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James E. Wise, Jr., Anne Collier Rehill. *Stars in Blue: Movie Actors in America's Sea Services.* Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1997. x + 316 pp. $29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-55750-937-6.

Reviewed by Charles C. Kolb (National Endowment for the Humanities)
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Hollywood Stars and Their WWII Service in Uniform

When motion picture stars who served their country during wartime are mentioned, many people inevitably think of the late actor Jimmy Stewart who served in the Air Force. When recalling public figures who served in the United States Navy, others imagine President John F. Kennedy and his PT-109 experience. *Stars in Blue* considers many cinema stars who answered, often eagerly, their nation's call to service in our country's time of need. This unique book documents the wartime experiences of men whose stories range from truly heroic efforts to those of enlistees who performed mundane but essential services and helped to ensure victory.

Authors Wise (a naval aviator, intelligence officer, and author of three other naval books) and Rehill (an experienced magazine writer and editor, and former acquisitions editor for the Naval Institute Press) divide their book into four sections and provide five informative appendices, a selected bibliography, an eight page index, and 117 black-and-white illustrations. They employed official records, archival sources, interviews, letters, books, and periodicals to document their profiles of stars who served in the United States sea services (the Navy, Navy Reserve, Coast Guard, or Coast Guard Reserve) from the 1920s through Korea. I understand that Wise and Rehill are preparing a sequel which will profile movie stars who served in the Marine Corps. We should look forward to it in 1999.

The inspiration for this book came from research on Pacific carrier operations by James Wise during which he learned of the exploits of actor and naval aviator Wayne Morris, who preferred to be called Bert. Some of the men whose sea services careers are documented in this volume were already established entertainers, film stars, or theatrical performers before "the war" or became famous subsequent to their military service. A few of these men were "larger than life" both in the cinema and theater of war (Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., for example); others used the GI Bill to further their education (Ernest Borgnine, Tony Curtis, and Paul Newman, for example). There are a few pleasant surprises –Cesar Romero, grandson of Cuban hero Jose Marti, was a Coast Guard enlistee, who by 1946 played the part of Hernando Cortez in the epic film *Captain from Castile.* The late Aldo Ray (recall his roles in the 1950s films *Battle Cry* and *The Naked and the Dead*) was UDT frogman Aldo DaRe who served at the invasion of Okinawa.

The volume begins with six essays collectively called "Above and Beyond." This is the heart of the volume and details the exploits and heroism of well-known stars who enlisted when in their 30s: Edward Albert (Heimberger), Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Henry Fonda, John Howard, Henry (later Robert) Montgomery, and Wayne Morris. Eddie Albert, a landing craft commander, performed numerous rescue missions during the bloody Tarawa amphibious campaign–a far cry from *Green Acres.* Fairbanks was an envoy to Latin America, served on the ill-fated North Atlantic Convoy PQ-17, trained as a naval commando, became a flotilla commander in the English Channel, was a special operations and planning officer for the North African invasion, and served as a sub-task group commander during numerous major engagements in the Mediterranean near Sicily, at Salerno, and the invasion of southern France. Hollywood writers could not script a better adventure.

Henry Fonda enlisted as a seaman, was resworn as an officer, and became an air intelligence officer during the Marianas campaign, earning a Bronze Star long before his role in *Mister Roberts.* During his theatrical appearances and in filming *Mister Roberts*, Fonda wore his original campaign cap. John Cox, on-screen known as John Howard, was a star in the 1937 blockbuster *Lost Horizon* and became the Executive Officer on a minesweeper in Mediterranean amphibious invasions, winning a Navy Cross for exceptional heroism. Robert Montgomery (a two-time Oscar nominee, producer and director) was an ambulance driver in France in 1940, served as assistant

naval attache in London, and commanded PT-107 long before making the classic 1945 film *They Were Expendable*. Montgomery participated in campaigns in the Solomon Islands and at Normandy where he was awarded a Bronze Star. Wayne Morris was an F6F-3 Hellcat naval aviator and ace with fifty-seven missions and seven shootdowns during the Marianas campaign and at the battles of the Philippine Sea and Leyte Gulf.

The brief second section, "The Early Years," documents the pre-World War II era and includes profiles of naval aviator Wallace Beery and enlisted men such as character actor Ed Begley, comedian Benjamin Kubelsky (who "got his start" in the Navy and later would be known as Jack Benny), and enlistee seamen who became major film stars: Humphrey Bogart, William "Pat" O'Brien, and Spencer Tracy.

The lengthy third section profiles, in alphabetical order, twenty-two men who served in World War II. Some were officers in air combat intelligence (Henry Fonda), others were naval aviators (Frank Coghlin and Charles "Buddy" Rogers), an ace flight instructor (Robert Taylor), a radioman/gunner on a torpedo bomber (Paul Newman), a top-notch air-to-air gunnery instructor (Robert Stack), and an aircraft mechanic (Roy Fitzgerald who was to be Rock Hudson). Amphibious operations saw participation by the aforementioned Albert, Fairbanks, and Howard, and character actor Logan Ramsey. From the surface navy, we encounter college-educated ensigns (Issur Danielovitch, who was already Kirk Douglas, and John "Jack" Lemmon), two enlistees who rose to become Chief Boatswain's Mates (Victor Mature and Cesar Romero), a ten-year man who was a gunner's mate (Ernest Borgnine), and a submarine tender signalman (Bernard Schwartz, after the war, Tony Curtis). We also meet officer candidate Harry Belafonte, actor-producer-director Gene Kelly, torpedoman's mate Rod Steiger, UDT frogman Aldo Ray, gunnery officer Yewell Tomkins (actor Tom Ewell), fireman Martin "Pat" Hingle, navy enlistees Jackie Cooper and Robert Moseley (Guy Madison), and the Coast Guard's Christian "Buddy" Ebsen. Two men were colorblind but served with distinction: Victor Mature and Paul Newman.

Only a few stars served during the Korean era; the fourth section of the book documents three of them: hospital corpsman William Henry (Bill) Cosby, Jr.; Canadian native Gwylleyn (Glenn) Ford who served in the Marine Corp Reserve (1943-1944) and in the Naval Reserve (1958-1968); and John Golenor (who became John Gavin), an assistant air intelligence officer, a film star, Screen Actors Guild president, and was Ambassador to Mexico from 1981-1986.

Appendices document World War II service, providing images of nine female movie stars who entertained servicemen or participated in bond drives, and profiling six musician-bandleaders: Eddie Duchin, Eddy Peabody, Artie Shaw, Claude Thornhill, Rudy Vallee, and Paul Whiteman. Screen siren Hedy Lamarr's 1942 patent of radio communications antijamming technology used in post-war torpedoes–and still in use–is documented, as is prize fighter Jack Dempsey's service in the Coast Guard. A list of sixty-four other stars who served in the Navy or Coast Guard include Raymond Burr, Don Rickles, and early *MASH* television stars Wayne Rogers and McLean Stevenson.

This book had the goal of documenting the stars' sea service, and, as may be expected because of the uniqueness of individual experiences and available information, the profiles are uneven; some are very detailed and documented, others are cursory and might have been deleted. In many cases, the reader desires to know more about certain stars and is left wondering. The six chapters comprising "Above and Beyond" are excellent well-written essays, and those on the twenty-five men profiled for World War II and Korea are, in the main, very good. The appendices, although interesting, often do not fit well with the narrative. Heddy Lamarr's significant contribution appears to be out of place but emended would make an excellent journal article in *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*. Appendix A, "The Ladies Do Their Bit," consisting only of nine photographs and accompanying captions, may hold some interest, for example, for fans of a young Elizabeth Taylor.

Nonetheless, this is a fascinating and valuable collection of profiles of the sea service of patriotic men better known for their careers in vaudeville, silent film, stage, legitimate theater, feature motion pictures, radio and television, or as orchestra or band leaders. This work is unlike Lawrence Suid's *Sailing on the Silver Screen: Hollywood and the U.S. Navy* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996) but comes organizationally closer to a volume by Bill Pertwee, *Stars in Battledress* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992), which profiles British entertainers and vaudevillians who served, in the main, in the British Army. None of Wise and Rehill's stars appear in Edward P. Murphy's *Heroes of World War II* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1990), a volume which profiles American Medal of Honor recipients. The essays appearing in *Stars in Blue* will be enjoyed by students of popular culture, film buffs, and World War II naval historians, and will also be of interest to the general public. However, after

reading this volume, one is likely to visit the local videotape rental store to see these former "stars in blue" as they appeared on the silver screen.

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