

Press Releases

BLUEJACKET ODYSSEY, 1942-1946

William L. McGee's "memoir within a military history" available in softcover

SANTA BARBARA, CA, November 1, 2000—*Bluejacket Odyssey, 1942-1946: Guadalcanal to Bikini, Naval Armed Guard in the Pacific*, is now available in softcover from BMC Publications.

Described as "a memoir within a military history," from the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor to the atomic bomb testing at Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands, author Bill McGee experienced World War II in the Pacific like few others.

McGee, a Montana country boy, joined the U.S. Navy in 1942 on his seventeenth birthday. He had to agree to serve in the regular Navy until he was twenty-one. These minority enlistments were tagged as a "Kid's Cruise"—probably by some salty old bosun. But McGee was no kid when his four-year hitch was over.

He was assigned to the Naval Armed Guard, that branch of the Navy whose mission it was to protect Merchant Marine ships and their valuable cargo and crew from enemy attacks and sabotage.

After gunnery training, McGee's "Kid's Cruise" threw him in the middle of air attacks at Guadalcanal and torpedoings in the South Pacific; carried him through the action in the Western Pacific; and ended after the war with the atomic bomb tests at Bikini. He had a front-row seat at the beginning of the Atomic Age aboard the heavy cruiser USS *Fall River*, the target fleet flagship.

Along the way he experienced the ups and downs of Navy life—boot camp in Idaho, life on merchant ships, duty in the Fleet, "stewed, screwed and tattooed in Tijuana" (well, almost), endless days of drills, drills and more drills, followed by moments of sheer terror.

Bluejacket Odyssey is the story of a generation of Armed Guard, seen through the eyes of a young volunteer. Combining his own daily shipboard journal with three years of interviews with former shipmates, records and declassified documents from the National Archives, and exhaustive historical research, McGee has produced an engrossing book, all from the unique perspective of an enlisted man who has "been there and done that."

"Your book brought tears to my eyes. A must read for all veterans and their descendants."—Charles Espy, Lt. (jg), USNR, SS *Thomas Nelson*, Armed Guard C. O.

The book is an honest, factual story—laced with humor—that takes the reader for a ride on Liberty ships, Victory ships, fast transports, destroyers, minesweepers and the heavy cruiser, USS *Fall River*. The reader will experience history up-close at such now legendary places as Guadalcanal, New Guinea, the Marshalls, Marianas and even kamikaze attacks in Leyte Gulf, the Philippines.

From Japanese Zeros, nuclear tests, and South Sea native customs to marathon poker games, *Bluejacket Odyssey* is a close-up view of the life of an Armed Guard sailor as it really happened.

After his WWII "Kid's Cruise," McGee attended Montana State College, founded and later sold an import-export company, and began a long and successful career in broadcasting. He is the author of nine books on retail advertising and broadcast advertising sales. He and his wife Sandra live in Santa Barbara.

McGee recently completed *The Amphibians Are Coming! Emergence of the 'Gator Navy and its Revolutionary Landing Craft*, Volume I in a series titled *Amphibious Operations in the South Pacific in World II*. He is deep into Volume II, scheduled for release in 2002.

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

by William L. McGee

\$35.00, Softcover, 546 pages, 250 photos and illustrations, plus appendices, bibliography and index, 6 x 9, ISBN 0-9701678-0-6. Hardcover edition published by Glencannon Press, 1997. Revised softcover edition published by BMC Publications, 2000.

Foreword by C. A. Lloyd, Chairman, USN Armed Guard Veterans of WWII.

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