

Preface

It's been almost eight years since I started researching *Bluejacket Odyssey* which was to be a single chapter in a "family history." It evolved into a factual account within a naval history of my four-year "Kid's Cruise" during World War II. By the time *Odyssey* was first published in 1997, I had become a military history buff searching for answers. For this reason, I decided to take a closer look at the early amphibious operations in the South Pacific—arguably the most important turning point in the Pacific War. That "closer look" gradually evolved into this three-volume series. Here's why and how.

My initial *Odyssey* research encompassed numerous supply runs to the South Pacific area (Solomon Islands); the Southwest Pacific Area (New Guinea and the Philippines); and the Central Pacific Area (Marshalls and Mariana Islands). See "Pacific and Adjacent Theaters" map on page 44. During this research I was constantly reminded of how little we knew about the war around us, let alone the big picture. Research findings usually trigger further research. For example, in *Bluejacket Odyssey* (Chapters 6-8), I describe my first trip to the South Pacific in the SS *Nathaniel Currier* and the 120-plane air raid on 16 June 1943 off Guadalcanal followed by the torpedo attack of 23 June while part of Task Unit 32.4.4. The date, time, and place were fixed in my memory. Research filled in the blanks, such as what ships were in the Task Unit, which ships were bombed and beached during the air raid, and which ships were torpedoed in the dark of night June 23rd.

Thanks to the help of several veterans magazines and newsletters,

I was able to locate and interview more than forty survivors off the two ships that were torpedoed. These interviews, some fifty years later, revealed that both ships went down and that sharks began savaging the oil-soaked men in the water. That's researching the past to update the historical records. So you see, historical research is never-ending. It also mounts up!

Here's a partial list of subjects I commissioned Samuel L. Morison to research for this trilogy:

- The new shore-to-shore landing ships and crafts and their crews.
- Amphibious operations from Guadalcanal to Bougainville.
- Seabee construction and stevedore battalions.
- Marine Corps engineers and pioneer battalions.
- Emergency shipbuilding under the Maritime Commission.
- Logistical challenges in the Pacific.
- Naval service squadrons.
- Manning the long-, medium- and short-haul vessels with U.S. Navy, Coast Guard, Merchant Marine, and Army crews to keep the "Pacific Express" pipeline filled.

In *Bluejacket Odyssey* I described our first encounter with the new amphibians (LCTs and LSTs) during a big air raid. The 1st Special (Seabee) Battalion was unloading us at the time. Well...you get the picture. *The Amphibians Are Coming!* is based on archival research and more than one hundred interviews with amphibious veterans who were there. Welcome aboard!

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