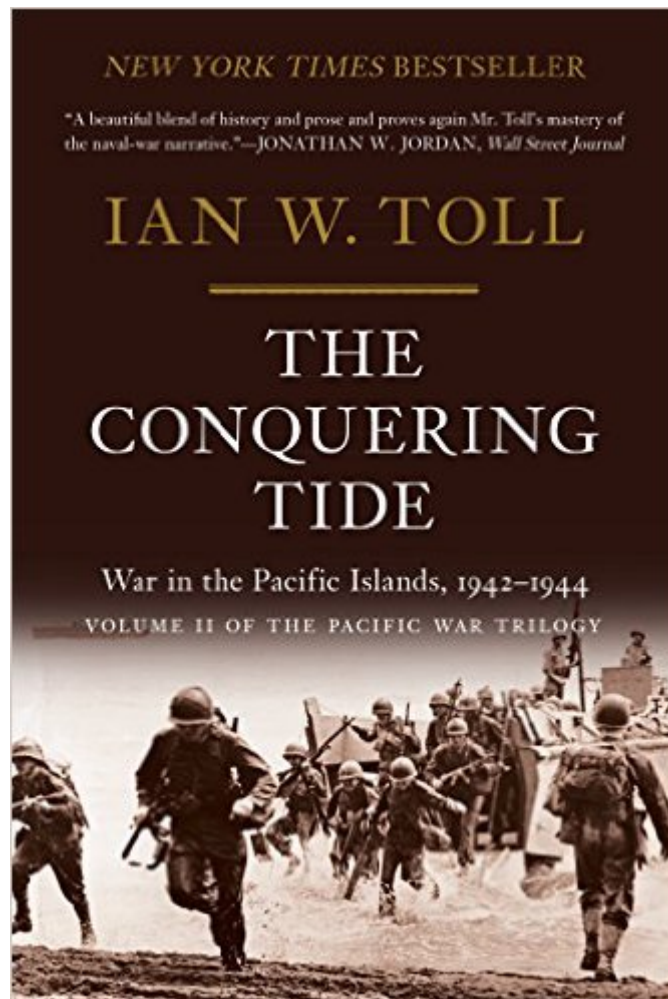


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The Conquering Tide: War In The Pacific Islands, 1942-1944: War In The Pacific Islands, 1942-1944



Synopsis

New York Times Bestseller The devastation of Pearl Harbor and the American victory at Midway were prelude to a greater challenge: rolling back the vast Japanese Pacific empire, island by island. This masterful history encompasses the heart of the Pacific War—the period between mid-1942 and mid-1944—when parallel Allied counteroffensives north and south of the equator washed over Japan's far-flung island empire like a "conquering tide," concluding with Japan's irreversible strategic defeat in the Marianas. It was the largest, bloodiest, most costly, most technically innovative and logistically complicated amphibious war in history, and it fostered bitter interservice rivalries, leaving wounds that even victory could not heal. Often overlooked, these are the years and fights that decided the Pacific War. Ian W. Toll's battle scenes—in the air, at sea, and in the jungles—are simply riveting. He also takes the reader into the wartime councils in Washington and Tokyo where politics and strategy often collided, and into the struggle to mobilize wartime production, which was the secret of Allied victory. Brilliantly researched, the narrative is propelled and colored by firsthand accounts—letters, diaries, debriefings, and memoirs—that are the raw material of the telling details, shrewd judgment, and penetrating insight of this magisterial history. This volume—continuing the "marvelously readable dramatic narrative" (San Francisco Chronicle) of *Pacific Crucible*—marks the second installment of the Pacific War Trilogy, which will stand as the first history of the entire Pacific War to be published in at least twenty-five years.

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Customer Reviews

Ever since I became aware this spring of the release of the second installment of Ian Toll's narrative of the war in the Pacific, I have eagerly anticipated this release much as I would the release of a new CD from my favorite artist or the anticipation of a must-see movie. (I was fortunate enough to acquire a copy of *THE CONQUERING TIDE* at my local bookseller a few days before the book's official release date). *THE CONQUERING TIDE, WAR IN THE PACIFIC, 1942-1944* is the second installment of a projected three-part chronicle of that war following up the critically acclaimed and highly satisfactory *PACIFIC CRUCIBLE, WAR AT SEA IN THE PACIFIC, 1941-1942*. I've read this first book twice finding it to be superb - history writing at its finest. *THE CONQUERING TIDE* is every bit superb and satisfactory as its predecessor. I won't take the space to describe the contents of the book here. Suffice it to say that this book deals with the beginning of the American offensive at Guadalcanal to the irreversible defeat the Allies handed the Japanese in the Marianas. As a writer, Toll has the capacity to bring the story alive, to make you feel as if "you are there." For example, the author gives a description of Nimitz's flight aboard a PB2Y Coronado flying boat to Guadalcanal during that campaign for an inspection tour. After describing the challenges of navigating over vast expanses of ocean, Toll writes, "Nothing provided a more visceral sense of the immensity of the Pacific than flying across it in a World War II-era aircraft." Indeed. Flying across that vast expanse in a modern airliner is adequately daunting.

In the world of naval historians, Ian Toll is the human embodiment of a trifecta. He combines superb research with highly polished writing skills overlaid with a towering talent for integrating disparate threads and themes - including gritty details - into a majestic portrait of the core years in the Pacific war. *The Conquering Tide* includes 542 pages of text that are richly textured and nuanced. One is tempted to devour this book quickly as it is entirely engrossing, and yet most passages are so rich as to invite multiple readings. Throughout the book one is struck by the fine balancing between coverage of all U.S. military services and both sides of the war - ours and the Japanese. While the U.S. Navy shines throughout like the beacon of freedom it was, the massive efforts and victories achieved by the marines, army and air force are given careful attention. The bombardment scenes are show stoppers, but only until one turns the page. "From the decks of the American ships, the bombardment of Betio presented a dazzling spectacle. Orange-red muzzle flashes lit up the sea in a

quarter circle to the south and west of the island. The shells whistled like freight trains and drew incandescent arcs across the night sky. The entire length of Betio blazed like a funeral pyre. Sheets of flame ascended hundreds of feet in the air. The marines cheered wildly at each successive blast. Our submarine force is provided glowing credit for the sometimes relatively unheralded work they did, which was badly undermined by extremely poorly performing torpedoes early in the war. As Toll notes, by war's end, the Pacific submarine force would sink more than 1,100 marus, amounting to more aggregate tonnage than Japan had possessed on December 7, 1941.

In the early chapters of *THE CONQUERING TIDE*, author Ian W. Toll spends a lot of time lingering in liberty ports. Not actually, of course, but the narrative takes long pauses where it stretches out and fills the reader in on what it was like to be a sailor on the beach in San Francisco, in the sleazy dive bars of Honolulu, or courting the grateful local girls of Sydney. It's something of a curious choice; what the sailors, pilots and Marines of the Pacific War did on their downtime is interesting, and often colorful, but not what you would call vital to the overall story. And what a story it is. *THE CONQUERING TIDE* is the second of three books in a trilogy that purports to tell the whole story of World War II in the Pacific, from the first air raid report on Pearl Harbor to the last echo of MacArthur's pen scratching paper on the deck of the USS Missouri. The book starts in mid-1942, with the run-up to Guadalcanal, and spends most of its time on the island-hopping campaign, where the American forces contested Japanese occupation of Tarawa, Kwajalein and Saipan. Island-hopping is a fair descriptor for the campaign, but it doesn't properly connote the incredible distances of ocean that each hop had to cross or the ferocity of the individual battles. Toll begins his story with the high-level debate about whether to challenge the Japanese occupation of Guadalcanal, and the massive naval and land battle that ensued. Toll's focus here is primarily on the air battle and the Japanese attempts to eradicate Henderson Field, home of the ragtag Cactus Air Force. Even in a book the size of this one, there ought to be a little more room in there for a full discussion of how the Navy lost the Battle of Cape Esperance, for example.

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