

Literary Frolic Fridays: September, 2019 edition

Captain Edward “Ned” Latimer Beach, Jr.

***Run Silent, Run Deep*** 1955

***Who was Captain Edward “Ned” Latimer Beach, Jr.?***

Captain Edward “Ned” Latimer Beach, Jr. was born on Apr. 20, 1918 and died at the age of 86 on Dec. 1, 2002. Between 1942 and 1945, Beach participated in 12 submarine war patrols and took part in the sinking of 35 enemy vessels. For his gallantry in combat, Beach received 10 decorations, including the Silver Star, the Bronze Star with combat "V," and the Navy Cross.

After the Second World War, Beach became a Navy aide to President Dwight D. Eisenhower and also commanded what was then the world’s largest submarine, the nuclear powered USS *Triton*, on a 36,000 nautical mile submerged circumnavigation of the globe.

A prolific writer, Beach published 12 books (3 fiction, 2 memoirs, and 7 works of non-fiction) and contributed numerous articles to a diverse array of popular mainstream magazines (e.g., *National Geographic* and *American Heritage*).

*Run Silent, Run Deep* was first published in 1955, and had gone through 10 before 1960. It was included by the *New York Times* on its *Book Review* for several weeks and was among its 250 Outstanding Books of the Year.

- Beach’s father, Captain Edward Latimer Beach, Sr. was born in Ohio on June 30, 1867. On August 29, 1916, Captain Beach was onboard his 14,500 ton, 504 foot long armored cruiser, the USS *Memphis*, when it was struck by tsunami-like waves which drove it from its anchorage off of Santo Domingo and onto rocks a half mile away; 24 crewman were killed and 204 others were seriously wounded. Though not sunk, the *Memphis* was a total loss and was broken up for scrap where she lay upon the rocks. Though convicted by an ensuing court martial, Beach was later given command of the battleship USS *New York*, the flagship of the US Navy, towards the close of the First World War.
- In 1939, at 16-years-of-age, Beach, Jr. graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland second in his class of 581 midshipmen; in 1941, he was ordered to enroll in the Navy's submarine school in New London, Connecticut, graduating three months later at the head of his class.
- In January 1942, Beach was assigned to the crew of the brand new Gato (pronounced *Gate-oh*) fleet-type submarine USS *Trigger*. Initially the sub’s damage control assistant, Beach earned promotion to become the *Trigger*’s chief engineer and, in less than two years, her executive officer (i.e. XO).

- Among Beach's most harrowing combat experiences as a member of *Trigger's* crew was being alone on the bridge while *Trigger* was on the surface about to be rammed by a Japanese warship barreling down upon her. Carefully, calmly, Beach calculated the speed and distance of the oncoming vessel and at the appropriate moment, ordered the firing of the torpedoes—the enemy had been so close that when her bow exploded pieces of it rained down all over Beach and upon the sub.
  - On another occasion, while attacking a convoy of 45 Japanese freighters, the *Trigger* was spotted by an enemy warship and had to crash dive to 300 feet. On the surface, six enemy escorts maintained a circular course above her general location and dropped a total of 100 depth charges over the course of 17 straight hours. Submerged, the *Trigger* was a virtual captive. In temperatures that exceeded 120 degrees Fahrenheit inside the *Trigger*, Beach and his fellow submariners endured the carnage wrought by the explosions. With their atmosphere now made up almost entirely of carbon monoxide, *Trigger's* batteries nearly empty, and sea water spraying in, the crew had no choice but to ascend. Luckily, one of the enemy vessels had left a large enough gap where the *Trigger* was able to stealthfully escape the deadly circle.
  - In May, 1944, Beach was transferred from the crew of the *Trigger* to that of the USS *Tirante*; less than 10 months later, the *Trigger*, which had sunk 27 Japanese ships and received 11 battle stars, the Presidential Unit Citation, and the Navy Unit Commendation, was sunk by the Japanese with the loss of all hands.
- While with the *Tirante*, Beach, as her chief executive, earned a Navy Cross.
  - In June of 1945, a short time before the conclusion of the Second World War, 27-year-old Beach was given his own command—the USS *Piper*.
  - Between 1953 and 1957, Beach was naval aide to President Dwight D. Eisenhower and from 1958 to 1960 an advisor to the Atomic Energy Commission which was then developing an atomic engine for submarines.
  - In 1960, Beach was given command of the newly launched USS *Triton*, the world's largest submarine (at 447 feet), and the first to be equipped with twin nuclear reactors. Submerging into the waters off of Groton, Connecticut on February 16, 1960, the *Triton* circumnavigated the globe, virtually retracing the course taken by Ferdinand Magellan, between 1519 and 1522. When, 84 days later, on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1960 the *Triton* surfaced again (off the coast of Rehobeth, Delaware), she had cruised 36,000 nautical miles under the sea.

The *Triton* was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation and President Eisenhower personally presented to Beach the Legion of Merit.

- A prolific writer, Beach published 12 books (3 fiction, 2 memoirs, and 7 works of non-fiction) and contributed numerous articles to a diverse array of popular mainstream magazines (i.e. *National Geographic* and *American Heritage*).

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