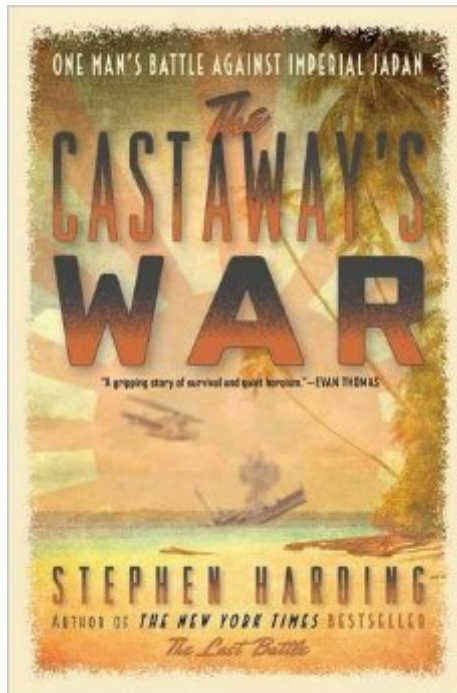


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# The Castaway's War: One Man's Battle Against Imperial Japan



## Synopsis

In the early hours of July 5, 1943, the destroyer USS Strong was hit by a Japanese torpedo. The powerful weapon broke the destroyer's back, killed dozens of sailors, and sparked raging fires. While accompanying ships were able to take off most of Strong's surviving crewmembers, scores went into the ocean as the once-proud warship sank beneath the waves—and a young officer's harrowing story of survival began. Lieutenant Hugh Barr Miller, a prewar football star at the University of Alabama, went into the water as the vessel sank. Severely injured, Miller and several others survived three days at sea and eventually landed on a Japanese-occupied island. The survivors found fresh water and a few coconuts, but Miller, suffering from internal injuries and believing he was on the verge of death, ordered the others to go on without him. They reluctantly did so, believing, as Miller did, that he would be dead within hours. But Miller didn't die, and his health improved enough for him to begin searching for food. He also found the enemy—Japanese forces patrolling the island. Miller was determined to survive, and so launched a one-man war against the island's occupiers. Based on official American and Japanese histories, personal memoirs, and the author's exclusive interviews with many of the story's key participants, *The Castaway's War* is a rousing story of naval combat, bravery, and determination.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 320 pages

Publisher: Da Capo Press; First American Edition edition (May 3, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0306823403

ISBN-13: 978-0306823404

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 1.2 x 9.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (14 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #91,952 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #119 in [Books > History > Asia > Japan](#) #197 in [Books > History > Military > Naval](#) #877 in [Books > History > Military > World War II](#)

## Customer Reviews

In "The Castaway's War", international best-selling author, military historian and editor-in-chief of Military History Magazine Stephen Harding has eloquently told the story of Lt. Hugh Barr Miller, Jr., his ship the USS STRONG DD-467 and her men, including my great-uncle Ensign William C. "Billy"

Hedrick, Jr. The STRONG was torpedoed by a Japanese destroyer on July 5th, 1943. In the book, Steve covers the history of the ship from birth to death and events leading up to the sinking of the ship. He flawlessly shifts gears and ramps up the action when Miller becomes a castaway on Arundel Island, and an unwilling hidden guest on the Japanese held island for 39 days. Miller's efforts to live through his pain and survive are daunting and unimaginable, yet he lived to tell his story. For the first time, it's being told by someone with the proper background, knowledge and military experience. As a veteran himself, Harding has the unique ability to bring that particular perspective, empathy and compassion to the stories he tells. As a family member of someone who served and died on the ship, I couldn't be happier with the book. Few people could have done as well. I heartily recommend this book to anyone interested in amazing survival stories, Naval history, Fletcher-class destroyers and military history in general.

On July 5th, 1943, the destroyer USS Strong was part of a task group of American ships patrolling in the Kula Gulf. In the early morning hours, a Japanese torpedo slammed into the destroyer. The ship's keel was broke and many men were hurled into the water. Among those was Lieutenant Hugh Barr Miller, the ship's anti-aircraft director. As the ship slipped under the waves, her depth charges began detonating underwater. These explosions killed some of the men in the water, while others such as Hugh suffered terrible internal injuries. Hugh and several other men survived three days in the water before reaching land. Once ashore, Hugh's real odyssey began, for unknown to him at the time, he would endure thirty-nine days on the island of Arundel. His raft mates would eventually die, leaving Hugh alone. During this time, Hugh had to deal with his painful internal injuries while trying to evade capture by Japanese patrols. Living off coconuts and water from springs, Hugh tried to keep one step ahead of the Japanese. Conflict proved inevitable, as Hugh had to fight against the Japanese while maintaining his cover. He managed to destroy several Japanese machine gun nests using grenades taken off dead Japanese soldiers. He also managed to acquire two bags full of important Japanese documents. Finally, Hugh was spotted by a low-flying American plane and was rescued. He endured months of debriefings and hospital stays. After arriving back in the United States, he was interviewed by numerous media outlets, and there was even talk of making a movie about his exploits. But Hugh was content to live life with his wife and family, which is what he did. "The Castaway's War" is a heroic story of survival against nearly impossible odds. Author Stephen Harding has written a fine book that describes naval combat as well as the determination to survive at all costs. Highly recommended.

Review of "Then Castaway's War" Stephen Harding  
Stephen Harding has written a tour de force of Naval History, and personal survival, ingenuity, and bravery. He takes time and care to give the background of the building of USS STRONG (DD 467) a Fletcher Class "Bath Boat", and her service in the Atlantic in late 1942 into 1943. We meet the protagonist of 'The Castaways War', Lt. Hugh Barr Miller and his shipmates. They proceed to the South Pacific, there to meet the fate of a Japanese Long Lance torpedo direct and devastating hit on July 5, 1943. Now begins the recounting of Miller's truly miraculous survival of the torpedoing, his survival with a few others of days at sea, and then his incredibly long (I'll let you read how long) individual survival and victory on Arundel Island. Harding's recounting is impeccably researched and presented without hyperbole. The story proceeds to Miller's continued Naval service and later civilian life. He never fully recovered from his ordeals of 1943, and died in 1978. A final thought: Quite unusual in my experience, I found Harding's 'Notes' frequently added information or detail to the telling. I thank him for that, and the 'whole deal'.

Vivid descriptions of an American destroyer being sunk by a Japanese torpedo in the Solomon Islands, and the bravery of one of its officers as he survived the sinking with serious wounds, found refuge on an enemy held island, avoided enemy patrols and attacked some of them. Highly recommend.

This is the story of small-time Southern lawyer who sought a commission as an officer in the US Navy prior to the Pearl Harbor attack. What follows is a fascinating story of a man whose ship is sunk by the Japanese navy and details how he escaped to a deserted island. Well, almost deserted, except for the Japanese navy garrison stationed there. Inside the book the author describes how Hugh Miller used his hunting, trapping and fishing skills, learned as a young man in Alabama to survive. He manages to ambush Japanese soldiers and witness their terrible attacks on the Japanese by American PI boats. I did get a laugh at the curious nature of the Japanese military rations. The difference between nations is very diverse. The story of Miller's situation remained such a large national interest that no-less than John Wayne met with Miller and discussed the possibility of turning his story into a movie. In fact, the story went national with the October 1943 edition of Life Magazine. I really enjoyed this book. Not only was it well written but it showed a totally different side of the war. However, the most interesting thing about the book was how often the author and I may have actually been in the same city and didn't know it. There are a lot of connections to my college days within his experiences. If you enjoyed this book then you might also want to read, "My thirty year war," by Hiroo Onoda. Onoda missed the memorandum regarding

the end of the war and fought on within the Philippines long after the Japanese had been forced off the islands.

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