



As we look forward to time with friends and family this season, it is also a good time to be thankful to the men who fought in WWII to make our life possible today. C. Vann Woodward tells the story of the men fighting in Leyte Gulf in the book that we are reading for our meeting on December 13. The Battle for Leyte Gulf was written in 1947 and reads like the recent history that it was when it was published. Woodward had access to the American survivors of the battle as well as to interviews with the Japanese officers who fought in the battle, talking to them while their memories of Leyte Gulf were still fresh.

Do not let the details about fleet sizes and types of ships in the first chapters bog you down. The further you read, the faster the pace as Woodward guides us through the battles, often with the words and stories of the men who fought there. He does a wonderful job of showing us the “fog of war” as the descriptions of the battles read like a play-by-play of smoke and fire, wounded men and ships, and the frantic efforts of naval officers to keep their ships from running into each other in the confusion. I know it is the holidays, so if you find yourself short of time, read chapters IV and V for the sheer excitement and the awe-inspiring stories of courage against impossible odds.

We will focus on those stories of courage as well as on the decisions made by Admirals Halsey and Kurita. In my lecture, I will give you a bit more background on these men which will enrich

our discussion of what happened. As you read, think about the stories of the men who fought. Which ones spoke to you and why? Remember that the average age of these guys was eighteen to twenty-three. Does Woodward succeed in showing the confusion of battle? How? What details stick with you as you read? Come prepared for a fascinating discussion.

I will also present the books for the spring meetings when we meet on December 13. And yes, I really did change three of the four titles on my original list. All will be explained, I promise, and I also promise that you will really enjoy these books. In case you want a sneak peek, here is our list:

*February*      The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War by David Halberstam

*March*          Polio: An American Story by David M. Oshinsky

*April*           Lone Star Nation by H.W. Brands

*May*             The River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey by Candice Millard

I am looking forward to our discussion on Tuesday, December 13 at 6:30. See you there!

*Donna McBride*