

This book is without a doubt the best single-volume history of the U.S. Navy's seaplane tenders and their sea-based aircraft patrol squadrons. The U.S. Navy operated a total of 67 seaplane tenders during World War II. They consisted of converted World War I mine sweepers and destroyers plus new ships designed and built to optimize fueling and servicing of a variety of seaplane types. Their story is generally ignored in the telling of U.S. Navy aerial warfare in favor of accounts of aircraft carriers and their aircraft.

The author, using a broad brush, paints the story of the pre-World War II development of seaplane tenders and their aircraft to their demobilization at the end of the war. These vessels and their aircraft were part of the war from the day war broke out in Asia and Europe. They and their aircraft were among the targets the Japanese attacked at Pearl Harbor and at Manila Bay in December 1941. With devotion to duty, the tenders and the aircraft they serviced performed in the forward battle areas: scouting, air-rescue operations and ferrying of goods and personnel. Without their help, the war would have taken far longer.

While 80 percent of the book's text focuses on the war in the Pacific, Philippines/Dutch Indies, Southwest Pacific, Central Pacific and Aleutians, the author also takes time to explore the development of seaplane tenders and their aircraft operations in the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea. For the author to tell the operational history of all of the Navy's seaplane tender during World War II, his reports must be limited in details. Yet each chapter gives the reader a feel for the ebb and flow of battle at sea and in the air between the years 1941 and 1945.

The book includes a number of appendices that provide detailed histories of each seaplane tender, which tender and patrol squadron took part in what naval campaigns, for what actions these ships and seaplane tenders received battle stars and a list of tenders and squadrons that were awarded a Presidential Unit Citation or the Naval Unit Commendation. The author has included a wealth of maps and illustrations that allow one to follow the action.

This book belongs in the library of anyone interested in naval operations in World War II for a complete understanding of the air war at sea.

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