on the verge of succumbing to the harsh elements to which they have been exposed over decades.

Dolin's narrative relates the development of America's picturesque coastal beacons to young America's evolution from colonial times to independence and beyond, providing a pleasurable and captivating history lesson.

Through extensive and detailed research, Dolin dug up nuggets of historical detail behind the very human stories created by the men, women and

events that surrounded each light.

During the American Revolution, War of 1812 and Civil War, lights became the targets of belligerents on both sides as a means of affecting navigation. Destruction of lights was done without regard for the toll that might be taken on the lives of mariners.

Lighthouse keepers – both men and women – were primarily charged with maintaining the beacons and assuring that they were in working order and lit. This was an arduous and often risky venture, especially during inclement weather.

Lighthouse keepers often became heroes. In September 1858, for instance, 15-year-old Ida Lewis was performing the keeper's duties at Lime Rock Lighthouse off Newport, Rhode Island, for her father, who was crippled from a stroke. Spying four boys on the verge of drowning when their sailboat overturned in rough seas, she rowed to their rescue in her small skiff.

*Brilliant Beacons* is chock full of compelling stories, chronicling early efforts to fund and construct lighthouses across America, wartime raids, and the eventual organization of the United States Lighthouse Service.

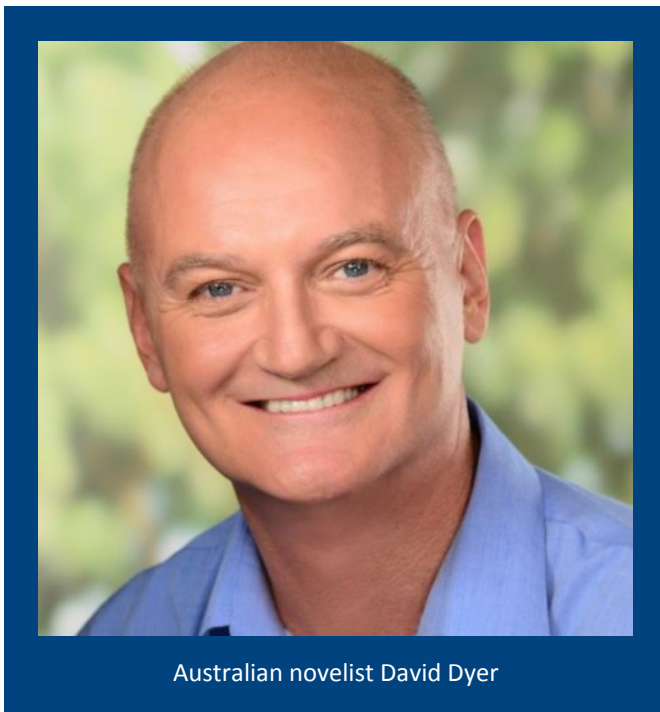
Sifting through old newspapers, lighthouse logs, journals and other archival material, Eric Dolin has compiled a shining account of America's life-saving beacons. Whether you are a lighthouse buff or a student of American history, this remarkable volume is to be savored again and again.



Detail from cover art for *The Midnight Watch* by David Dyer.

# DAVID DYER

by George Jepson



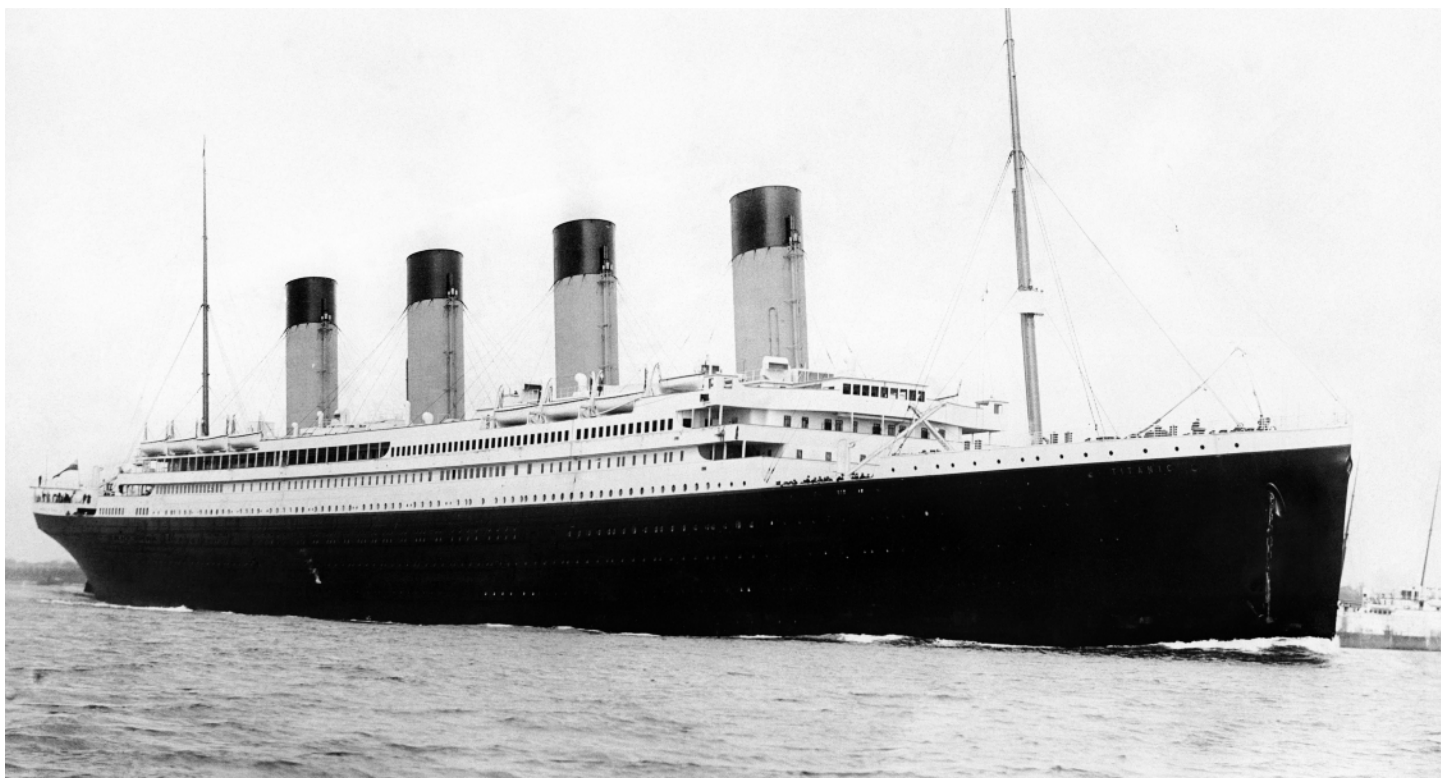
Australian novelist David Dyer

AUSTRALIAN NOVELIST DAVID DYER'S passion for the star-crossed liner RMS *Titanic* dates back to his boyhood in Shellharbour, a small coastal town New South Wales.

The saga of the majestic ship and her tragic demise in the North Atlantic on April 14, 1912, has pulled Dyer to various *Titanic*-related locations around the world in search of the facts and documentation encompassing the great drama performed at sea.

Dyer's professional career – as an officer – in the Australian merchant navy and as a litigation lawyer in the firm that represented the *Titanic*'s owners after the disaster has given him a rare insight into the ship's brief history, which still resonates a century later.

On April 5, St. Martin's Press will launch Dyer's debut novel, *The Midnight Watch* (see review on page 19). The plot approaches the *Titanic* disaster from the perspective of officers aboard the SS *Californian*, who ob-



PD-US – published in the US before 1923 and public domain in the US.

RMS *Titanic* departing South Hampton on April 10, 1912

served *Titanic*'s distress rockets, but did not respond.

Dyer shares the story behind *The Midnight Watch* and his life-long fascination with the ship in this interview:

**What originally sparked your interest in the events surrounding the *Titanic* tragedy?**

When I was a young child, perhaps four or five years old, I watched the classic *Titanic* film *A Night to Remember* on television at my grandmother's house. I was hooked. That ship! Its four tall funnels, slender hull and luxurious interiors fascinated me. I was enthralled too by the way the ship sank – the water inexorably filling one watertight compartment and then the next, the bow settling inch by inch into a black and calm sea. I still think the scene where the *Titanic*'s three mas-

sive propellers rear slowly out of the water is one of the most dramatic in all of cinema. That image says to me: the people on this ship are in deep trouble!

Throughout my childhood I drew pictures of the ship, wrote stories about it and made models of it.

**“In London I visited the same docks in Woolwich from which the *Californian* departed on Good Friday, 1912 . . .”**

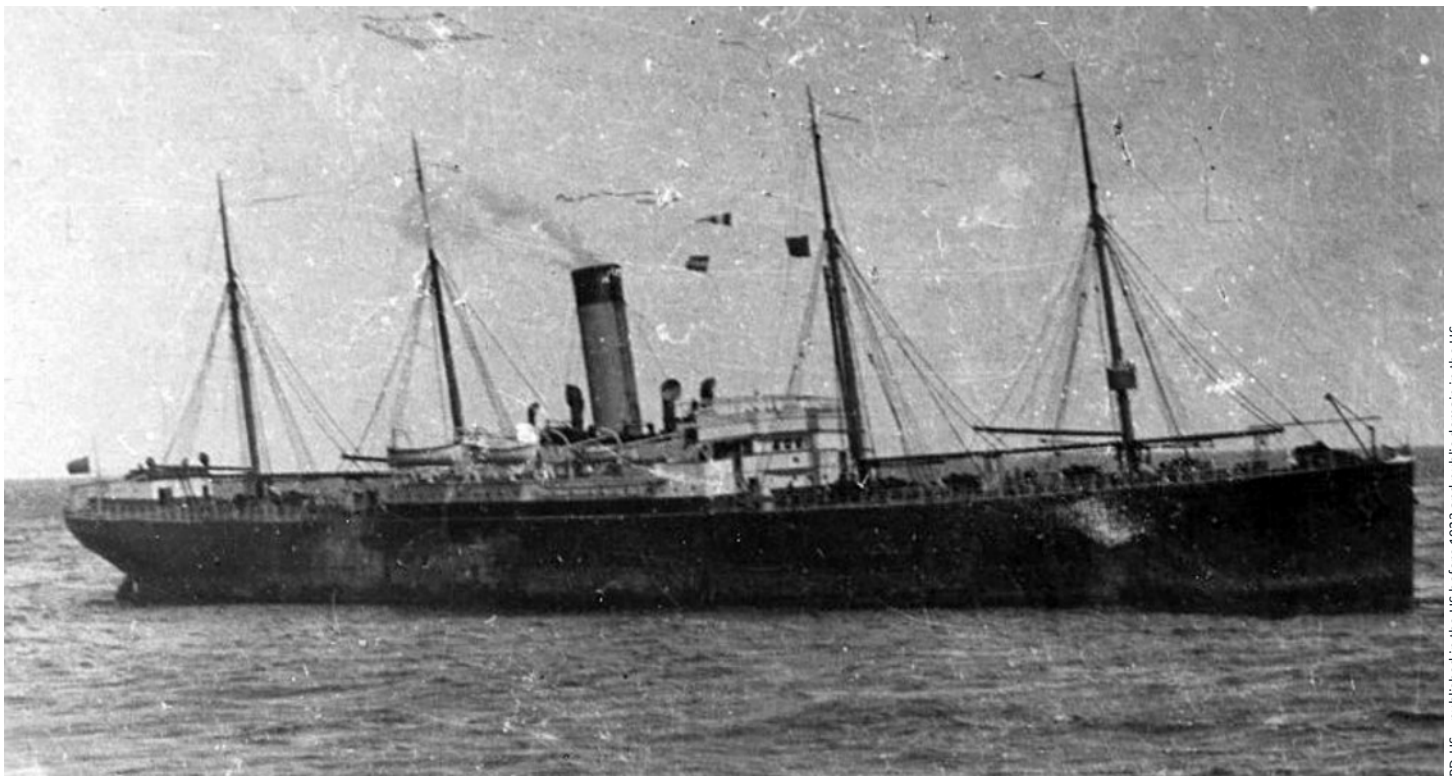
I would sink toy ships in bathtubs and swimming pools, with my pet mice acting as passengers. (They were always safely rescued in the end.) I tilted my bed by placing books under one side so that I could fall asleep imagining I was on the sinking liner.

As I grew older, I became in-

trigued by the human aspects of the *Titanic*'s story. It seemed to me that history and fate had conspired to put together all the elements of a great drama: the largest ship in the world on her maiden voyage, a passenger list of the rich and famous, a silent iceberg ready and waiting to punish hubris. The sea was a flat calm, like a giant stage, and the brilliantly-lit *Titanic* sank slowly, allowing time for tests, dramas and moral dilemmas to be played out on her decks. These are the features of the story that everyone knows: the ship's musicians showing their

courage by playing until the very end, the cowardly chairman of the line sneaking into a lifeboat, John Jacob Astor bidding farewell to his pregnant wife, the elderly Mrs Straus standing back with her husband rather than saving herself.

But what is less well known is that this piece of mid-Atlantic high



PD-US – published in the US before 1923 and public domain in the US.

The SS *Californian* was within site of RMS *Titanic*, as the liner slowly sank on April 14, 1912.

theatre did in fact have an audience. The *Titanic* was being watched, very carefully and thoughtfully, by the officers of a nearby ship. They could not hear the *Titanic*'s desperate radio messages – their own wireless operator was asleep – but they could see her distress rockets clearly enough. Eight rockets were fired and seen, but nothing was done. Why? What happened on that ship that night?

It was this puzzle that, in recent years, I set out to solve.

*What had you written prior to The Midnight Watch?*

Over the course of my life I have written many academic articles and essays – and hundreds of legal advices – but *The Midnight Watch* is my first novel. Or, to put it more accurately, my first *published* novel, because while in grade four I did write a six-page “novel” entitled,

unsurprisingly, *Titanic's Disaster*. In subsequent years at school I wrote other pieces about the *Titanic* – in fact, that's all I wrote about. In one notable case, I submitted a Geography assignment on ‘The Tundra,’ which gave one page of superficial information about tundra land-

**“Eventually, I was banned altogether from writing about the *Titanic*. So, of course, I turned to the *Lusitania* . . .”**

scapes in arctic regions, and then pointed out that arctic regions also produced icebergs! There then followed a twenty page appendix describing in dramatic detail what an iceberg did to the *Titanic*.

Eventually, I was banned altogether from writing about the *Titanic*. So, of course, I turned to the

*Lusitania*. Then the *Empress of Ireland* disaster. And then plane crashes.

*Was The Midnight Watch your first attempt at writing fiction?*

*The Midnight Watch* was my first serious attempt at writing fiction for publication. I had written some pieces during my English studies at university in Sydney, and had attended some creative writing workshops during my years in London, but nothing much came of it. The workshops were not

always useful. I found they often drifted on aimlessly while people recited poems about sitting in dark rooms with upturned bottles of vodka, or read stories about seedy encounters in supermarket car parks. I began several pieces, but never finished them. Demands of work and everyday living took up

too much energy. I later realized that to write – to *really* write – I would need very deliberately to carve out the time and space to do it.

Your interest in the *Titanic* tragedy covered many years. At what point did you decide to write your novel?

In the late 1990s, while working at the London legal practice Hill Taylor Dickinson (whose parent firm, coincidentally, represented the *Titanic*'s owners back in 1912), I began to develop an interest in "the *Californian* incident," the story of the ship that saw the *Titanic*'s distress rockets, but did not go to the rescue. This interest quickly became an obsession, and the more I researched, the more puzzled I became. Herbert Stone, the officer on the *Californian*'s bridge who saw the rockets, was reliable, diligent and sober. Captain Lord, who was woken by Stone and told about the rockets, was a young and capable commander, one of his company's very best. So why did they do nothing? Eventually I discovered that the story of the *Californian* was one of complex psychologies, tragic errors and terrible guilt.

Once you decided to write *The Midnight Watch*, how did you proceed to develop your storyline? Was additional research required beyond what you already knew?

My decision to write a book about the *Californian* affair was the beginning, not the end, of a very long research journey. I had already read

many books and much of the transcript of the American and British inquiries, but I knew I needed to do more. To achieve what Australian author Kristel Thornell calls "narrative telepathy" with Captain Lord, Herbert Stone and the other historical figures of the story, I had to go where they had gone, and see what they had seen. In London I visited the same docks in Woolwich from which the *Californian* departed on Good Friday, 1912; in Liverpool, I walked the streets that Captain Lord and Herbert Stone had walked and visited the addresses where they had lived. Some buildings from 1912 still remained, including the pretty clubhouse of the Wallasey

**"My decision to write a book about the *Californian* affair was the beginning, not the end, of a very long research journey."**

Golf Club, of which Lord was a member (but "only for the game," he once said, "not its social side"). I wondered what it had been like for Lord to play golf with men who knew what the American and British inquiries had said about him: that he could have saved everyone who died on the *Titanic*. How could he have lived with the shame and guilt of it all?

In Boston I took a tour of the harbor and saw the wharves where Captain Lord's ship arrived only days after the *Titanic* had sunk, and where he and his men faced the inquisitive Boston press. In New York, I visited the building at No. 9 Broadway, which once housed the

White Star offices, and I imagined Philip Franklin, vice president of the line, standing on its steps to announce to the world that the mighty *Titanic* had sunk.

In all of these places I visited libraries and searched newspaper archives, and slowly, surely I began to arrive at the truth.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly of all, I traveled to the *Titanic* wreck site itself on the Fred Olsen liner *Balmoral*. At 2:20 AM on 15 April 2012, one hundred years to the minute after the *Titanic* sank, I stared over the side of our ship into the water. The wreck was directly beneath me, and the sea was as calm as it had been on the

night of the disaster. The water was black and cold, it was at that moment that I truly understood what was at stake in the *Californian*'s story. Fifteen hundred people froze to death in this water, including more than fifty children. It must have been terrifying. And they all died within sight of the lights of the *Californian*, tantalizingly close.

At the end of all this research I had a mountain of material. How to arrange it all? How to thread it through with a coherent and compelling narrative? In the end my solution was to invent a narrator to act as my proxy in the novel: a newspaper man who encounters the *Californian*'s men in Boston and knows that something strange lurks behind their blank faces. This allowed me to structure my material as a detective story in which, as Ian McEwan puts it in one of my favorite novels (*Atonement*), "like policemen in a search team, we go on hands and knees and crawl toward

the truth.”

**Do you consider yourself a historian or writer first?**

I consider myself a writer first, I guess. I have a doctorate in the creative arts, but no formal academic training in history. It would be wrong to call myself a historian, although I do know quite a bit about the *Titanic*.

**Do you have a regular writing routine? Are you a rapid writer?**

A regular writing routine? If only! I am a very undisciplined writer. When I was working on *The Midnight Watch* I would sometimes write two thousand words a day or more; but at other times I would write nothing for weeks. YouTube is my great enemy: it's very difficult to do the hard work of writing when funny cats, crashing cars, news bloopers and 747 takeoffs are only a click away.

My consolation is that I am a fast typist. During long sea voyages I taught myself to touch type, and I am very glad I did. When ideas come, my fingers fly!

**Your prose is extremely distinctive, with a lyrical quality. Was it difficult finding your writing voice?**

Finding the right narrative voice was one of the key challenges of this whole project. Because I knew so many facts about the *Californian* incident, I found it difficult to resist the temptation to show off that knowledge in my novel. The result was not pretty. The story drowned

in detail. It was only when I learned the difficult art of leaving things out – and freeing myself from the facts – that I found an effective writing voice.

I also learned another important lesson: have faith in your reader. You don't have to spell everything out. Readers are clever: they can deduce things for themselves and reach their own conclusions. They soon tire of an author who is forever interpreting things for them and bossing them about.

**Did you bounce your manuscript draft off anyone as you wrote?**

As I was writing *The Midnight*

**“Even though we live in a digital age I love paper books . . . I have an extensive library of *Titanic*-related books . . .”**

*Watch* I was lucky enough to have input from two wonderful Australian writers, Delia Falconer and Debra Adelaide. I bounced my manuscript off them often, and it would sometimes come back in a very different shape indeed.

I also showed early drafts to friends, and discovered that often Friend A disliked the very thing that Friend B loved the most. There was much disagreement, for example, about the novel's controversial penultimate chapter. All I could do was listen carefully to all advice given, and then make a decision based on my own artistic vision and judgment.

**Did you rewrite sections of your manuscript as your work proceeded?**

Yes. Absolutely. Almost every sentence of *The Midnight Watch* has been revised and rewritten. And some large parts of early drafts have been thrown out altogether. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch famously advised authors to “murder their darlings,” Well, I have murdered entire chapters. For example, I wrote some early chapters about Philip Franklin, vice-president of the International Mercantile Marine, owners of the *Titanic*. They were based on meticulous research and were, no doubt, fascinating.

But they didn't fit the overall narrative arc so they had to go. Goodbye darlings!

**Which do you enjoy more, research or writing?**

I found the research easier than the writing, but I enjoyed the writing more. I have lots of experience in gathering information and facts, but yoking that data into an interesting narrative was a new and difficult challenge. It was in the actual writing of the story that I took material that in a sense belonged to everyone and transformed it into something uniquely my own.

**Do you have a personal research library?**

I do. Even though we live in a digital age I love my paper books! I have seven or eight bookshelves containing a wide range of fiction and non-fiction titles. And, of course, I have an extensive library of

*Titanic*-related books and materials which I have accumulated over a lifetime. Two highlights of this collection are a first edition of Marshall Everett's *Story of the Wreck of the Titanic*, published within months of the disaster, and a first edition of *Titanic and Other Ships* by Charles Lightoller, second officer of the *Titanic*.

Were you able to set your manuscript aside while you were working on it or was it always in your subconscious?

During the years I was researching and writing *The Midnight Watch*, I was never able to put the project wholly to one side. It always ticked away softly in the deep part of my brain, and ideas would sometimes pop to the surface when I least expected it. These ideas could vanish as quickly as they appeared, so I often found myself quickly tapping thoughts into my mobile phone.

How much did your experience as a ship's officer and maritime lawyer contribute to the development of *The Midnight Watch*?

My four years of training at the Australian Maritime College and my experience as a cadet and ship's officer in the Australian merchant navy were invaluable in the writing of *The Midnight Watch*. I was lucky enough to be one of the last year groups to be taught the art of mid-ocean navigation with sextant, compass and trigonometric tables. No GPS! This arcane knowledge was essential in understanding the navi-

gational elements of the *Californian* story, and one of my great frustrations is reading work by authors who clearly don't understand the technical aspects of ship operations and navigation. In my experience, those who argue that the *Californian* did not see the *Titanic* (the "Lordites") tend to misunderstand the nature of mid-ocean position fixing.

My work as a litigation lawyer was useful too: it helped me to interpret and be properly skeptical about the evidence given by key witnesses at the British and American inquiries. I have much experience listening to the testimony of people who have a very clear motive

“... my experience as a cadet and ship's officer in the Australian merchant navy were invaluable in the writing ...”

to lie, and sometimes their evasive, desperate tactics can be a sad spectacle. Did Captain Lord think the rocket-firing ship seen by his second officer was the *Titanic*? Absolutely not, he says on oath. With fifteen hundred ghosts looking for someone to blame, how could he say otherwise?

Is there a second novel in your immediate future?

Hmmm. Interesting question! I do have some thoughts for a second novel, but they are very undeveloped at this stage. I am being pulled in two very different directions – a non-fiction account of a recent

high-profile maritime accident, or a fictional, non-historical novel. After the detailed research of *The Midnight Watch*, I would love to not have to worry about facts!

What other topics interest you from an author's standpoint?

I hate to admit it, but I am also fascinated by aviation disasters. One in particular: the Air New Zealand DC-10 crash into Mount Erebus of 1979. It is, in my opinion, the most fascinating air accident of all time. I would love to write a book about it.

What sort of reader were you as a boy? Are there childhood books and authors that have remained with you over the years?

I was an avid reader as a boy. I loved adventure novels (Enid Blyton), detective novels (*Agaton Sax*, *Alfred Hitchcock and the Three Investigators*, Agatha Christie) and books about ships, planes and space travel. One book in particular which has stayed with me from my very earliest years is Mae and Ira Freeman's *You Will Go to the Moon*, written ten years before Apollo 11. (I, of course, read it many years after it was published!) Unusually, it is written in second person future tense (“You will go . . .”) which creates a sense of certainty in a human future in space. The book told me I would take off in a rocket, visit a space station, and live in a house on the moon. At the time, I believed it. But none of these things have come to pass, of course, which I think is just a little bit sad.

Do you read only books or articles that are relevant to your work? Do you read fiction?

I love fiction! I have read it all my life. In recent years, reading fiction has also been my work, because I have been teaching English at a high school in Sydney.

What is the last book you read for enjoyment?

Strangely, a book entitled *Kill Your Friends* by John Niven. It is one of the most violent, politically incorrect, profanity-strewn books I have ever read. I loved it! Ironically, it was loaned to me by a good friend. Perhaps he was trying to tell me something. Either way, I found it to be an effective antidote to the sugary good will and festive spirit of the Christmas holiday season.

Who are writers you most admire?

I love the novels of Henry James. I think *The Golden Bowl* is an extraordinary work. It requires commitment early on, but then the suspense slowly grows and before you know it you're hooked. It is like a game of chess with only four pieces, and the final checkmate is breathtaking.

My other favorite authors include George Eliot, William Somerset Maugham and Ian McEwan. I also enjoy reading marine fiction: Herman Melville, Nicholas Monsarrat, C. S. Forester and Brian Calhoun.

What do you plan to read next?

I have just taken from my shelf Anthony Doerr's *All the Light We Cannot See*. *The Times* says it's "sublime." *The Guardian* says it's "magnificent." I think I'm going to enjoy it.

Are there books in your library that you find yourself returning to again and again?

Yes: the novels of P. G. Wodehouse (which cheer me when I'm down), Agatha Christie (which are like mathematical puzzles, which I love) and Henry James (which, I think, are the best novels in the English language). And, strangely, Emily Post's *Etiquette* 1959 edition, which

"I love the novels of Henry James . . . I also enjoy reading marine fiction: Herman Melville, Nicholas Monsarrat . . ."

has useful advice even in these days of Facebook and Twitter. For instance, one should not go window shopping from one's car by driving it slowly along a crowded street.)

Oh, and Elmore Leonard's *10 Rules of Writing*, which, in my humble opinion, is probably the only guidebook a writer needs.

Name three historical figures, living or dead, whom you would enjoy chatting with over dinner.

I am tempted to say Herbert Stone, Captain Lord, and Captain Smith of the *Titanic*. ("Captain Smith, how did you feel when you saw a ship on the horizon, fired distress

rockets, but it didn't come?")

But to move away from the *Titanic*, I would love to have dinner with Christopher Hitchens, because at dinners he was known for always suggesting a second bottle of wine, and then a third, in order to induce a "Feast of Reason and Flow of Soul" (to quote Hitchens quoting Wodehouse quoting Pope); Charlotte Bronte, because she was a real firecracker, and I'd love to hear her speak to Hitchens in the same mode that Jane Eyre spoke to Rochester; and Eugene Cernan, the last man on the moon, because he spent a whole *three days* on the moon (as opposed to Neil Armstrong's three hours), and that experience surely would be worthy of an anecdote or two. What an interesting gathering that would be.

Is there anything else you would like to say to our readers?

Only that I am grateful to *Quarterdeck* for this opportunity to ramble on about topics that fascinate me; and that that I hope *Quarterdeck's* readers, if they choose to embark on *The Midnight Watch*, enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it. It is a sad story, but I hope within its pages can be found positive ideas about the power of forgiveness and the strength of the human spirit.

Visit David Dyer on Facebook.

# A NIGHT REMEMBERED

by George Jepson

As midnight approached on April 14, 1912, the magnificent liner RMS *Titanic* rushed through the icy North Atlantic darkness at 22½ knots.

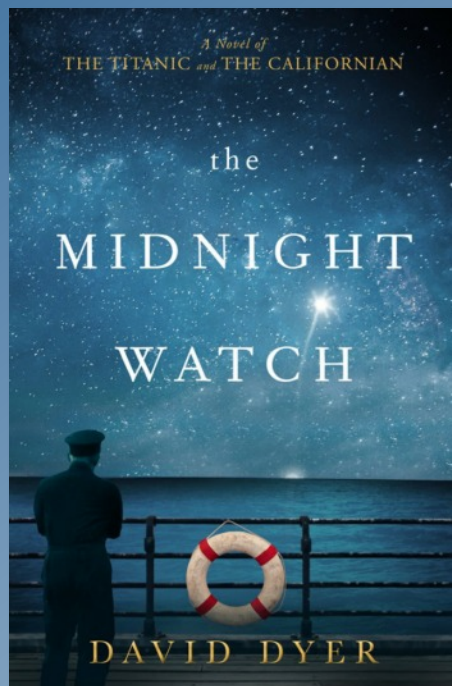
Within minutes, the great ship struck an iceberg. The collision set in motion an epic and tragic drama played out by 2,224 souls aboard the vessel, 1,500 of whom would perish in the freezing sea.

Ten miles away, another ship, the SS *Californian*, bound from London to Boston, sat idly in the same ice field as *Titanic*, waiting for daylight before proceeding through the treacherous waters.

Aboard the *Californian* about 11:10 p.m., Third Officer Charles Groves observed a ship's lights moving on the horizon. Thirty minutes later he looked on as the nameless vessel stopped abruptly and seemed to extinguish her lights. Groves immediately notified *Californian's* master, Captain Stanley Lord, and was told to contact the ship by Morse lamp.

The anonymous ship was the *Titanic*, which over the next two hours launched eight distress rockets that were seen aboard the *Californian*. Why then did she not steam to the rescue, preventing the horrific loss of life?

In *The Midnight Watch*, Australian author David Dyer, drawing on years of detailed research, presents a powerful fictional account of *Californian's* failure to respond to *Titanic's* distress signals.



## THE MIDNIGHT WATCH

St. Martin's Press, \$26.99,

U.S. Hardback /

\$12.99, Kindle and NOOK

The story is told through the eyes of crewmen aboard the *Californian*, the family of third-class passengers lost in the disaster, as well as an intrepid Boston journalist, John Steadman, who refuses to end his investigation into the tragedy until the unvarnished truth is known.

As early news reaches America that *Titanic* has struck ice and is seriously damaged, Steadman travels from Boston to New York by rail to learn the latest straight from the horse's mouth – Philip Franklin, then in charge of the White Star Line office.

Learning that *Titanic* has indeed sunk, with great loss of life, and that a mystery ship may have stood by and ignored the white distress rockets, Steadman is determined to find out why, launching a quest that ends nearly a half century later in the living room of Captain Stanley Lord in Wallaby, England.

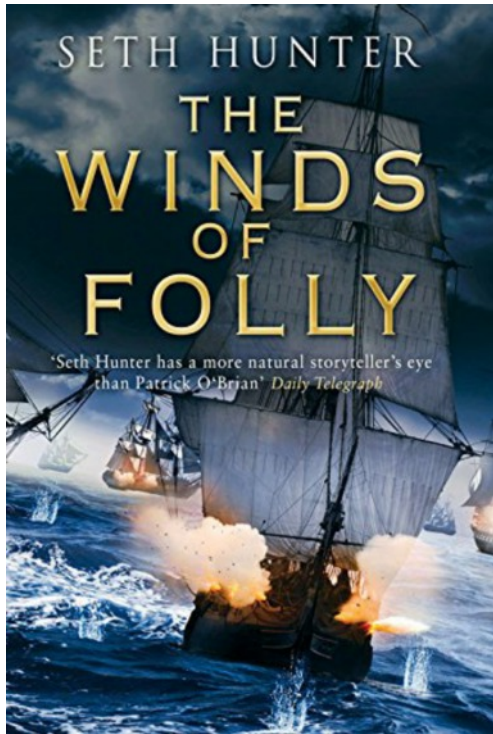
David's Dyer's passion for the true story behind the *Titanic* and *Californian* affair underlies a triumphant debut novel, tying historical fact and characters together with a plausible fictional premise.

That *Californian* lay idle but a few miles away is a fact. That Third Officer Groves alerted Captain Lord to the nameless ship's presence is fact. And that Second Officer Herbert Stone informed Lord of the distress rockets is fact.

What is not known is why Lord did not order *Californian* to *Titanic's* rescue, which could have saved hundred of lives. The answer, largely unresolved, is left to history, but Dyer offers a believable scenario as to how this could have happened.

The characters – real and imagined – speak in language that reflects the early twentieth century. Crisp, spare prose, often with a lyrical quality, creates a pace that left us begging for more information with each succeeding chapter.

*The Midnight Watch* is simply one of the most engaging historical novels to come along in many years.

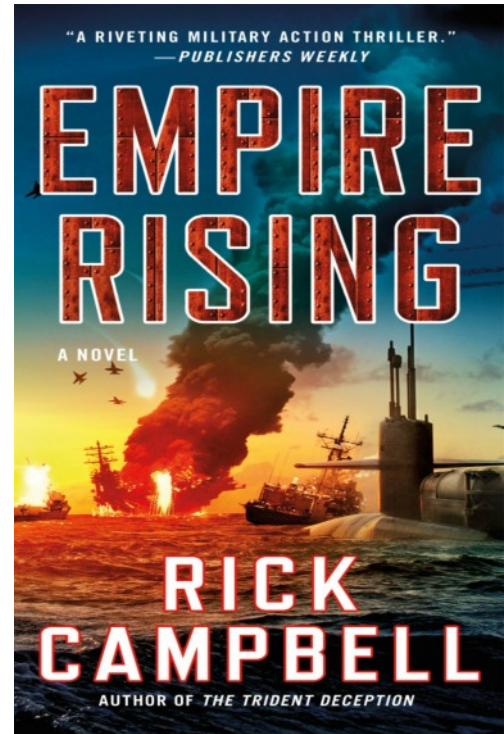


April

## The Winds of Folly

by Seth Hunter

(McBooks Press, \$18.95, U.S. Trade Paperback / **\$9.99, Kindle and NOOK**) This is a compelling new historical naval adventure from a master of maritime storytelling. 1796: Nathan Peake, captain of the frigate *Unicorn* is sent with a small squadron into the Adriatic to help bring Venice into an Italian alliance with Britain against the French. He establishes a British naval presence, harrying the French corsairs that swarm out of Ancona in Italy and confronts the politics of “intrigue, poison and the stiletto” in Venice, but learns that Bonaparte is negotiating a peace deal with the Austrians – Britain’s only remaining ally. Worse, the Spanish are about to ally with the French. Nathan returns to the *Unicorn* and rejoins Nelson for the decisive Battle of St. Vincent against the entire Spanish fleet.



Available Now

## Empire Rising

by Rick Campbell

(St. Martin’s Press, \$25.99, U.S. Hardback / **\$12.99, Kindle and NOOK**) China launches a swift and deadly attack on Taiwan. But it’s only the first move in a much deadlier game. The problem is that China’s limited supply of oil is threatening to derail its economic growth and prosperity. Having failed to win access to a greater supply diplomatically, Chinese party secretary, Xiang Chenglei sets his backup plan in motion. And what is war, but diplomacy by other means? When Taiwan is invaded, the U.S. Pacific Fleet fails to repel the invading Chinese forces. It falls to an unlikely alliance of three people to stop this incursion and prevent an all-but-in-avoidable global war. National Security Advisor Christine O’Connor has critical information, but she’s trapped in Beijing; Captain Murray Wilson, commanding officer of the submarine USS *Michigan* must somehow infiltrate the Chinese submarine blockade; and Navy SEAL Jake Harrison must lead a strike team into the most hostile of territories with only hours to implement the

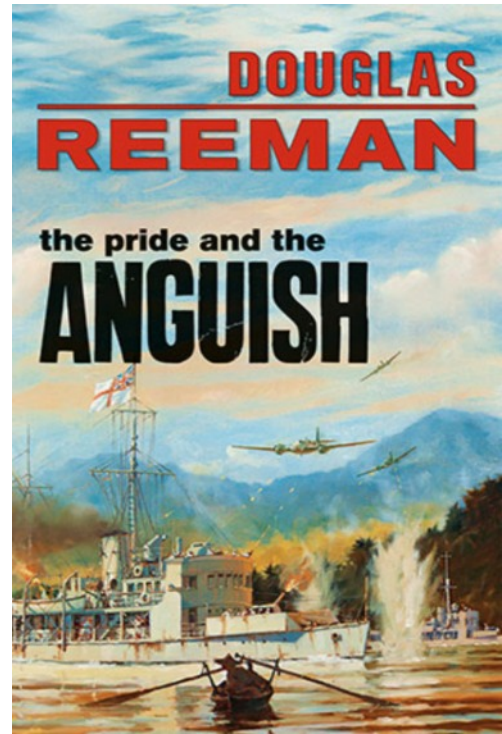


Available Now

## Britannia's Spartan

by Antoine Vanner

(Old Salt Press, \$13.50, U.S. Trade Paperback / \$3.49, Kindle) This is the fourth volume of the Dawlish Chronicles. It is 1882 and Captain Nicholas Dawlish has just taken command of the Royal Navy's newest cruiser, HMS *Leonidas*. Her voyage to the Far East is to be a peaceful venture, a test of this innovative vessel's engines and boilers. As *Leonidas* arrives in Hong Kong, Dawlish has no forewarning of the nightmare of riot, treachery, massacre, and battle that he and his crew will encounter. A new balance of power is emerging in the Far East. Imperial China, weak and corrupt, is challenged by a rapidly modernizing Japan, while Russia threatens both from the north. They all need to control Korea, a kingdom frozen in time and reluctant to emerge from centuries of isolation. British interests, too, are at stake, and treading a safe path between the rival powers is vital, but perhaps impossible. Dawlish finds himself a critical player in a complex political powder keg against the background of real historical events.

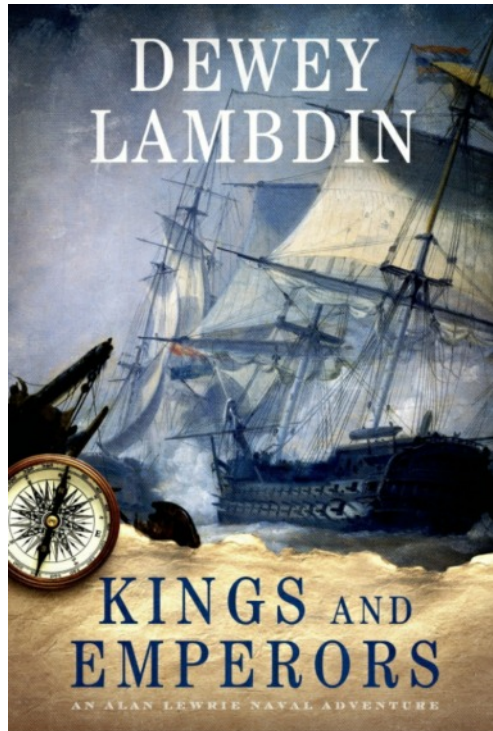


April

## The Pride and the Anguish

by Douglas Reeman

(McBooks Press, \$18.95, U.S. Trade Paperback) Singapore, November, 1941 . . . They called it the "Gibraltar of the Far East" – a British rock that could not be taken. But suddenly, in a lightning blow, Singapore may be defeated. Call it incompetence or call it false pride. It doesn't really matter. Just as the warplanes of the Rising Sun take command of the skies. Lieutenant Ralph Trewin, who was a proud recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross, arrives at Singapore as second-in-command of the gun boat HMS *Porcupine*. Is it too late to overcome the ignorance and blind optimism he finds in Singapore?

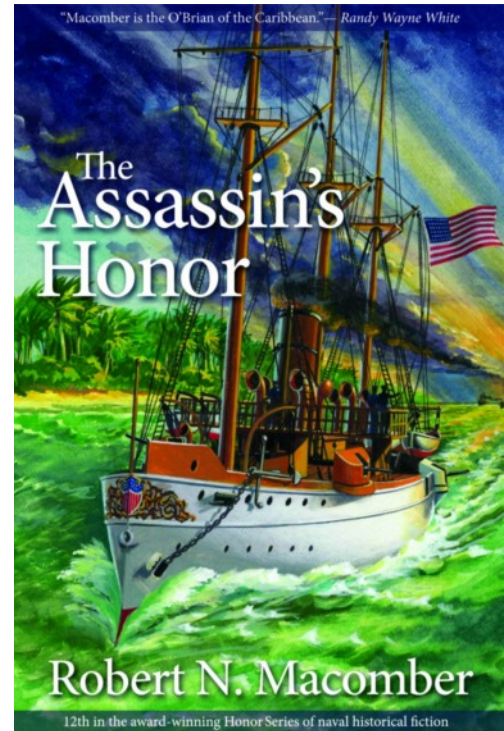


Available Now

## Kings and Emperors

by Dewey Lambdin

(Thomas Dunne Books, \$17.99, U.S. Trade Paperback / \$9.99, Kindle and NOOK) Captain Alan Lewrie, Royal Navy, is still in Gibraltar, his raids along the coast of southern Spain shot to a halt. He is reduced to commanding a clutch of harbor defense gunboats in the bay while his ship, HMS *Sapphire*, slowly grounds herself on a reef of beef bones! Until Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Portugal and his march into Spain change everything, freeing *Sapphire* to roam against the king's enemies once more! As kings are overthrown and popular uprisings break out across Spain, Lewrie's right back in the action, ferrying weapons to arm Spanish patriots, scouting the impregnable fort of Ceuta, escorting the advance units of British expeditionary armies to aid the Spanish, and even going ashore to witness the first battles between Sir Arthur Wellesley, later the Duke of Wellington, and Napoleon's best marshals, as the long Peninsular War that broke Imperial France begins to unfold.

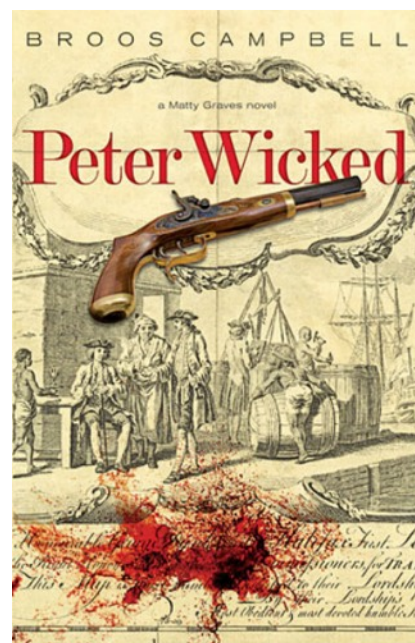
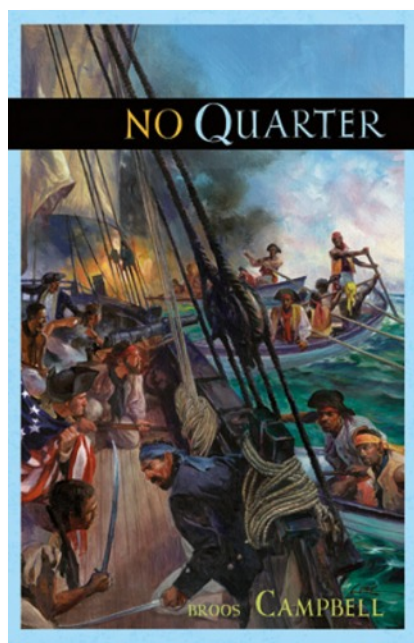


Available Now

## The Assassin's Honor

by Robert N. Macomber

(Pineapple Press, \$26.95, U.S. Hardback / \$9.99, Kindle / \$9.49, NOOK) Commander Peter Wake, USN, is finally happy. In command of a newly commissioned light cruiser in the Caribbean, he is back at sea where all real sailors belong. All his years of espionage in the more sordid corners of the world are over. Ashore, he has the sincere love of a beautiful, fascinating, exotic woman. After years as a lonely widower, he is considering marriage. Everything changes when a man is found murdered aboard a steamer at Key West. Summoned to investigate, Wake uses his naval intelligence skills to decipher the strange clues left behind and discovers that an important man will be assassinated by a foreign team of killers in eight days. But who, where, and why? The clues lead him on a desperate voyage to save the man and stop a war. Germans in Mexico, Cuban rebels in Key West, and Spanish counter-intelligence agents in Tampa, are all part of the equation he must solve. But nothing is as it seems.



## THE MATTY GRAVES NOVELS

by Broos Campbell

### 1 - NO QUARTER

(McBooks Press, \$23.95, U.S. Hardback / \$16.95, U.S. trade paperback / \$9.99, Kindle / \$9.49, NOOK) This first book in the series introduces Matty Graves, midshipman in the early years of the United States Navy. In 1799, the young U.S. Navy faces France in an undeclared Quasi-War for the Caribbean. Matty Graves is caught up in escalating violence as he serves aboard the *Rattle-Snake* under his drunken cousin, Billy. Matty already knows how to handle the sails and fight a ship. Now, with the sarcastic Lieutenant Peter Wicked as his mentor and nemesis, he faces the ironies of a war where telling friend from foe is no mean trick.

### 2 - THE WAR OF KNIVES

(McBooks Press, \$23.95, US Hardback)

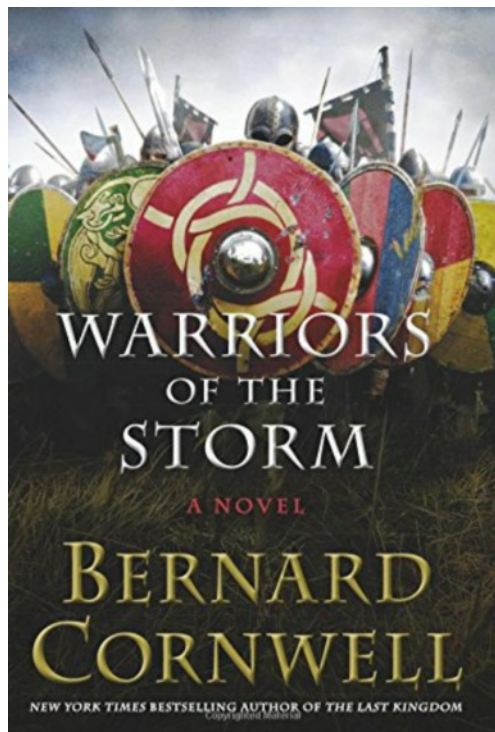
( \$7.99, Kindle / \$9.49, NOOK). When Matty Graves, acting lieutenant in the newly formed U.S. Navy, agrees to become a spy in the French colony of Saint-Domingue, he plunges headlong into a brutal world of betrayal and double-cross beyond anything he's ever known. At first the bloody civil war between former slaves and their mixed-race overseers simply offers a way to test himself and a means to purge his guilt over the death of his former captain. But soon Matty is drawn into the heart of the conflict when he meets the flamboyant Juge and the mysterious Grandfather Chatterbox – and faces an interrogation by the brutal colonel known as “The Whip.” White supremacists, cutthroat patriots and desperate rebels vie for control in the colonial world's richest island. No one is what

he seems, and Matty must sort out the twisted lies from the cold, hard truth – and keep himself alive long enough to learn from his mistakes.

### 3 - PETER WICKED

(McBooks Press, \$23.95, U.S. Hardback / \$7.99, Kindle / \$9.49, NOOK) Lieutenant Matty Graves is still recovering from his ordeal during the slave rebellion in the French colony of Saint Domingue when he is ordered to Washington to answer questions about the death of his former captain. On home soil he must deal with the mystery surrounding his birth, as well as the attractions of his best friend's sister. Offered a command of his own, he seizes the opportunity to make a name and fortune for himself – even if it means destroying those closest to him.

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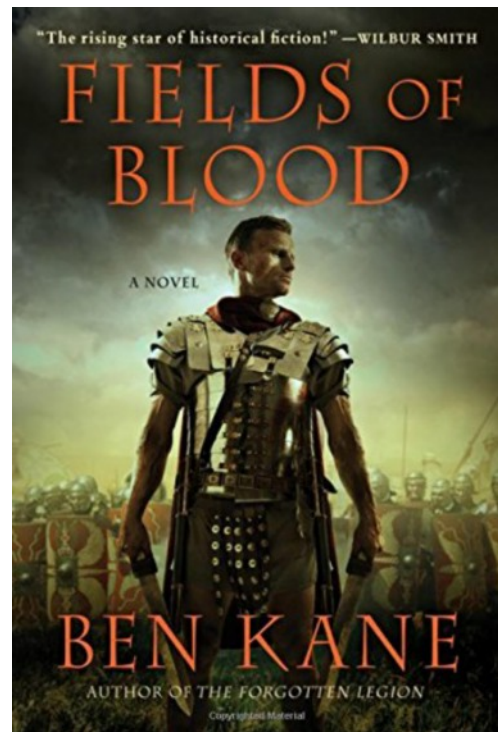


Available Now

### Warriors of the Storm

by Bernard Cornwell

(Harper, \$27.99, U.S. Hardback / **\$14.99, Kindle**) A fragile peace reigns in Wessex, Mercia and East Anglia. King Alfred's son, Edward, and formidable daughter, Aethelflaed, rule the kingdoms. But all around the restless Northmen, eyeing the rich lands and wealthy churches, are mounting raids. Uhtred of Bebbanburg, the kingdoms' greatest warrior, controls northern Mercia from the strongly fortified city of Chester. But forces are gathering against him. Northmen allied to the Irish, led by the fierce warrior, Ragnall Ivarson, are soon joined by the Northumbrians, and their strength could prove overwhelming. Despite the gathering threat, both Edward and Aethelflaed are reluctant to move out of the safety of their fortifications. But who can be trusted? In the struggle between family and loyalty, between personal ambition and political commitment, there will be no easy path. But a man with a warrior's courage may be able to find it.

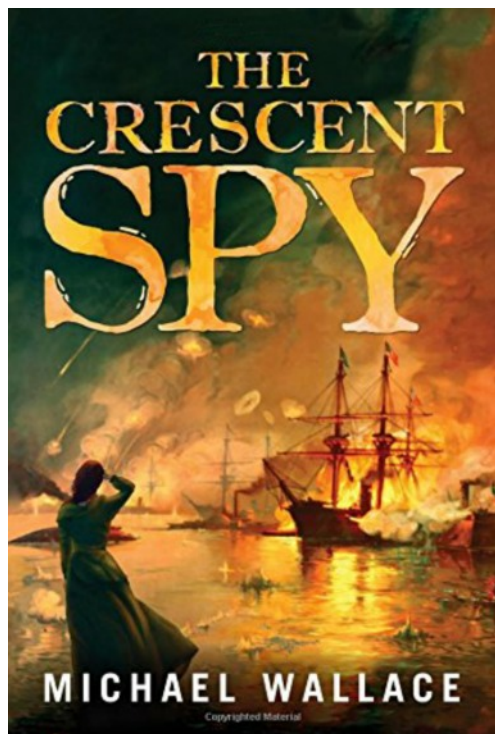


Available Now

### Fields of Blood

by Ben Kane

(St. Martin's Griffin, \$17.99, U.S. Trade Paperback / **\$9.99, Kindle and NOOK**) Hannibal's campaign to defeat Rome continues. Having brought his army safely over the Alps in winter, he now marches south to confront the enemy. With him is a young soldier, Hanno. Like his general, Hanno burns to vanquish Rome. Facing Hanno is his former friend, Quintus, whom Hanno met while in Roman captivity. A bitter quarrel with his father led Quintus to join the Roman infantry under an assumed name. Among his legionaries, he finds that his enemies are not just the Carthaginians, but men of his own side. A stealthy game of cat and mouse is being played, with Hannibal seeking to fight, and Rome's generals avoiding battle. But battle cannot be delayed for much longer. Eventually, the two armies meet under a fierce summer sun in August in the south of Italy. The place is Cannae – the fields of blood. The encounter will go down in history as one of the bloodiest battles ever fought.



Available Now

### The Crescent Spy

by Michael Wallace

(Lake Union Publishing, \$24.95, U.S. Hardback / \$14.95, U.S. Trade Paperback / \$4.99, Kindle / \$9.99, NOOK) Writing under a man's name, Josephine Breaux is the finest reporter at Washington's *Morning Clarion*. Using her wit and charm, she never fails to get the scoop on the latest Union *and* Confederate activities. But when a rival paper reveals her true identity, accusations of treason fly. Despite her claims of loyalty to the Union, she is arrested as a spy and traitor. To Josephine's surprise, she's whisked away to the White House, where she learns that President Lincoln himself wishes to use her cunning and skill for a secret mission in New Orleans that could hasten the end of the war. For Josephine, though, this mission threatens to open old wounds and expose dangerous secrets. In the middle of the most violent conflict the country has ever seen, can one woman overcome the treacherous secrets of her past in order to secure her nation's future?



Available Now

### The White Ghost

by James R. Benn

(SOHO Crime, \$26.95, U.S. Hardback / \$15.95, U.S. Trade Paperback / \$12.99, Kindle / \$15.49, Nook) 1943 . . . In the midst of the Solomon Islands campaign, Lieutenant Billy Boyle is sent by the powerful Kennedy family to investigate a murder in which Jack Kennedy has been implicated. The victim is a native coastwatcher, an allied intelligence operative, whom Kennedy discovered on the island of Tulagi with his head bashed in. Kennedy was recovering in the Navy hospital on the island after the sinking of his motor torpedo boat. The military hasn't decided whether to court-martial him for losing the boat. The last thing the Kennedys want is a murder charge hanging over his head. Billy knows firsthand that he shouldn't trust Jack: the man is a charmer, a womanizer, and, when it suits his needs, a liar. But would he kill someone in cold blood? And if so, why? The first murder is followed by two more. To find the killer, Billy must sort through a tangled, shifting web of motives and identities.

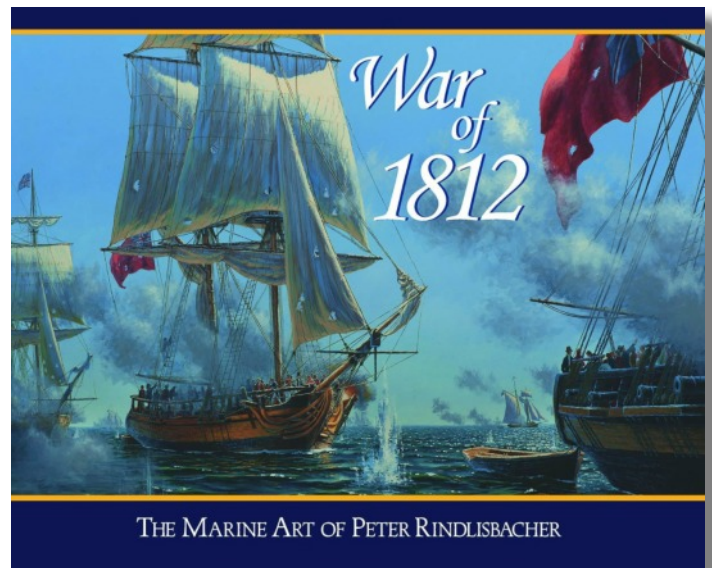


Available Now

### In Full Glory Reflected

by Ralph E. Eshelman and Burton K. Kummerow

(Maryland Historical Society, \$17.99, U.S. Paperback)  
All but forgotten by Americans, the War of 1812 (1812–1815) was a dramatic watershed for the young Republic of the United States. Ill-prepared to fight the powerful English nation, the U.S. struggled through three years of conflict, but emerged more unified with new patriotic symbols like the “Star-Spangled Banner.” Much of the fighting occurred in the Chesapeake region. *In Full Glory Reflected* uncovers gripping stories of devastating raids, heroic defense, gallant privateers, fugitive slaves, and threatened lands. The historic tales unfold with a lively narrative, well over a hundred vivid illustrations, and clear maps to follow the action. In addition, a travel section provides a rich guide for adventurers who want to step back 200 years and explore the tidewater world where the war was fought. *In Full Glory Reflected* is an enchanting invitation to travel the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail and discover the amazing world of our ancestors.

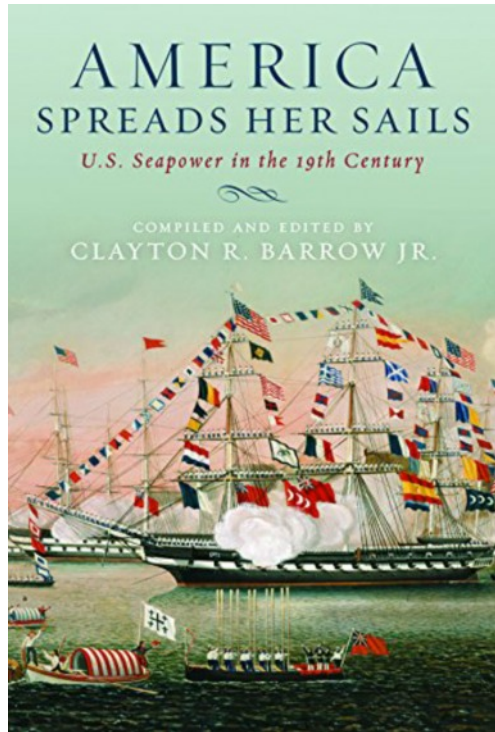


Available Now

### War of 1812

by Peter Rindlesbacher

(Quarry Press, \$39.95, U.S. Hardback) Marine and maritime paintings portraying battles between the British and American navies on the Great Lakes during the War of 1812-1814. This book marks the sesquicentennial of the War of 1812 by reproducing marine artist Peter Rindlisbacher’s celebrated paintings. Museums and historic sites in the U.S. and Canada have purchased many of his paintings, while print editions of his work are sold as fund raisers for historic groups.

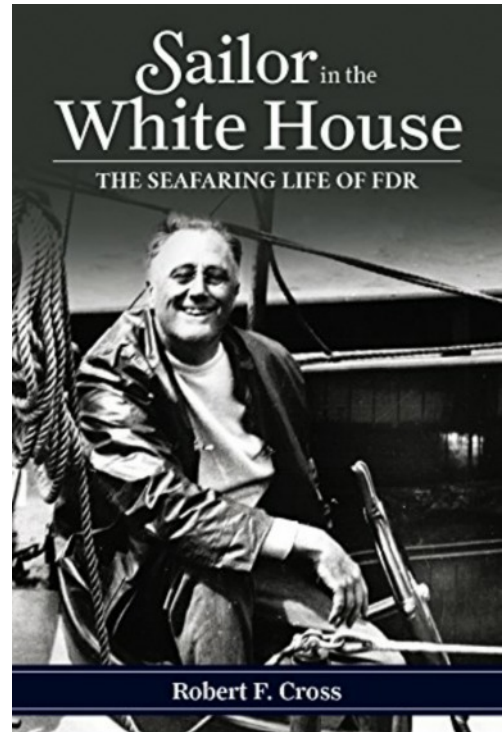


Available Now

## America Spreads Her Sails

by Clayton R. Barrow, Jr.

(*Naval Institute Press, \$29.95, U.S. Paperback*) / **\$20.99, Kindle / \$17.49, NOOK** In this new paperback edition of *America Spreads Her Sails*, fourteen writers and historians demonstrate how American men and goods in American-made ships moved out over Alfred Thayer Mahan's "broad common," the sea, to extend the country's commerce, power, political influence, and culture. Captain Thomas Catesby Jones, Lieutenant John "Mad Jack" Percival, and Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry are among some of the colorful names that many will recognize. They are all gone now, these strong men and their stout ships, who carried their country's colors up to the Northern Lights, down to the Antarctic's stillness, over the cutting coral, across the Roaring Forties, and into the great ports and the backwaters of the world. The results of their adventures, however, are not forgotten, but instead set the stage for America to indisputably become the dominant world power of the past century.



Now Available

## Sailor in the White House

by Robert F. Cross

(*Naval Institute Press, \$21.95, U.S. Trade Paperback* / **\$11.99, Kindle / \$16.99, NOOK**) Now available in paperback, Robert F. Cross's *Sailor in the White House* remains one of the most interesting and intimate books about Franklin D. Roosevelt. Secret Service agents, family, and old sailing pals share stories about their days on the water with America's greatest seafaring president. The author argues that the skills required to be a good sailor are the same skills that made FDR a successful politician: the ability to alter courses, make compromises, and shift positions as the situation warrants. This perspective on Roosevelt shows how his love of the sea shaped his presidency, and its unique look remains refreshing even today.

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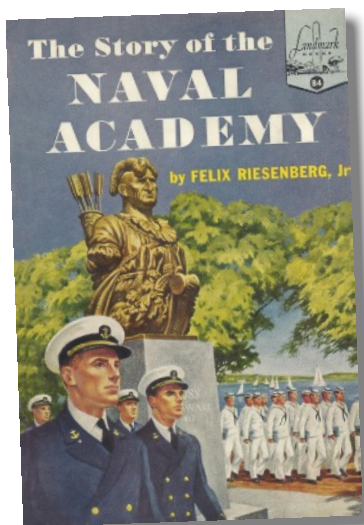
During the summer in my youth, the Kalamazoo Public Library Bookmobile visited Milwood weekly, providing a source of books between school years.



In those days, World War II was still a fresh memory. By the middle of the 1950s, I was reading World War II naval histories, with an emphasis on the South Pacific, where my father served aboard a U.S. Army Air Force crash boat. Two favorite volumes were *Submarine Operations in World War II* by Theodore Roscoe and *Day of Infamy* by Walter Lord. Six decades later I still refer to these titles, which are part of my personal

library, along with select Landmark editions.

Reading became a habit and a pleasurable pastime in an era when technology was primitive by today's standards. Television was still in its infancy. Our 12-inch black-and-white set was only switched on in the evening for a couple of hours, with limited programming.



A big wooden radio on my bedside table, with a dial that glowed amber, was my primary entertainment, other than books. I grew up listening to programs like the Lone Ranger, Gunsmoke, Boston Blackie, and Challenge of the Yukon with Sergeant Preston. I listened to the radio every night after crawling into bed. I still recall the chill that passed through me on March 5, 1953, when a late evening broadcast was interrupted to

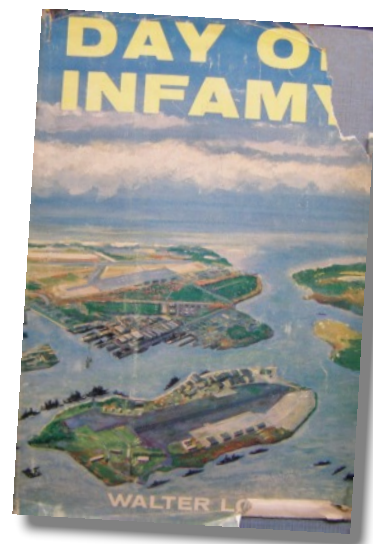
announce the death of Joseph Stalin.

Walking, or riding my bike, three blocks twice daily to the plain two-story brick school was a regular routine, but I spent much more time there after classes were dismissed, as well as in the evening and on weekends.

The building was an anchor for numerous community

activities. Our Boy Scout Troop 39 met weekly in the gymnasium. A school carnival each spring brought out families to wander the hallways, participating in games for prizes or trying to win the cake walk. I attended my first dance there when Elvis and doo-wop topped the music charts.

In 1955, Milwood's baseball diamonds were the site of the first Little League in Kalamazoo. Young players, including our grandsons Nick and Drew, still run the base paths and chase fly balls on these fields. A regulation-size football field, where we played flag football, once stood where new baseball diamonds have been built.



Late last summer, time caught up with the building, which had served students for almost a century. The decision was made to raze the school to make way for a new structure. However, before work began the community was invited to an open house.

So we joined a few dozen former students, teachers and others, strolling the halls, visiting classrooms and the gym. To my eye, very little had changed since the late 1950s. Memories flowed, while the faces of classmates, teachers and administrators were recalled. In the library, only shelves remained. The gym, with its aged hardwood floor was exactly the same as when we shot baskets, climbed the hemp rope that once hung from the ceiling, or stood on the sideline waiting for roll to be called.

In late summer, construction crews started demolition and by December the structure was a pile of rubble. Driving by the site with his parents, young Sean Mason (also a former student at the school) suggested they stop and ask a construction worker for a brick by which to remember the old structure. "And let's get one for Mister Jepson," he said.

It was a gift that keeps on giving. One glance at the brick and I recall again and again the immense role Milwood Elementary played in my life.

Memories are forever treasures.

George Jepson