



Under a Blood Red Sun: The Remarkable Story of PT Boats in the Philippines and the Rescue of General MacArthur

John J. Domagalski

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Elisabeth says

I was excited when I first heard this book was coming out, since the adventures of Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron 3 and the Philippines in WWII have been a bit of an interest of mine ever since I saw the film *They Were Expendable*. Since then I've read several books dealing with the fall and recapture of the Philippines, but there didn't seem to be much out there about MTB-3 besides the original book by William L. White on which the movie was based.

So in one respect, this book was satisfying, because it fills in a lot of information that was unavailable at the time White's book was written. It includes the background of squadron commander John Bulkley, plenty of detail on the design and building of the first PT boats, more about the other officers in the squadron besides the four who were interviewed for *They Were Expendable*, and fuller descriptions of the actual combat activities of MTB-3 (with the evacuation of MacArthur dealt with most thoroughly).

The downside is, the book took me quite a while to get through because of the way it was written. The style is choppy, occasionally producing some very awkward sentences in efforts to dramatize incidents that would be quite gripping enough if stated plainly. The timeline is also somewhat disconcerting, as it switches back and forth between different groups of characters in alternating paragraphs and chapters (an issue I've run into frequently in recently-published nonfiction). There is a *lot* of material on the general situation in the Philippines during the Japanese invasion, perhaps more than needed—while it's helpful to have some context for what was going on at the time of the PT boats' exploits, there does seem to be much that's not entirely necessary or relevant, with whole chapters spent on the decisions of generals, and away from the main characters of the narrative.

So if you're interested in learning more about Bulkley and his squadron, you'll very likely want to read this as a companion to the original *They Were Expendable*; though in a literary sense I think a better job could have been done with it.

Steve says

An interesting read on the escape of General Douglas MacArthur when the Philippines fell under Japanese control. This also tells of the PT boats the United States Navy used in the Pacific during World War II.
