

Mackenzie and others who stood in their way of seizing the ship? Would they go to their assigned posts to carry out the mutiny? Was the brig to be a piratical cruiser?

Delgado describes the onboard tension this way in Chapter 5: “*Somers* was now a ship in the full grip of fear by the officers of the men and boys, fear of the officers by the crew, and no one sure of exactly what would happen next.” Nathaniel Currier’s “floating gallows” lithograph of two bodies hanging from *Somers*’ yardarm below an unfurled American flag best illustrates what happened next.

The iconic image of the hangings only opened the door for more anger and controversy from a fistfight in Tyler’s cabinet between Spencer’s father and Navy Secretary, Abel Parker Upshur, through the Navy with courts of this and that reviewing and judging, and writers like Cooper and a press eager to feed an audience on details that “proved” Mackenzie was correct or Spencer a “martyr.”

Delgado leads readers into that vortex of nineteenth-century recrimination that continues to this day. He has skillfully put the facts on the table in *The Curse of the Somers*. Like the author, I now believe “all parties are to blame,” a major change from my first introduction to *Somers* through Cooper’s 1844 pamphlet on Mackenzie’s “despotism” and “unmanly conduct” on the cruise. Spencer was at the centre of the vortex that cursed *Somers*.

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John J. Domagalski. *Escape from Java: The Extraordinary World War II Story of the USS Marblehead*. Barnsley, S. Yorks; Pen & Sword, www.pen-and-sword.com, 2022, ix+310 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. US \$34.95, UK £25.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-52678-441-4.

The prime objective of Imperial Japan’s attacks on American, British, and Dutch possessions in December 1941, was to secure the natural resources of Malaya (now Malaysia) and the Dutch East Indies (DEI – now Indonesia). Those areas were rich in rubber and tin as well as other resources, all of which Japan lacked. Starting in 1940, military officials from Great Britain, the USA, the DEI, Australia, and New Zealand began developing contingency plans to meet the Japanese military threat. For America, the US Navy’s (USN) Asiatic Fleet was based in Manila, in the then-American colony of the Philippines. Part of the Asiatic Fleet was a by-then elderly light cruiser named USS *Marblehead*. John J. Domagalski’s *Escape from Java: The Extraordinary World War II Story of the USS Marblehead* tells the story of this tough ship and its courageous crew in the early days of the Pacific War.

Marblehead was a World War One-era warship design, commissioned in 1924. Its pre-war career saw it in service across the globe, in both the USN's Atlantic and Pacific Fleets, before being assigned to the Asiatic Fleet. In late November 1941, with war imminent, *Marblehead* and its crew were transferred from the Philippines to the DEI island of Tarakan. War broke out on 7 December 1941 (8 December in the Far East, due to the International Date Line) with Japanese attacks on Hong Kong, Malaya, and the US naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. For a brief time, due to the Japanese need to first neutralize American and British resistance in the Philippines and Malaya, respectively, the Dutch East Indies saw little combat. Inevitably, Japanese forces worked their way south to attack American, British, and Dutch units in DEI. At 10:00 am on 4 February 1942, Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) bombers struck the ships based at Tarakan – *Marblehead* included. Two bombs struck *Marblehead* while a third bomb exploded underwater near the ship's port bow. That bomb opened a large gash in the hull, which should have spelled the end for *Marblehead*.

But the stubborn old ship came from a tough class of cruisers and was manned by an equally stubborn and tough crew; neither the ship nor the men were disposed to let *Marblehead* sink. Despite the onboard fires, the damage to the ship's steering gear, and the casualties caused by the bombing, *Marblehead's* captain, Arthur Robinson, and his executive officer, Commander William Goggins, rallied the crew. Crippled with what-should-have-been fatal damage, *Marblehead* made it to the DEI naval port at Tjilatjap on the island of Java. There, emergency repairs were carried out and *Marblehead's* seriously wounded crewmen were taken to DEI hospitals. After the repairs were affected, the remaining crew took *Marblehead* on what can only be termed "an epic voyage." Captain Robinson and his crew sailed the damaged cruiser across the Indian Ocean, stopping off at Durban, South Africa, for supplies and then Simonstown, South Africa for more supplies and additional repairs. Once those were completed, Robinson and crew pointed *Marblehead* across the South Atlantic. (That was a dangerous trip due to German U-boats and commerce raiders. *Marblehead* would have been an easy target for submarines and was in no condition to take on a German commerce raider in a surface engagement.) Finally, after plowing through the Caribbean and up the American Atlantic Coast (in constant danger from the ubiquitous U-boats), *Marblehead* entered New York Harbour and berthed at the Brooklyn Navy Yard on 4 May 1942. It was truly a magnificent feat of seamanship, courage, and toughness. After repairs and upgrading, *Marblehead* returned to active USN service. It saw convoy escort duty in both the North and South Atlantic and provided fire support for the Allied landings in southern France.

The end of World War II saw the end of *Marblehead*. The old ship was

decommissioned in late 1945 and scrapped in 1946. The book also relates the after-careers of several principals – Captain Arthur Robinson, Executive Officer William Goggins, Gunnery Officer Nicholas Van Bergen, and the ship's doctor, Corydon Wassell.

If this book were only about *Marblehead* and its crew, this review's conclusion would merely note that this book is a good read. But this work is actually two books in one. Interspersed with the narrative on *Marblehead* are chapters on the initial stages of the Pacific War and the assault on the DEI. These chapters are accurate and provide good background for *Marblehead's* service Indonesia and the overall military situation in late 1941-early 1942. This is important, as the assault on DEI has been, until recently, one of the least-written about periods of the Pacific War. It, therefore, makes a valuable contribution to the literature on the Pacific War.

Domagalski writes well. The text flows and is augmented by a photograph section showing *Marblehead* both at sea and under repairs, photos of the main characters, and several valuable maps which illustrate the combat theatre as well as *Marblehead's* journey. *Escape from Java* is detailed enough that it will remain a good, brief, reference work on the early Pacific War as well as a good read about a stubborn, tough ship and its equally stubborn, tough, and courageous crew.

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Donald J. Feltmate. *Building a Better Boat: How the Cape Island Longliner Saved Nova Scotia's Inshore Fishery*. Halifax, N.S.: Nimbus Publishing, www.nimbus.ca, 2023. 250 pp. illustrations, bibliography, notes. CDN \$24.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-77471-158-3.

Building a Better Boat is a volume both sharp in focus and broad in scope. Seeming from the title to be the simple story of the development of a vessel design for a small inshore fishing boat, the history that emerges is a fascinating exploration of the changes in the important Nova Scotia coastal fishery through the twentieth century.

This is an area that has rarely been addressed, as the Atlantic fishery is usually examined from further offshore. For many writers, fish means cod, and cod means the Grand Banks, but little has been written on exploitation of fishery resources closer to the coast. This land-based fishery was threatened early in the twentieth century by rural poverty and lack of capital investment, inadequate fishing technology, and lack of support at both national and provincial levels of government.

Donald J. Feltmate begins by setting the scene, giving a brief outline of the