

Discussion questions for *Due To Enemy Action: The True World War II Story of the USS Eagle 56*

Parts of *Due To Enemy Action* are written in a narrative style, through the eyes of characters. How does this style compare with other works of history you've read? Does the narrative style enhance or hinder your understanding of the history and the time period?

Before reading *Due To Enemy Action*, how much did you know about the Battle of the Atlantic and German U-boat attacks off American shores? Were you surprised that the torpedo attack of the *Eagle* took place so close to the coast in Portland, Maine?

In telling the *Eagle* story, the book includes intimate personal stories of the *Eagle* crewmen — both survivors and those who were killed. Whose story did you find most poignant, and why?

The Naval Court of Inquiry originally concluded that the sinking of the *Eagle* was caused by the explosion of a ship's boiler. Why do think the court reached this conclusion, despite compelling eyewitness accounts that suggested otherwise?

In your opinion, whose testimony best refuted the boiler explosion theory? What did you think of Helmut Froemsdorf, commander of the U-853, and his determination to record "final kills," despite the fact that it led to the deaths of his 55-man crew?

In addition to telling the *Eagle* story, *Due To Enemy Action* provides information about other World War II events and circumstances, such as a comprehensive "behind-the-scenes" depiction of the subtracking "Secret Room." Did the book help you learn — or learn more — about World War II? What new information did you learn about the war?

In 2002, the Navy awarded Purple Heart medals posthumously to the 49 sailors who were killed, and to survivors Scagnelli and Peterson. However, the Navy did not award Purple Hearts to Johnny Breeze and 10 other *Eagle* survivors. Do you agree with this decision?

At a ceremony on April 23, 2005, all four living survivors of the *USS Eagle 56* were in attendance to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the *Eagle's* sinking. If you had the opportunity to meet one of the survivors, what would you say, or what questions would you ask?

If you hadn't been involved with this book club, would you have chosen to read *Due To Enemy Action* on your own? Do you typically read non-fiction or history?

After reading *Due To Enemy Action*, do you want to read other books about related topics (World War II, the Battle of the Atlantic, submarine stories and history, anything written by Steve Puleo?)