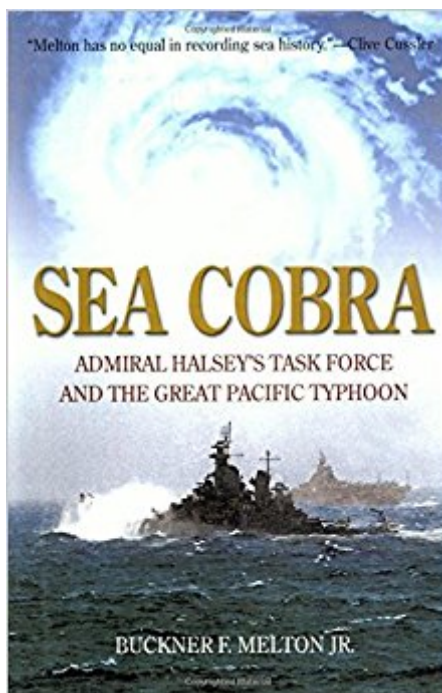


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# Sea Cobra: Admiral Halsey's Task Force And The Great Pacific Typhoon



## Synopsis

One of the costliest battles of World War II happens to be one of the least known. After failing to stop the attack of Admiral Takeo Kurita at Leyte Gulf, Admiral Halsey made a desperate attempt to engage the Japanese Imperial Navy in a full-scale battle. Acting against better judgment and in a desperate attempt at redemption, Halsey led his crew into the raging path of a typhoon, which resulted in the loss of nearly one thousand sailors—the most costly mission of the Pacific war.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 336 pages

Publisher: Lyons Press; 1 edition (March 1, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1592289789

ISBN-13: 978-1592289783

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1.1 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 19 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #910,584 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #139 in Books > History > Asia > Philippines #1843 in Books > History > Military > Naval #7716 in Books > History > Military > World War II

## Customer Reviews

The ripple of interest in the typhoon that struck the U.S. Third Fleet in December 1944, sinking three destroyers and drowning 800 sailors, swells onward in this absorbing naval adventure saga.

Historian Melton (Aaron Burr) paints a wider canvas than do Bob Drury and Tom Clavin in Halsey's Typhoon (reviewed Oct. 9). Like them, he regales readers with firsthand recollections of the shrieking winds and titanic waves that battered ships to pieces, the ordeal of survivors besieged by thirst and sharks, and the heroism of sailors who rescued them in mountainous seas. He recounts at length the subsequent navy inquiry into the performance of meteorologists, Adm. William Halsey and Cmdr. James Marks of the sunken destroyer Hull, who are pilloried by Drury and Clavin but largely exonerated here. Melton pads out the story with a blow-by-blow of the preceding Battle of Leyte Gulf, an account of another typhoon Halsey sailed the Third Fleet into in 1945, and a chapter on Japanese kamikazes. Melton's prose can be purplish—"The beast was still growing in the heart of the sea... feeding on the heat of the water as if it were mother's milk"—but when the storm

breaks, he settles down to a straightforward, gripping narrative. Photos. (Mar.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

The author of *A Hanging Offense* (2003), on the 1842 Somers mutiny, takes to sea again in fine style in this powerful account of the great typhoon off the Philippines in the autumn of 1944, which inflicted major damage on Admiral "Bull" Halsey's U.S. Third Fleet. This book ranges more broadly than Bob Drury and Tom Clavin's *Halsey's Typhoon* (2006), covering more kinds of ships (the light carriers really took a pounding) and the subsequent court of inquiry in greater detail. It adds an afterword on Typhoon Viper, which struck the Third Fleet off Okinawa in 1945, and at no point does it err on the side of charity to either Halsey or the U.S. Navy's weather forecasting. It does offer unstinted praise for the men of the Third Fleet, few of whom, except the Annapolis graduates, had seen saltwater before Pearl Harbor but who fought their ships through the worst weather disaster ever to strike the U.S. Navy. A solid shelf mate for *Halsey's Typhoon* and the burgeoning numbers of nautical-calamity tomes. Roland Green Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

In 2007 two different publishers released two different books on the 1944-1945 typhoons that sank three ships in the U.S. Third Fleet. Under the command of Admiral William Halsey, the U.S. Navy lost more men due to these natural disasters than it did at the battle of Midway. Bob Drury and Tom Clavin's "*Halsey's Typhoon*" was the first one to make it to book stores and garnered more attention and sales than Buckner F. Melton Jr.'s "*Sea Cobra*." Given the timing and focus of these two books, this review will compare and contrast the two. In short, there is no question that Melton wrote the better book. The illustrations of carriers, battleships, oilers, destroyers, and destroyer escorts compared to 30, 60, and 90 foot waves is the best feature of Drury and Clavin's account. It gives landlubbers a good idea of how rough seas are problems for some ships and not for others. The shortcomings of this book, however, are much more significant. First, the book ignores altogether the second typhoon Halsey sailed into. Melton discusses this one, but not at length. This brevity is understandable, the second typhoon did less damage and sank no ships. It does show, though, that the commander and staff of the Third Fleet learned little from their experiences with the first typhoon despite efforts to do so. The problem that Drury and Clavin have is that this second storm undermines their argument that Halsey was largely blameless for sailing into the typhoons. The mechanics of publishing also favor Melton. Drury and Clavin have only one map. Melton has nine. He also provides an extensive bibliography and footnotes, whereas Drury and Clavin have a brief

bibliography and make no effort to provide any sort of documentation on their sources. Drury and Clavin also make a number of basic mistakes when it comes to nautical matters and use maritime terms incorrectly. Examples include "helming" a ship; calling a battle jack a "battle guideon" (an Army term); referring to a ship's mess deck as its "mess hall." They also put generals in the Japanese Navy Ministry and refer to the Army Ministry as the "War Department" (an American term). Stylistically, Melton is the better wordsmith. Drury and Clavin use too many editorializing adverbs ("legendary" or "untold") to exaggerate the significance of their story. Much more significant is the thesis of each book. Drury and Clavin make Lt. Cmdr. James Marks, captain of the USS HULL, out to be the main villain in this incident. The HULL was one of his ships lost in the first typhoon. This charge seems reasonable at first, but Marks' seamanship does not explain why the USS MONAGHAN and SPENCE sank, nor does it explain a number of close calls on other ships. It seems that the two authors allowed crewmen from the HULL that they interviewed for the book to use the opportunity to settle old scores with Marks. In fact, Drury and Clavin do not spend much time talking about ships other than the HULL while Melton does. Melton also gives much more attention to the post storm investigation. Since Marks was the subject of an official investigation, Drury and Clavin argue this was proof enough of his guilt. The fact that there was no court-martial or that the other captains died in the storm makes this observation rather weak. Melton gives a much more nuanced description of the investigation. Halsey rather than Marks was the main target of the investigation and the board placed primary blame for sailing into the storm on the Admiral. There were a number of mitigating circumstances, though, and Melton is good at describing them. This incident is no black and white morality play. In short, Melton offers a much better book than Drury and Clavin.

All my life I had heard about the terrible typhoon of Dec. 1944 from my father who was the communications officer on an APD destroyer caught in the middle of it. I was pleased to discover this book and have the opportunity to understand more fully what these men went through as the typhoon hit. Many incredible moments in history are nearly forgotten and this book revives and recreates this with fascinating events and detail. I felt as if I was living through the Typhoon along with the men.

A great story and a great story-teller! The most user friendly book I've read. There was no overblown technical term or military acronym that I couldn't understand. You didn't have to have 20 years service time in the Navy to know what was happening to the sailors and what the command

leadership was doing right or wrong. You felt you right there with the sailors in their battle to survive! An amazing story of heroes and tragedy. The story of Commander Henry Lee Plage of the destroyer USS Tabber is awesome! He stands 3 times taller than John Wayne ever did! He was a 29 year old reservist with only one and a half years of sea time. He amazingly avoided direct orders and rescued over 50 sailors inside the fury of a killer typhoon (almost a thousand sailors died and many ships were sunk or nearly sunk). The other current book on this event "Halsey's Typhoon" doesn't even come close to the passion or power of "Sea Cobra".

Well researched and written account of the typhoon events the task force faced from several perspectives, as well as the after actions events that were initiated and took place.

great book,quick delivery,book was as advertised,book was very informative,and well written.if you are into history and world war two facts check out this book

a must read if you like ww2 history

An amazing story about a major, yet unpublicized, WWII U. S. Navy disaster.Well written, clear and moves along nicely.

Good book. Thanks.

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