

“Sub alongside! Sub alongside!”

(Krause could have hit her with a rock...If he had had a rock to throw.)



Gary Heartsill

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¹ Aaron Schneider (Director), & Tom Hanks (screenplay). (2020). *Greyhound* [Motion Picture]. United States: Apple TV+.

Background

Want to spend some time with a good movie, good book, good author, and a good actor; for sure, to connect the dots with just these items would add but the joy in this paper is answering some questions about the book after seeing the movie.

This note will also spend a few minutes on the deplorable losses in the Battle of the Atlantic and maybe tie in the connection of losses with the merchant marine ships and the U-Boats of the Kriegsmarine (German Navy).

This is not a review of the movie, the book, or the Battle of the Atlantic but the dots connected (hopefully) will serve to show the value and sacrifice of some very gallant people during the first part of WWII. There is no glory in any of this. None of this battle promotes glory.

We just need to be reminded what happened, what and who we lost, and if they had not been successful in stopping the German Navy's *Unterseeboots* some of us wouldn't be here today to talk about it.

"In war men died and ships sank" (Forester, p. 209)².



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8Fkfgnh1o> (5:40/50:05) Battle of the Atlantic. The Supply Line.

² C.S. Forester. (1955). *The good shepherd*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

On the cover page you see a 20mm Flak (Flugabwehrkanon) antiaircraft gun mounted on a special platform just aft of the bridge. Early in the war it was just a single gun but later they mounted twin and even quadruple 20mms as heavier air defense armament was required.

The deck guns were mostly the 8.8cm (88mm) Schiffskanone (Antiship Cannon). “The naval 88mm gun was not the same as the famous 88mm of the German Army. Installed on the Type VII’s, the ammunition was a single unit round (projectile and cartridge) and weighed about 30 pounds (13.7kg). Mounted on a platform just ahead of the conning tower, it had identical controls on both sides, so the crew of two could operate it from either side.”³



Notice no boat emblem or insignia...

Speaking of emblems and insignias, the red eagle covering the swastika, on the side of the U-boat on page one may have come from something like this



Or maybe this one.⁴

³ For all you ever wanted to know about the German U-Boat see: <http://www.uboataces.com/weapon-deck-gun.shtml>

⁴ I Googled German Eagles with Swastika and found about a thousand.

Actually, from the U-Boat Web site the emblem or insignia is for U-132, a type VIIC boat (Operational lost Date: Nov 5 1942). It looks like this:



Quite dramatic on the conning tower with a blood red eagle (head to right) and white swastika.

Have honed in on this scene, this insignia, and this story in the book, because it holds the guts of the fight and who won the fight. I assure you the rendering on a wide screen with the stupendous noise of battle as a submarine (U-boat, really) goes “not ten feet between them” and you can almost feel the hits of gunfire on metal and feel the heat, sting, and perseverance of the U-boat commander fighting it out with two destroyers as he cannot submerge his boat.

It is a toss up which is better: movie or book?

This fight is worth both.

After the title words in this paper:

“That was a scream from the port lookout. Almost scraping alongside, not ten feet between them. Krause could have hit her with a rock if he had had a rock to throw. As it was there was nothing to throw. Not a depth charge at the port K gun; the five-inch could not depress so far. *Tonk-tonk-tonk* went the port forty-millimeter; Krause saw the splashes in the water beyond – it would not depress sufficiently either. Painted on the side of the U-boat’s bridge was a golden-haired angel in flowing white robes riding a white horse and brandishing a sword. The U-boat’s bow submerged again at a sharp angle and the bridge plunged forward into the water again. *Bang-bang-bang-bang*. Someone had got a fifty-caliber machine gun into action too late.

“Left full rudder!” (p. 194).

Did you get that? Where in hell did the angel riding a horse come from? Yes, I asked that question myself. The dots got undotted. To connect, you just have to plug in German insignias with Forester’s creative novel, and Hanks’ screenplay writing...

Which is correct? Well, that is a good question and the answer is on page iv of the book:

“The incidents described in this book never took place.”



His first fire fight in war...Would you believe friendly?

Want to use this image of Captain George Krause to use as the picture of the same person in the book. For sure we can watch and hear Krause lead the convoy from the bridge of his destroyer *Keeling*.

We can also read about him in the book. As a matter of fact we can hear him think to himself and read what he does on the bridge through the author. So, the question is how well did the movie portray the person in the book? You will probably get more than one answer – if even asked, as most people discussing the movie are critiquing Tom Hanks as an actor, and how well the movie was produced from the deck of USS Kidd sitting in the mud of the Mississippi River in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

I want to take a swing at this character by using the words of the author for I believe Krause met the task. There are some psychological places where you will shake your head like I did when Forester paints on paper how tired Krause is after 30 hours of Atlantic War fighting and trying to keep the convoy going east AND keeping the torpedoes from sending 23% of his fleet to the bottom of the ocean...You will see some of this in the movie and you will feel some of this in the book. Blessed are they who get to see and feel both.

If you can wrap your appreciation for the main character around your heart and see him for who he is, you will have met the compassion and strength of the captains of the sea during WWII. It was a bitch (cleaned up).

Listen to Forester – and Krause:

“Yesterday, and today, and forever,” he said to himself, as he always did when he had passed his own inspection. That was a passage from Hebrews XIII; it marked the fact that he was starting out on a fresh stage of his journey through the temporary world, to the grave and to immortality beyond it. He gave the necessary attention to that train of thought; and while his mind was so occupied his body automatically retained its balance, for the ship was rolling and pitching as only a destroyer can roll and pitch – as she had rolled and pitched without ceasing for the past several days...Of the twenty years which had elapsed since Krause’s graduation from Annapolis, thirteen had been spent at sea, and mostly in destroyers, so that his body was amply accustomed to retaining its balance in a rolling ship...

“Captain to the bridge.” It took him seven seconds to get to the pilothouse” (pp. 10-11).

“As Krause watched he saw one of the most distant ships turning until her stern was presented to him. Someone out there of necessity or from recklessness was turning in a full circle; squeezed out from his position he was about to try to nose his way into it again. And out there on that heaving expanse of water could be U-boat, possible one commanded by a cautious captain, hanging on the skirts of the convoy. An outlying ship like that would be a choice victim, to be torpedoed without any chance of one of the escort running down to the attack at all. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (pp. 25-26).

“*Viktor* had heard the crunch; they had heard the breaking-up noises as the U-boat crumpled under the overwhelming pressure like a piece of paper crushed in the hand. Krause stood silent at the T.B.S. (Talk Between Ships). He was a hard man, but his silence was partly due to the thought that two minutes ago, far below the *Keeling*, fifty men had died a horrible death; quick, but horrible. But in most part his silence was due to the unworded realization that this was a peak in his career; he had achieved the thing for which he had been trained as a fighting man for more than twenty years. He had killed his man; he had destroyed an enemy ship. He was like a student momentarily numbed at hearing he has won a prize. Yet the other realization was present equally unworded and even less conscious; fifty dead men graced his triumph” (p. 72).

“Now, Mr. Sand.”

“Fire one!” said Sand. “Fire two!”

Thunder and lightning again under water astern. White pillars of water just visible rising in their wake. Wait one minute after the last explosion.

“Left standard rudder. Steer course zero eight seven.”

Back again for another parallel sweep.

“Deep pattern again, Mr. Sand.”

“Aye aye, sir.”

“Sonar reports indications confused.”

“Very well.”

“Steady on course zero eight seven, sir”

“Very well. Mr. Sand, let ’em have it.”

Another ellipse of explosions, beside the previous ones. Krause had gone through the course at the antisubmarine school at Casco Bay; he had read, with painful concentration, innumerable classified pamphlets digesting all the British experience acquired in two and half years of war against submarines. Mathematicians had devoted their talents and their ingenuity to working out the odds for and against scoring a hit on a submerged U-boat. The most sensitive instruments had been devised, and the most powerful weapons developed. But no one had thought of a way yet to reach a U-boat captain’s mind, of making a certainty out of the simple guess as to whether he would turn to starboard or port, go deep or stay shallow. And there was no machinery to supply a destroyer captain with patience and pertinacity and judgment” (pp. 126-127).

Prosecution of the North Atlantic War

The first six months or so after Germany declared war on the US, was a very unfortunate time for our Navy. Have never been very fond of Admiral King known as the Atlantic Admiral but under his watch we (the US of A – the navy and merchant marine) lost around 500 ships and about 5,000 sailors. I still find this very difficult to believe but you can look it up.

The German U-boat offensive was planned by Admiral Donitz to begin on Jan 13, 1942 and was named Operation *Paukenschlag* or Drumbeat. They were targeting oil tankers (My submarine attorney briefed me on these points). It was a hemorrhage...35 ships in Jan with 1,219 crew and passengers were killed. In February 34 ships, plus 15 more in the Caribbean...and then the⁵ report said: "*The United States fired nary a shot in their defense.*" [Highlight and italics mine.] I would like to add **King at the end of the war got five (5!) STARS...**

"During the first six months of hostilities against the United States, our boats sank 495 vessels totaling 2.5 million tons...In 1942...more than 1,200 Allied ships...were sent to the bottom" (p. xv).⁶

Let's Convoy East...

WEDNESDAY, FORENOON WATCH: 0800-1200

The book follows the WATCH using a 24 hour clock. Some have found this annoying especially on the screen but paying attention to these markers make it easy to keep up with the time – and progress. The book starts on Wed at 0800...

First of all a little lesson on WATCH. There are six watches in a (24 hour) day. Each watch is worth four hours. These are the periods of alternating duty with the crew members on the destroyer.

Wednesday Forenoon watch	0800-1200
Wednesday Afternoon watch	1200-1600
Wednesday Dog watches	1600-2000 {dog has two alternating two hour watches}
Wednesday First watch	2000-2400
Thursday Midwatch	2400-0400
Thursday Morning watch	0400-0800
Thursday Forenoon watch	0800-1200
Thursday Afternoon watch	1200-1600...
Thursday Dog watches	1600-2000
Thursday First watch	2000-2400
Friday Midwatch	2400-0400
Friday Morning watch	0400-0800
Friday Forenoon	0800-1200

So, from Forenoon Wed to Forenoon Friday you are looking at about 48 hours to 0800 and to noon would be 52. The movie ended sometime in the last watch.

⁵ New England Historical Society – U-Boat attacks of WWII: 6 months of secret terror in the Atlantic.

⁶ Werner, Herbert A. (1969). *Iron coffins: A personal account of the German U-boat battles of World War II*. New York, NY: Da Capo Press Books.

Sailing East (with zig-zag)

Going through either the book or movie using these four hour watch periods will tell you, among other things, each four hours is worth about 30 nautical miles of sailing.

Given the round numbers for a distance from say New York to Liverpool where they were headed, the distance is 'about' 1,000 nautical miles. Given the distance of 30 miles in four hour the average the convoy will sail with is a speed of 7.5 nm. At this speed the time to travel the distance is about 16.7 days making about 180 nm per day. A half knot difference either way would give:

7 nm/168 miles/17.9 days

7.5nm/180 miles/16.7 days

8 nm/192 miles/15.6 days

Looks like the zig zag is being used for the 30 nm each four hours.

Ok, they were headed for Liverpool which is a bit farther than Londonderry where the destroyers were finally dispatched.



A US freighter goes down off the American coast.

A couple of notes.

1. They were told in the beginning of the movie no airplane cover for five days (120 hours) while in the black pit. If the movie started in the black pit the Wolfpack showed up very quickly after the cover left. However, the time to reaching the British and the airplane was just about 48 hours or two days. Am only bringing it up as it just shows a discrepancy.
2. The movie showed beginning in Feb '42. From what we have seen about King not using convoys, it is my opinion the movie started before they had set up destroyer escorts which is just another point of contention with the screen play.
3. Then the movie started explaining these gas cannisters to develop a bubble clouds to confuse the sonar return. My red flag went straight up...well, I admitted I had never heard of bubble machines before. I was in error. It is called BOLD (derived from *kobold*) and was from 1942 onwards. This German sonar decoy is colloquially referred to as *Pillenwerfer* which is English for "pill thrower." The Royal Navy called it SBT for Submarine Bubble Target.

4. I jumped straight up when they stopped the ship to bury the dead. They were 'adrift' for a while going through something they needed to do. Will let you decide what you think about it. Will say the book had a service and the sonar pinging continued while he spoke... "as the men bent to lift the inboard ends of the stretchers and as the beat of the propellers ceased for a few seconds when the stretchers were tilted and the bundled-up shapes slid out from under the flags" (p. 210). They certainly did not take very long being exposed to the threat.

"The men were dead; the first men who had died under his command. In war men died and ships sank" (p. 209).

5. Watched the insignia and emblems on the boats. Again, was really impressed with the red eagle on the conning tower – probably on the front, and both sides. Could not find the **golden-haired angel** in the U-boat site. Did find a couple worth commenting on as in U-107 and U-3040. Course, a lot of the U-boats had the same insignias.



is U-107 Type IXB Fate: Sunk Date: Aug 18 1944. Shown on One boat.



is U-3040 Type XXI Fate: Scuttled Date: May 3 1945

There was one with a skull and cross bones but I didn't see a copy of it on the site.

6. The bad ass Wolf on the main sub – painting covered the whole side of the conn – was impressive, done well, but it reeked of Hollywood.

7. One of the U-boats had an English speaker taunting the destroyers with some smack that I thought was done rather poorly. I did not read about it (or missed it) if in the book. More Hollywood.



The USS Robert C. Tuttle torpedoed and burning – 1942. Both sinking pictures from www.uboat

The numbers

The Armed Guard Web site shows over 144,900 men served on over 6,236 American and Allied ships. About 2,085 died and at least 1,127 were wounded as a result of enemy action.

The end of the movie showed there were 3500 ships in the war and 72000 souls.

“The Merchant Marine⁷ lost between 9,000 and 12,000 sailors during the war, depending on whose numbers you use. The National World War Two museum puts the number dead and presumed dead at 11,324, a loss rate of almost 4 percent. Meanwhile, the Marines took losses of almost 3.7 percent with 24,500 killed out of 669,000 people who served throughout the war.”

“When hostilities finally ceased in May 1945, the ocean floor was littered with the wreckage of the U-boat war. Our boats had **destroyed 2,883 merchant vessels** totaling 14.4 million gross weight tons; in addition, U-boats had sunk 175 Allied warships and damaged 264 merchant ships totaling 1.9 million tons. In return, we had paid an incredible price. Our total of 1,150 commissioned U-boats met the following fate: **779 were sunk**, two were captured, and the rest were either scuttled or surrendered as ordered at war’s end. Out of a total enlistment of 39,000 men the U-boat Force lost 28,000 men killed and 5,000 taken prisoner. This represents **85 per cent** casualties. Yet even these figures do not reveal the full extent of the U-boat disaster. Since only 842 U-boats saw battle duty, and since 781 of these were lost, **93 per cent** of the operational U-boat Force was wiped out” (Werner, pp. xvi-xvii).

“Flames were spouting from her, reaching far upward, and so thick about her that he could make no attempt at identifying her. Then a tremendous flash, reaching up to the clouds above, an explosion-wave which he could feel where he stood, and then the rightful crash of the explosion. And then nothing; darkness; silence; eyes blinded and ears deafened to everything until sensation came slowly back, with first the ears reporting the sound of Keeling cleaving through the sea and then the eyes dimly becoming conscious of the foam-flecked surface all about them. Silence in the pilothouse, broken only by someone’s nervous cough” (Forester, p. 107).

⁷ <https://www.wearethemighty.com/history/merchant-marine-worst-losses-wwii>

*There are no roses on a sailor's grave,
No lilies on an ocean wave,
The only tribute is the seagulls' sweeps,
And the teardrops that a sweetheart weeps.*

- German song

Fitting selected quotes - in the text of the book

Let thy words be few, said Ecclesiastes.

Leviathan, that crooked serpent.

Hell from beneath is moved for Thee to meet Thee at Thy coming.

Incline your ear and hear my words.

He maketh the deep to boil like a pot, as Job said.

Every man shall bear his own burden, and this was his – that was a text from Galatians.

God setteth the solitary in families.

The pestilence that walketh in darkness.

There was no Christian charity in the North Atlantic.

A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

A bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.

Thou art weighed in the balance.

There was still duty to be done and life to be lived; and it did not clash with duty to ask BuPers for assignment to the Atlantic seaboard, away from Southern California and the house in Coronado; to tear off the fragile roots that had begun to sprout; to face the rest of life with duty as his sole companion.

Chance – the chance that elevated a paranoiac to supreme power in Germany and a military clique to power in Japan – dictated that when it was too late he should receive the coveted promotion to commander, if it can be called chance.

Chance had made him an orphan;

Chance had brought about the senator's nomination;

Chance had put him in command of the convoy escort;

Chance had made him the man he was and had given that man the duty he had to carry out.

Now he was asleep. He could be called happy now, lying spread-eagled and face downward on his bunk, utterly unconscious (Forester, p. 257).

