



Descent into Darkness: Pearl Harbor, 1941?A Navy Diver's Memoir

By Cdr. Edward C. Raymer USN (Ret.)

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On December 7, 1941, as the great battleships *Arizona*, *Oklahoma*, and *Utah* lie paralyzed and burning in the aftermath of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, a crack team of U.S. Navy salvage divers headed by Edward C. Raymer are hurriedly flown to Oahu from the mainland. The divers have been given a Herculean task: rescue the sailors and Marines trapped below, and resurrect the pride of the Pacific fleet.

Now for the first time, the chief diver of the Pearl Harbor salvage operations, Cmdr. Edward C. Raymer, USN (Ret.), tells the whole story of the desperate attempts to save crewmembers caught inside their sinking ships. *Descent into Darkness* is the only book available that describes the raising and salvage operations of sunken battleships following the December 7th attack.

Once Raymer and his crew of divers entered the interiors of the sunken shipwrecks?attempting untested and potentially deadly diving techniques?they experienced a world of total blackness, unable to see even the faceplates of their helmets. By memorizing the ships? blueprints and using their sense of touch, the divers groped their way hundreds of feet inside the sunken vessels to make repairs and salvage vital war material. The divers learned how to cope with such unseen dangers as falling objects, sharks, the eerie presence of floating human bodies, and the constant threat of Japanese attacks from above.

Though many of these divers were killed or seriously injured during the wartime salvage operations, on the whole they had great success performing what seemed to be impossible jobs. Among their credits, Raymer?s crew raised the sunken battleships *West Virginia*, *Nevada*, and *California*. After Pearl Harbor they moved on to other crucial salvage work off Guadalcanal and the sites of other great sea battles.

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Descent into Darkness: Pearl Harbor, 1941?A Navy Diver's Memoir By Cdr. Edward C. Raymer USN (Ret.) **Bibliography**

- Rank: #346517 in Books
- Published on: 2012-03-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.30" h x .70" w x 5.20" l, .70 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 240 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Within hours of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Raymer, an enlisted man, was on a plane headed from San Diego to Oahu. His primary mission: to act as chief diver in the operations to rescue men trapped in sunken battleships. Removing bodies, recovering material and raising the ships themselves could, and would, come later. In this compelling memoir, Raymer describes the multiple hazards of working inside wreckage-strewn warships under the handicaps imposed by available diving technology. Courage was at least as important as competence as the number of dives mounted and the law of averages shifted against the men who went down. Raymer details many harrowing incidents, including one in which he, an arachnophobe, began to panic when a spider stowed away in his diving suit began to crawl over his face in the middle of a dive. The narrative includes lighter passages as well, especially the depictions of how the divers spent their off-duty hours pursuing food, liquor and women. For all its drama and charm, however, Raymer's memoir is useful above all as a case study of the hands-on, un-bureaucratized approach to problem-solving that the U.S. brought to WWII from the beginning. Photographs and maps not seen by PW.

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From [Booklist](#)

Raymer's World War II memoirs throw some light on a literally dark side of Pearl Harbor and the Pacific war--the salvage efforts on sunken and damaged ships. He spent most of his wartime diving career in Hawaii, working on ships ranging from the ruined *Arizona* to the comparatively easily salvaged *California*, but also took a side trip to Guadalcanal aboard a salvage tug. His is a plain tale plainly told, and one could wish for more material on diving and less on chasing women and liquor ashore. Yet Raymer pays tribute to fallen comrades--diving was nearly as dangerous as combat--to good and bad superiors and divers, and to the technical ingenuity of the U.S. Navy at the time of its greatest trial. He adds more than enough to our knowledge of the Pacific war for his recollections to be worthwhile. *Roland Green*

Review

?This is an impressive book written by an impressive individual.? ? **Naval Books of the Year column in *Warship*, 2013**

Users Review

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Jimmy Martinez:

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Maranda Shoemaker:

Your reading 6th sense will not betray you actually, why because this Descent into Darkness: Pearl Harbor, 1941?A Navy Diver's Memoir reserve written by well-known writer we are excited for well how to make book that could be understand by anyone who have read the book. Written with good manner for you, dripping every ideas and publishing skill only for eliminate your hunger then you still doubt Descent into Darkness: Pearl Harbor, 1941?A Navy Diver's Memoir as good book not only by the cover but also from the content. This is one reserve that can break don't judge book by its handle, so do you still needing yet another sixth sense to pick this particular!? Oh come on your examining sixth sense already told you so why you have to listening to a different sixth sense.

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