

WORLDS AWAY: FOLLOWING MY FATHER'S WORLD WAR II FOOTSTEPS
PATRICK M. FINELLI, Paradise Press, Temple Terrace, FL, \$19.95 US,
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During World War II, author Patrick M. Finelli's father was a U.S. Marine and frogman--a member of the elite Underwater Demolitions Team that was the predecessor of the Navy SEALs. His father fought in the Battle of Peleliu, a bloody campaign in which 20,000 Marines invaded a heavily fortified island occupied by the Japanese. In the first week alone, the Marines suffered more than 4,000 casualties. Of the 20,000 Japanese soldiers stationed there, less than 300 survived. In the end the U.S. forces were victorious, but the cost had been high.

Finelli's father, a modest man, rarely speaks of his wartime accomplishments. When he does it is usually in facts and figures, deployment numbers and tactics. Seeking a deeper understanding of his father's experiences, the author travels to Peleliu Island to see the battle sites for himself.

"Worlds Away" is part military history, part travel log. Finelli is an accomplished technical diver, and because his father was a frogman, a significant portion of the author's journey involves diving. The bays and lagoons are watery graves for a vast array of Japanese ships. One of the most awe-inspiring is the "Fuji Kawa Maru," a 437-foot passenger vessel employed as an aircraft ferry. Its holds are still full of Japanese Zero fighter planes complete with spare parts. All the wrecked ships that Finelli explores show evidence of torpedoes or violence explosions, but most eerie is the "juxtaposition of ceramic bowls, mess kits and intact bottles in close proximity to deformed steel beams and twisted metal."

On land the danger Marines faced becomes more evident. Peleliu's beaches are littered with bullets and mortar shells. Further inland the jungle has grown back, but it cannot hide the burnt-out buildings; the scores of destroyed aircraft, tanks, and personnel carriers; and the other debris of war. Most telling is the island's topography: its hills are riddled with the treacherous caves, trenches, and subterranean passages that Japanese soldiers used to their maximum advantage.

Finelli's writing is as clear and fascinating as the Pacific waters he plumbs. Fans of military history will appreciate his thorough research and meticulous battle site descriptions. Divers will appreciate the technical details of his dives and the sheer variety of sea life he encounters. Color photographs throughout the book help convey the wonder of the author's journey and the magnitude of the battles his father fought. "Worlds Away: Following My Father's World War II Footsteps" is a historically significant work and a fitting ode to all who served in the Pacific.

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