



Bluejacket Odyssey, 1942-1946: Guadalcanal to Bikini, Naval Armed Guard in the Pacific

William L. McGee, Foreword by C.A. Lloyd, USN Armed Guard Veterans of WWII

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FROM THE AUTHOR

"All these years after the war, I was curious about what happened to the other ships in my Task Unit 32.4.4 and to the men who served on them. During the war, this information was classified, but when I began my naval military memoir research in the 1990s, a lot of information had become declassified and provided answers to many of my questions."--William L. McGee

"A NAVAL MILITARY MEMOIR WITHIN A HISTORY"

In 1942 at age seventeen, and like a lot of other youth anxious to do their part in the war effort, Montana cowboy Bill McGee joined the U.S. Navy and was assigned to the U.S. Naval Armed Guard, the branch of the Navy that protected merchant ships and their valuable cargo and crew from enemy attacks.

During his first voyage in the South Pacific, between New Caledonia and Guadalcanal, his Task Unit 32.4.4 suffered two major enemy attacks: the first by air (the largest Japanese air attack since Pearl Harbor); the second by torpedoes. Of the four Liberty ships in the Task Unit 32.4.4, only one survived: the SS *Nathaniel Currier* -- the ship McGee was assigned to.

His "kid's cruise" (as these minority enlistments were called) ended in 1946 with duty on the heavy cruiser USS *Fall River*, the Target Fleet Flagship for "Operation Crossroads"-- the post-war atomic bomb tests at Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands.

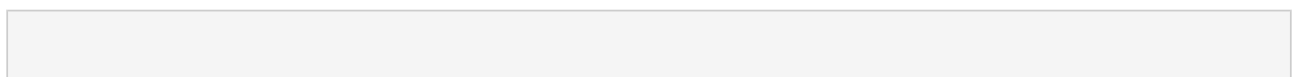
McGee's enlisted man's perspective on the Bikini atomic bomb tests--by itself--makes this book worth owning. The author had a front row seat at the beginning of the atomic age as "Operation Crossroads" grew from a few thousand people into a mammoth operation of 150 ships, 75 aircraft and more than 42,000 men, including political observers, the media and scientists of every calling. McGee covers the event in complete and exciting detail.


Drawing on his shipboard journal, three years of interviews with former shipmates, and exhaustive research with declassified documents in the National Archives, McGee has produced an engrossing book that has the inimitable mark of one that has "been there, done that."

In a straightforward writing style, he tells an honest, factual story that takes the reader for a ride through the war zones on Liberty ships, Victory ships, and the heavy cruiser, USS *Fall River*. *Bluejacket Odyssey* is a close-up view of a defining period in our nation's history.

PRAISE

"Little has been written about service in the Naval Armed Guard in which nearly 145,000 men served...McGee remedies this with a book that has value for historians." *Naval History Magazine*



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