

# The Northern Mariner / Le marin du nord

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## Editorial

I am very happy to introduce the second issue of 2023, which contains two fascinating research articles, a lively and insightful commentary, a thoughtful review essay, and a selection of high-quality book reviews. I want to thank all the authors for their incredible patience as they waited for the publication of this issue.

As a long-time fan of Johnny Cash, I am delighted to present the first article, “Blue Jacket Blues: Lost Recordings of Johnny Cash at the Naval War College – Live in ’75,” by David Kohnen and Roy Cash, Jr. At the heart of this article is a previously undocumented performance by the “Man in Black” on St. Patrick’s Day in 1975 at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. The authors provide an in-depth examination of the concert, using recently rediscovered audio from the event that showcases how much Cash had to “say about civil-military relationships and the future of America on the global stage in 1975.” At the same time, the authors explore Cash’s long involvement with military affairs, the impact that his military service had on his work, his close connection with the Naval War College, and his broader thoughts on American policy, strategy, and sea power. As much as has been written about Cash’s life and his impact on popular culture, the authors highlight that much more remains to be uncovered.

In the second article, “Fleet Carrier in Name or Fact?: The Post-War Misinterpretation of USS *Ranger* as Unsuited for Combat in the Pacific,” James Alvey strives to correct the faulty perceptions that many still have about the aircraft carrier, USS *Ranger*. Naval historians long ago concluded that the Navy Department regarded *Ranger* as a carrier unsuited for combat in the Pacific. Alvey convincingly establishes that this common view is incorrect. Indeed, the US Navy considered *Ranger* fit for combat during the Second

World War, but a range of issues, including diplomatic necessity and the need to fill essential non-combat roles, kept the vessel from battle. Alvey takes the reader through *Ranger's* rich history, from the Mediterranean, to the Atlantic, to the Pacific, and crafts a strong argument. But, as he points out, Alvey is not simply trying to salvage *Ranger's* image. The carrier "is still cited in debates on the size and types of carriers the United States builds. For *Ranger* to be used as an example, a complete understanding of the ship and its context is necessary. Otherwise, these arguments may be built on shifting sand."

In the commentary, "A Sailor's View of Early Service in the *Marine nationale* on the Eve of the First World War," Chris Madsen offers an up close and personal look at the individual experience of a sailor in the French Navy between 1913 and 1915. Madsen uses thirty-eight original handwritten letters sent by George Brucelle to his mother and sister to recount the working and social life of this sailor, including training, off-duty extracurriculars, and health issues. Brucelle specialized in torpedoes and his letters offer a rare window into the intense training and experiential learning provided to common sailors. The author grounds his analysis in an extensive amount of contextual and historiographical content that captures the shifting currents of the era. "Sadly, Brucelle died when the *Casabianca* sank on the night of 3 June 1915 in the Aegean Sea due to a mine explosion. The letters are what remain of a young life cut-short during the war, and an otherwise forgotten sailor only remembered and cherished by his immediate family. Sharing Brucelle's writing and reflections brings a unique lower deck perspective to the working and social lives of a sailor indoctrinated into the pre-war French Navy."

Finally, in his review essay, "Reassessing U-Boats and Convoys," Second World War veteran and long-time *Northern Mariner* contributor, Fraser McKee, shares his thoughts on Lawrence Paterson's, *The U-boat War: A Global History*, and *Convoy Will Scatter: The Full Story of Jervis Bay and Convoy HX84* by Bernard Edwards.

We have some great content lined up for the next few issues. If you have an article, research note, commentary, or review essay that you are interested in publishing, I urge you to submit as soon as possible.

I hope you find this issue informative, insightful, and engaging. I want to thank the authors for their contributions. As usual, I would also like to thank editorial board members Roger Sarty and Rich Gimblett, book review editor Faye Kert, and production editor Walter Lewis for their assistance and guidance.

All the best,  
Peter Kikkert  
Editor, *The Northern Mariner*