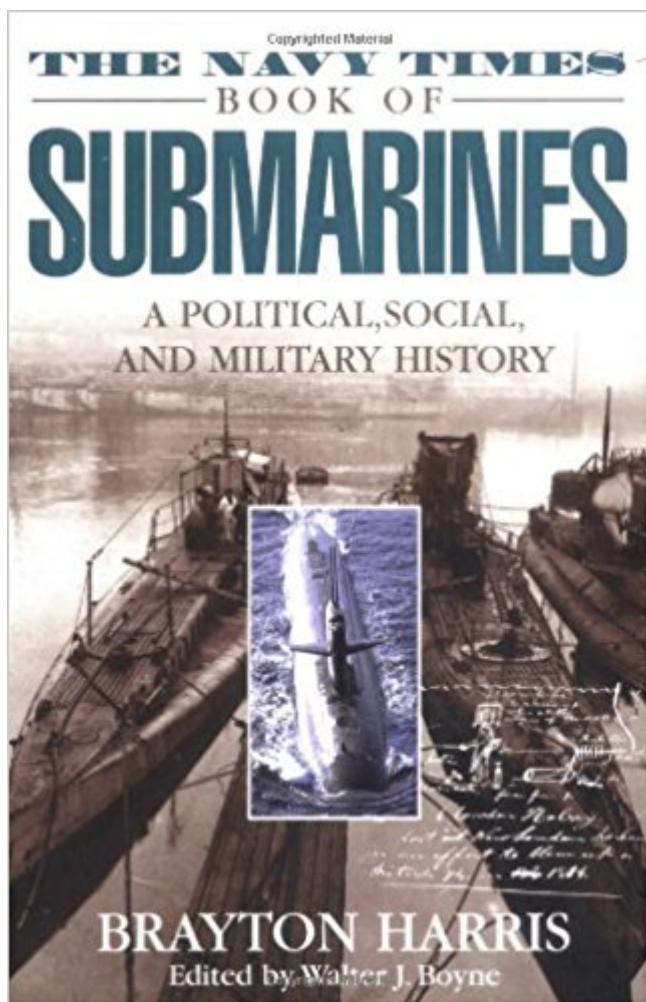


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The Navy Times Book Of Submarines: A Political, Social, And Military History



Synopsis

Shattering long-held myths and misunderstandings, author Brayton Harris traces the development of the submarine through an era in which writers of fiction saw the merits better than most professionals-until the Germans almost won World War I. He covers the professional and political arrogance that delayed antisubmarine development for so long that German submarines almost won World War II as well, and examines post-war progress toward the truly awesome submarine of today. Along the way, Harris explores the shifting moral issues of "unrestricted" naval warfare, outlines the hundred-year search for an effective underwater power plant that culminated in the nuclear reactor, and raises important questions about the future. A fascinating exploration of the steps and stumbles during development, a rousing tribute to those who fought and died, and a powerful study of the submarine's impact on America, *The Navy Times Book of Submarines* is an unparalleled source for understanding the great "hunters of the deep."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Brayton Harris spent twenty-four years on active duty with the U.S. Navy, reaching the rank of Captain. He is the author of *The Age of the Battleship: 1890-1922*. His shorter pieces have appeared in numerous magazines including the Saturday Review, Army Times, and the Naval Institute Proceedings. Walter J. Boyne is the bestselling author of *Weapons of Desert Storm*, *Silver Wings*, and *Clash of Wings*, among others.

If you want a general history of submarines from the start till now its okay. It covers the early history very well right up to WW1. Has quite a few quite interesting facts nothing though I felt of any major significance. WW2 is sort of covered. What particularly did annoy me is that the post war era, I felt this section was very short and badly covered. What there is almost all about the US, a little about Russia and almost nothing about anyone else.

While much of any history of submarines will focus on things mechanical, this book goes much farther and more than justifies its sub-title, "A Political, Social and Military History." I was fascinated to see that the political and social aspects of military systems -- or strategies -- have not changed much over the four hundred or so years covered by this book. A comment on comments of "Reader from Rochester" who offered an unflattering review -- where Reader found "superior attitude," I found (and enjoyed) sardonic humour. Be that as it may, Reader ought to hire-out as a professional copy editor, because the irritating errors he spotted (i.e., typos) obviously slid by the publisher's fact-checkers and proofreaders. As for the 3"/50 caliber deck gun -- that's a designation used for naval guns, where "caliber" is the length of the barrel measured as a multiple of the diameter of the bore. Thus, in this instance, a 3" bore and a 150" tube. Obviously, the publisher's copy editor didn't understand this, either, and stuck a period in front of the 50.

This book stands out from others in its subject area by the amount of space it devotes to coverage of the very early days of submarines, a subject little covered by others. However, my enjoyment of it was greatly diminished by the manner in which the author repeatedly heaps scorn upon the other books which apparently contain factual errors that are now finally being corrected in this volume. I rapidly tired of the author's superior attitude, and eventually found myself being annoyed by it. But despite the fact that this book is quick to criticize other submarine books for being "riddled with errors," it suffers from the same defect itself! Many ship's names are misspelled (Thetis, Ramillies, Plantagenet, etc), gun calibers are quoted in an erroneous manner (I've never heard of a 3 inch / .50 caliber), Hitler's birthday is given incorrectly as 4/18, and numerous other words and names are misspelled. And these are only the ones that I recognized straight away; who knows if other facts are garbled. Perhaps this author too was "in a hurry" to go to press, and thus committed the same mistake of allowing errors to slip through. I realize that the items I listed are mostly of a minor nature, but for a book which makes such a big deal about the errors of others, they are inexcusable. The only other submarine book that I have read which contains the same density of defects is Peter Padfield's "War Beneath the Sea", but then Padfield doesn't assume any tones of superiority, so he

is much easier to forgive. In all, a useful addition to the submarine bookshelf, but flawed, mostly by the author's tiresome attitude.

By Admiral Frank B. Kelso, USN (Retired), career submariner and former Chief of Naval Operations: "Captain Harris has written an informative and entertaining history of submarines and the people involved in their invention and operation. The book covers the period from the early vision of a submarine to recent times, and includes a great deal of history that was new to me This book will likely disappoint those who are looking for greater detail in the history of U. S. submarines in World War II Others will think that the nuclear era needs more attention. But Harris does give us the early days of the submarine in great detail. He describes those early years in most entertaining prose and has uncovered and pieced together submarine history which was both new and exciting... This is a book of submarine history and its leading characters. Throughout their history, submarines have fascinated many. This book will explain the fascination and make for enjoyable reading."

(February, 1998)

... Harris's overview proves a useful guide to a mass of data and doctrine frequently forbidding to nonspecialists. The book's strongest feature is its narratives of German U-boat operations in the world wars. These emphasize the submarine's role as an economy-of-force weapon for lesser naval powers and the contingency of allied victory in both campaigns. Harris later develops the subject of preparedness more directly, assessing innovations recently made by the Russians and insisting that nuclear boats remain inherently superior to even the best modern diesel designs and should therefore be central to the U.S. Navy's procurement program. Elsewhere, Harris downplays the "official" point of view. This fact enhances his study as a counterpoint to Dan van der Vat's British-accented *Stealth at Sea* and as a useful, if unbalanced, popular introduction to the subject.

I have read nearly every decent book you can get on U-boats and submarine warfare during WWI and WWII. This new book is one of the better books that offers you a more complete understanding of their historical background and role. Most people know about the U-boats and the terrible campaign they waged against Merchant shipping during both World Wars but who knows about the very early submarines, their sometimes unfortunate crews and their inventors. This was a great story and I was unsure if I would find the history behind the submarine as interesting as its role in naval warfare but I did. The author tells a great story that never gets boring and keeps you reading page after page with interesting bits of information and first hand accounts of those involved. I found this

book easy to read and it was a joy to lay back and read a few pages each night.

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