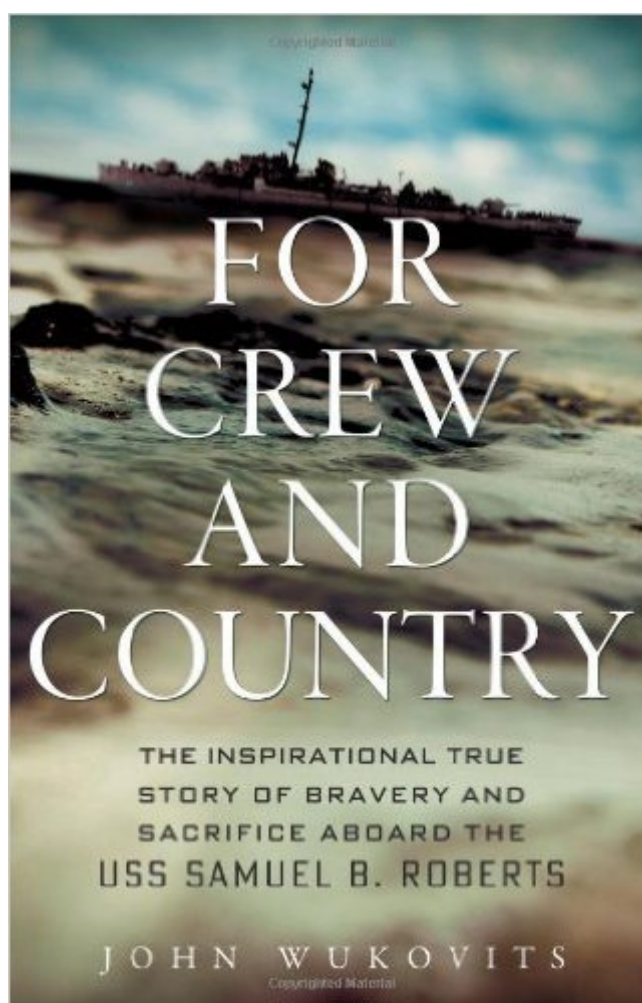


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For Crew And Country: The Inspirational True Story Of Bravery And Sacrifice Aboard The USS Samuel B. Roberts



Synopsis

In *For Crew and Country*, John Wukovits tells of "the most dramatic naval battle of the Pacific War and the incredible sacrifice of the USS Samuel B. Roberts." On October 25, 1944, the Samuel B. Roberts, along with the other twelve vessels comprising its unit, stood between Japan's largest battleship force ever sent to sea and MacArthur's transports inside Leyte Gulf. Faced with the surprise appearance of more than twenty Japanese battleships, cruisers, and destroyers, including the Yamato, at 70,000 tons the most potent battlewagon in the world, the 1,200-ton Samuel B. Roberts turned immediately into action with six other ships. Captain Copeland marked the occasion with one of the most poignant addresses ever given to men on the edge of battle: "Men, we are about to go into a fight against overwhelming odds from which survival cannot be expected. The ship churned straight at the enemy in a near-suicidal attempt to deflect the more potent foe, allow the small aircraft carriers to escape, and buy time for MacArthur's forces. The Samuel B. Roberts, a John C. Butler-class destroyer escort, was sunk, going down with guns blazing in a duel reminiscent of the Spartans at Thermopylae or Davy Crockett's Alamo defenders. The men who survived faced a horrifying three-day nightmare in the sea, where they battled a lack of food and water, scorching sun and numbing nighttime cold, and nature's most feared adversary—sharks. The battle would go down as history's greatest sea clash, the Battle of Samar—the dramatic climax of the Battle of Leyte Gulf.

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Customer Reviews

Last year I read "The Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors," by J.D. Hornfischer, a previous book about

this same Battle off Samar. It's an exciting and moving account of one of the bravest performances ever by the U.S. Navy, in particular the Destroyer Escort USS Samuel B. Roberts. I read WWII history a lot; "Last Stand" is one of the best. On the other hand, this book, "For Crew and Country," by John Wukovitz, about the same battle, is a disappointment. It's virtually the same book as Hornfischer's, even to the point of individual paragraphs and quotes. It only differs by leaving out parts about the other ships in the "Taffy 3" task force, and beefing up biographical history for some of the Roberts crew. In his Acknowledgments chapter Wukovitz tells us that Hornfischer is his agent and encouraged this book. Apparently an arrangement exists between the two to share information, etc., which benefits both. Wukovitz's book is a rehash of Hornfischer's. So what's wrong with Wukovitz's book? It lacks balance about the people. After nearly 70 years the crew is gone, and he had to rely on information from any relatives he could find in recent years to beef up the crew's bios. This ends up with a lot of information about some people, and virtually nothing about others. As a result, the ones for which he could find interviews became more prominent in the book, mentioned again and again, and other officers and enlisted people lacking such information were either ignored, or in at least one case denigrated. One young Ensign, who was a "decent" man, but not one of the book's true heroes, was mentioned so many times it became annoying. Strangely, there was comparatively little about the ship's Executive Officer. Lt.

On October 25, 1944, the USS Samuel B. Roberts, along with the other ships of Taffy 3, was on station in the Philippines. At the same time, steaming through San Bernadino Strait, was a Japanese task force comprised of battleships, cruisers, and destroyers. Their objective was to reach the American transports unloading troops and supplies in Leyte Gulf. In what was soon to become one of the most heroic and valiant displays of courage in the war, the men of the Samuel B. Roberts would, unhesitatingly, attack the overwhelming Japanese force to keep them away from the vulnerable escort carriers. Originally, San Bernadino Strait was to be guarded by Admiral Halsey's powerful 3rd Fleet. However, miles to the north, a Japanese carrier group was spotted. Halsey immediately took the bait and sprinted north with his entire force, leaving San Bernadino Strait unguarded, except for the Samuel B. Roberts and her sisters. Once the Japanese sighted Taffy 3, they began shooting large-caliber shells in their direction. These American ships, only able to make around 18 knots at top speed, would soon be caught by the faster Japanese. For Lt. Commander Robert Copeland, this was not an option. The Roberts and her sisters fought a running gun duel with the Japanese ships while using smoke screens to conceal themselves and the vulnerable escort carriers from the Japanese. Although facing almost impossible odds, the Roberts and her

sisters never hesitated in attacking the Japanese. Hits were scored on Japanese ships with torpedoes and 5-inch shells. Eventually, luck would run out for the Roberts, as enemy shells finally found the range and sank her. But, she and her sisters had done what they set out to do.

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