

# Pacific Glory: A Novel

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A thrilling, multi-layered World War II adventure following two men and an unforgettable woman, from Pearl Harbor through the most dramatic air and sea battles of the war

Marsh, Mick, and Tommy were inseparable friends during their naval academy years, each man desperately in love with the beautiful, unattainable Glory Hawthorne. Graduation set them on separate paths into the military, but they were all forever changed during the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7, 1941.

Glory, now Tommy's widow, is a tough Navy nurse still grieving her loss while trying to save lives. Marsh, a surface ship officer, finds himself in the thick of terrifying sea combat from Guadalcanal through Midway to a climactic showdown at Leyte Gulf. And Mick, a hotshot fighter pilot with a drinking problem and a chip on his shoulder, seeks redemption after a series of failures leaves him grounded.

Filled with wide-screen action, romance, and heroism tinged with the brutal reality of war, Pacific Glory is a dynamic new direction for an acclaimed thriller writer.

One of Library Journal's Best Historical Fiction Books of 2011

I first heard the story of the destroyers at Leyte Gulf fight from my father, who was a destroyer division commander in Halsey's fast carrier task force when the battle occurred. He was naval academy class of 1927 and rose to the rank of Vice Admiral before retiring after forty-two years service. Like many officers of his vintage, he had strong opinions about the battle, and the debates about Leyte go on until this day.

As a midshipman I studied the battle in my first-class (senior) year at the naval academy in 1963. I can remember voicing some of my father's opinions on what happened to our professor, E.B Potter (Professor Emeritus) and being taken to task by him for uttering various heresies. The way I saw it then, Pop had been out there when it happened, so I thought his version was more likely to be accurate.

When my first destroyer visited San Francisco for Fleet Week, I learned that Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz lived in the big quarters up on the hill on Treasure Island, where my ship was tied up. My dad had told me that if I ever got the chance to meet him, make sure I did. So I called the quarters and told his aide that I was Ensign Deutermann and that I'd like to make a formal, five-minute call, and that Admiral Nimitz might remember my father. The aide was probably so astonished by this request that he forgot to say no. An hour later I showed up in my best uniform, calling cards in hand, to pay my respects to the admiral who had overseen victory in the Second World War in the Pacific.

Nimitz looked just like every picture I'd ever seen of him except perhaps grayer: I didn't know the meaning of the word gravitas then, but afterwards I did. He solemnly bade me sit down. A steward brought coffee, which I tried hard to keep from spilling. He told me a story about my dad that I hadn't heard, and then asked if I had any questions for him. I asked him what was the most glorious battle of the Pacific war for the navy.

Only an ensign would ask such a question, but he was nothing if not a kind man. He said there were two that came to mind: Midway and Samar, which is another name for what happened that day when the destroyers took on the IJN Yamato and her consorts.

Midway was a given, but I then asked how such a thing as Samar could have happened. His aide stiffened in his chair, but Nimitz just smiled sadly. "I made an assumption," he said. "That was a mistake. My mistake."

He didn't say: Halsey screwed it up. He said: I screwed it up. Such was the greatness and moral serenity of C.W Nimitz, and I never forgot it.

My initial focus in writing this book was not so much on re-telling the battle of Leyte Gulf as it was on what it must have been like to have been commanding officer on one of those heroic destroyers. Having been a destroyer skipper, and, later, a destroyer squadron commander, I've often wondered what I would have seen, heard, and, most importantly, done when the orders came to go drive off three Japanese battleships and eighteen-inch shells began to fall in my lap.

I chose in some cases to invent ships' names, such as Winston, so as not to tread on the accomplishments of the real ships and their officers and enlisted men. Once I did that, I then had to take some liberties with the real history in terms of precisely when and where things happened. After refreshing my own knowledge from more recent works than were available in 1963, I concluded that the pilots from the little Jeep carriers played just as important a role in making the Japanese admiral blink as the destroyers had. Some historians/authors take the position that the planes were actually the decisive element, leading Admiral Kurita to conclude that Halsey's fleet-carrier formations, by which his forces had already been savaged while approaching Leyte, were right over the horizon.

Kurita was embarked in battleship Yamato, sister ship of Musashi. These two behemoths were the biggest battleships ever built. Admiral Kurita had been promised by the Japanese Army that he would be supported from airfields on Luzon. No such support ever materialized. Having watched American carrier pilots destroy Musashi a day before he came through the San Bernardino straits to surprise the Taffies, he probably decided to get out of there while he still could once the aluminum overcast began to form over his head. This persuaded me to write in the character of Mick "Beast" McCarty to tell the story of what the Jeep aviators did on that terrifying morning. Beast ended up grabbing a bigger role in this book than I'd anticipated, but that's the nature of carrier aviators. God love 'em.

Thomas Cutler's book, *The Battle of Leyte Gulf*, has an extensive bibliography if you want to gain an expert's understanding of the battle. For a general appreciation of what happened at Leyte, I recommend four books, two of which being quite recent. *The Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors*, by Hornfischer, is an outstanding blow-by-blow description of what happened to the destroyers. *Sea of Thunder*, by Evan Thomas, expands on this story by folding in the Japanese view of the battle as well as Halsey's. *The Battle of Leyte Gulf*, mentioned above, is another great overview story. And, of course, there's always Theodore Roscoe's 1947 classic on *Destroyer Operations in World War II*.

All that said, I must beg the indulgence of both the professional and amateur historians who will undoubtedly harrumph when they see some of the historical distortions I've made in this story. For instance, in Pearl I've made it sound like the hospital, the base o-club, and the BOQ were all close together. In fact, Hospital Point is part of the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and not really near the o'club or the BOQ. I have the Puunchbowl cemetery being finished in 1946 - that actually happened a few years later. Marsh Vincent's ship is named the Evans, which was the name of the skipper of the USS Johnston. Evans was a full-blooded Cherokee, and he won the Medal of Honor for his gallantry that day.

Posthumously. There was no USS Evans in those days, but, after that fight, the navy added the name of Evans to the list of ship's names.

It may also interest the reader to know that there are over two dozen navy vets who have been interred within the hulk of Arizona since her destruction on December 7th, 1941. The navy has a policy that anyone who survived the attack on that ship may be buried inside her when the time comes. Men who were otherwise veterans of Arizona, but not aboard that dreadful Sunday, may have their ashes scattered over the sunken hulk.

Having finished writing the book, I still wonder if I would have had the guts to do what those captains did that day, especially Commander Evans, whose decision to turn again into the fight committed his ship, his crew, and himself to certain destruction. I've concluded, after twenty-six years in the navy and three commands, that one simply cannot know until the time comes and the elephant comes over the horizon. The skippers of the destroyers off Samar that day apparently had no doubts as to what had to be done. As inappropriate a word as glory is when applied to man's most horrific endeavor, what they did that day was the essence of glory and unsurpassed valor.

P. T. DEUTERMANN, a retired Navy captain, is the author of fourteen previous novels and lives with his wife in North Carolina. His father was a destroyer division commander in the Pacific theater under Admiral Halsey.

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