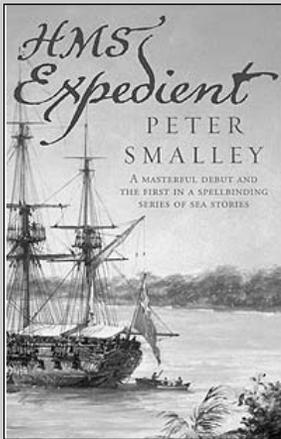


★ QUARTERDECK

A PUBLICATION OF MCBOOKS PRESS - MAY 2006

SCUTTLEBUTT



PETER SMALLEY

HMS Expedient by Peter Smalley, the first title in the Captain William Rennie naval adventures, will be published in a new UK paperback edition in June.

JAMES E. FENDER

The Lucifer Cypher by James E. Fender, the fifth title in the Geoffrey Frost naval adventures set during the American Revolution, will be launched in June in hardcover.

EDWIN P. HOYT

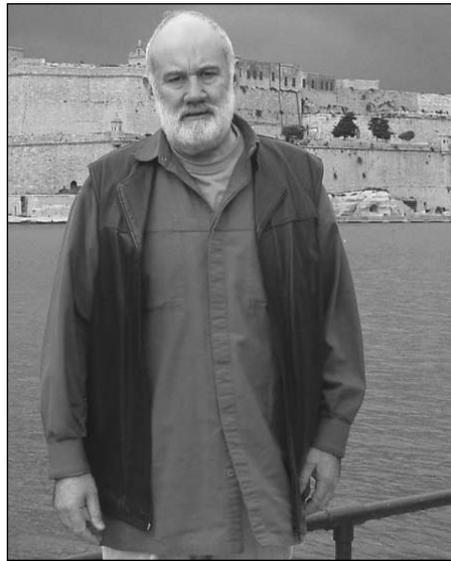
Hellfire in Tripoli by Edwin P. Hoyt, the first in a series of three novels chronicling the real-life exploits of one of America's great naval heroes, Stephen Decatur, during the war with the Barbary Pirates, will be published in a new trade paperback edition in June.

RUSSELL THORNDIKE

Dr Syn of the High Seas by Russell Thorndike, the first volume of seven in the swashbuckling adventures of Doctor Syn, the Scarecrow of Romney Marsh, will be published in trade paperback in June.

JULIAN STOCKWIN

Thomas Kydd Passes Milestone



Julian Stockwin with Fort St Angelo on the island of Malta in the background, during a research expedition for *Command*.

(Photo by Kathy Stockwin)

It has been five years since Julian Stockwin's Thomas Paine Kydd appeared on the literary horizon in *Kydd*. This autumn *Command*, the seventh title in the naval adventure series, will be launched in the United Kingdom.

In this interview with *Quarterdeck*, Stockwin discusses the evolution of the Kydd series and provides a look ahead to *Command* and beyond:

Has your approach to writing changed since *Kydd* was launched?

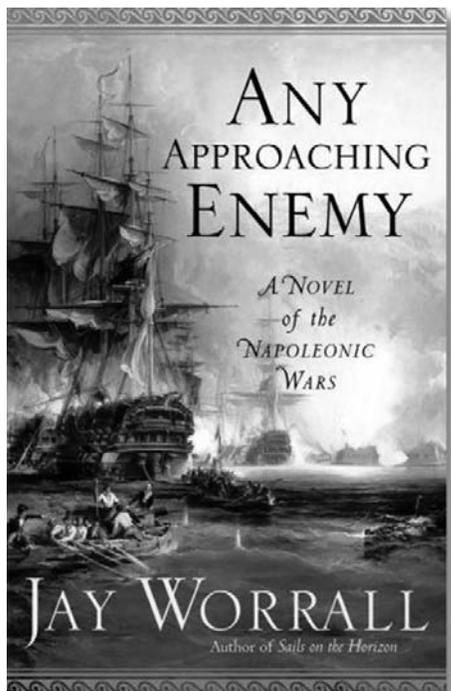
Yes, it's hard to believe that it was five years last month since my first book came out. The time has gone so fast!

My approach to writing has not really changed much in that time. I am fortunate in having a background in computers so I did quite a lot of flowcharting preparation for the structure of the series right up

Turn to page 6

JAY WORRALL

Charles Edgemont Sails Again

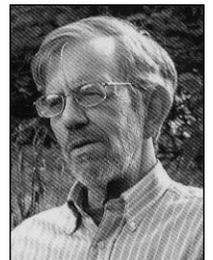


Jay Worrall launched his new series of novels about the Napoleonic Wars a year ago with the publication of *Sails on the Horizon*, which introduced Commander Charles Edgemont of the British Royal Navy.

Any Approaching Enemy (see Bookshelf on page 3), the second title in the series, is now available, with the sequel scheduled for publication 2007.

In the following interview, the author chats about his work:

What first drew you to write nautical fiction?



Sails on the Horizon is not my first novel. It is however my first nautical novel and the first work of fiction I have had published. As a younger person I read and re-read all of the Hornblower books by C. S. Forester. I loved them and have probably read

Turn to page 7

BY GEORGE!

Our England

Our first sight of England's lush, green countryside in spring was through a small break in the early morning clouds as our plane descended on its approach to Gatwick Airport nine years ago. It's a memory that lingers among many that have since accrued.

That first journey to the ancestral home of our families was in one respect a search for the England of storybook naval heroes Horatio Hornblower, Richard Bolitho, Jack Aubrey, and later, Thomas Paine Kydd. I had read somewhere – perhaps in the writings of fellow Iowan and well-known anglophile Bill Bryson – that England was whatever you perceived it to be.

Over the next few days, this was borne out as we travelled daily from our base in London. The capital is a modern, thriving financial center, but our eyes only sought images of ancient buildings, beautiful parks and bookshops, such as Hatchards, which dates back to 1797.

Rising early one morning, we headed for the nearest Underground station, bound for Waterloo Station. There we purchased tea (white, not black), a sack of scones and boarded a first-class carriage for an hour-and-a-half journey to Portsmouth Harbour. As we travelled through rural Hampshire, I imagined Jack Aubrey and Stephan Maturin riding on horseback from Ashgrove Cottage to Portsmouth.

Stepping onto the platform at Portsmouth Harbour, the air was crisp and smelled of the sea. A day following in the footsteps of Nelson, Collingwood and generations of Jack Tars, plus time aboard the ancient first-rate HMS *Victory*, solidified a growing appreciation of maritime Britain.

Another day we were off to Paddington Station en route by rail to Bath, with its lovely Georgian buildings on the slopes of the River Avon. It was a city frequented by Nelson and other naval officers, as well as the gentry, seeking quiet holidays at the fashionable spa, away from the sea and the bustle of London. We were thrilled to find the townhouse held by Nelson during his visits.

Three years later, we were back in England and discovered Guildford, the town in Surrey from whence Thomas Kydd came, as well as the Horse and Groom pub in nearby Merrow village where the young wigmaker had been impressed into the Royal Navy. It was a delightful experience, which made reading the Kydd novels even more vivid.

On a subsequent visit to Cornwall, we were treated to a tour of Richard Bolitho's world, which was created by novelist Alexander Kent, in and around Falmouth by English marine artist Geoffrey Huband. From Pendennis Castle on the headland overlooking Falmouth Bay, Carrick Roads, and Falmouth Harbour, one could imagine the comings and goings of the lad who grew from a midshipman to flag rank.

So we have our special bits of this historic and literary land – perhaps seen by others in the same way, perhaps not – but they are our England.

George Jepson

QUARTERDECK

MAY 2006

McBooks Press, Inc.
ID Booth Building
520 North Meadow Street
Ithaca NY, 14850

Toll-Free Order Line:
1-888-BOOKS11
(1-888-266-5711)

Tel: (607) 272-2114
Fax: (607) 273-6068
E-mail: mcbooks@mcbooks.com
Web Site: www.mcbooks.com

Our telephone lines are normally open
Monday-Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM
Eastern Time.

Alex Skutt, Publisher
alex@mcbooks.com

Jameson Romeo-Hall, Production Coordinator
jameson@mcbooks.com

Panda Musgrove, Art Director
panda@mcbooks.com

Jackie Swift, Editorial Director
jackie@mcbooks.com

Robin Cisne, Marketing Assistant
robin@mcbooks.com

Quarterdeck is published monthly by
McBooks Press, Inc.

George Jepson, Editor
1-319-465-3142
news@quarterdecknews.com

Prices are subject to change without notice.

Coming in June ...

- Peter Smalley discusses his new novel, *Port Royal*, featuring Captain William Rennie.

- James L. Nelson chats about his new naval history, *Benedict Arnold's Navy* and his recent experiences rigging wooden ships.

BOOKSHELF

A Nautical Fiction Tradition

By Charles White

Any *Approaching Enemy* by Jay Worrall continues the new naval fiction series chronicling the exploits of Captain Charles Edgemont of the Royal Navy through the era of Revolutionary to Bonapartist France. Like its predecessor, *Sails on the*

Horizon, *Any Approaching Enemy* sits squarely in the tradition of mainstream nautical fiction. In fact, Worrall reminds me of Hornblower creator C. S. Forester more than any other author writing today. This is a good thing, in that he strives not to be too cute in terms of subject matter and style, instead prefer-

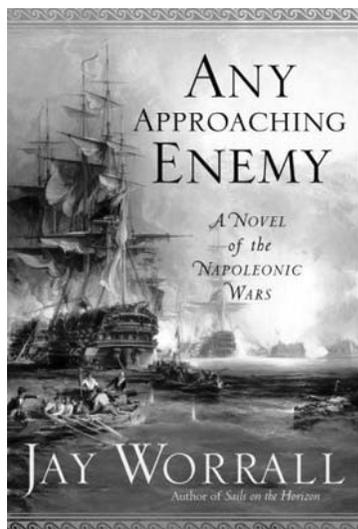
ring to revisit the familiar sights and sounds of storm-tossed decks and officers over their wines, those standbys of the genre that Henry James once cheekily remarked were “enough to make the angels weep.”

In this installment, Edgemont, skippering the *Louisa* frigate of 36 guns, is attached to the newly promoted (and amputated) Rear Admiral Nelson on his way to confront a French expeditionary fleet rumored to be harbored in Toulon. When a savage storm at sea strikes and disperses the fleet, Edgemont, along with most of the fleet’s frigates, struggles to survive the blow. When they do manage to weather all immi-

nent dangers they convene at the designated rendezvous only to find that Nelson and his line of battle ships are nowhere to be found.

Needless to say, and without desiring to give too much of the plot away, our plucky hero is not one to let these few inconveniences keep him from discovering Nelson and his battered fleet, passing along vital info as to the whereabouts of the rascally Froggie force, and joining in the pivotal action at the Battle of the Nile.

While a few elements of the story stretched my tolerance for willing suspension of disbelief (namely, the highly improbable meeting with Edgemont’s wife Penny and Edgemont’s strangely indulgent treatment of a borderline mutinous First Lieutenant), *Any Approaching Enemy* delivers a full-bodied adventure worth the specie. I will look forward to seeing what new mischief Edgemont stirs up in the next episode.



\$24.95 - 277 Pages US Hardcover
First Edition
Bookplate Signed by the Author

\$34.95 - 277 Pages US Hardcover
First Edition
Signed on Title Page by the Author

Note: McBooks Press has acquired a limited stock of hardcover first editions of *Sails on the Horizon*, signed by Jay Worrall. See page 6 ...

NEW FICTION PUBLICATION DATES 2006

US (United States)
UK (United Kingdom)
PB (Paperback)
TPB (Trade Paperback)
HC (Hardcover)

June

Port Royal (UKHC)
Peter Smalley

HMS Expedient (UKPB)
Peter Smalley

Dr Syn on the High Seas (USTPB)
Russell Thorndike

Dr Syn Returns (USTPB)
Russell Thorndike

Hellfire in Tripoli (USTPB)
Edwin P. Hoyt

July

The Lucifer Cypher (USTPB)
by James E. Fender

Against Cold Steel (USTPB)
Edwin P. Hoyt

August

Decatur’s Revenge (USTPB)
Edwin P. Hoyt

September

Tenacious (USHC)
Julian Stockwin

Quarterdeck (USTPB)
Julian Stockwin

A King’s Trade (USHC)
Dewey Lambdin

The SeaWolf (USTPB)
Michael Aye

The Gun Ketch (USTPB)
by Dewey Lambdin

JOHN BIGGINS

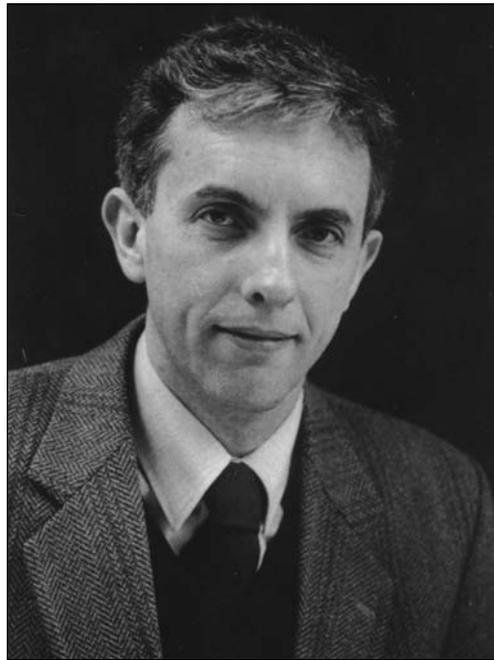
Classic Historical Fiction Out of the Shadows

English author John Biggins' *A Sailor of Austria* launched a four-book series in 1991, featuring Lieutenant Otto Prohaska of the Imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian Navy. *Publishers Weekly* called Biggins' debut novel "A retro techno-adventure story that falls somewhere between Tom Clancy and Patrick O'Brian ... top-notch military fiction with a literary flair." By the late 1990s, hardcover first editions of Biggins' books were hard to find and prices soared on the used and rare book market.

This year, McBooks Press has re-introduced Otto Prohaska to readers with trade paperback editions of *A Sailor of Austria* and *The Emperor's Coloured Coat*, which is out this month. The remaining titles – *The Two-Headed Eagle* and *Tomorrow the World* – will follow in November 2006 and May 2007, respectively. John Biggins, who presently lives and works in Poland, recently chatted about his work with *Quarterdeck*:

Did you read maritime fiction and history as a lad?

I've never cared in the least for "seafaring yarns" – except perhaps for Joseph Conrad's. During my childhood in the 1950s the post-war "Men Who Built our Empire" literature written for boys struck me even then as highly meretricious stuff – though not the personal memoirs of wartime seafarers (Nicholas Monserrat; Ray Parkin), which I used to read with great interest. But nautical fiction as such has never much appealed to me. I once tried reading a couple of C. S.



John Biggins

Forester stories to my son, but we both found Hornblower such tedious company that we gave up. "Real" literature with a seafaring setting – Herman Melville, Stevenson, Kipling's *Captains Courageous*; Pierre Loti; William Golding; Jan de Hartog – most certainly. For the rest though, forget it: I wouldn't waste my retinas on genre fiction (and for your information, I never could read detective stories either).

I freely admit at this point that genre fiction is probably all that I'm myself capable of writing – but I hope that it's sufficiently up-market genre fiction to at least border on literature.

I would also like to point out here that I don't suffer from any armchair-sailor romanticism about the sea or any attraction towards it. It's cold, it's wet, it's monotonous, it's rough, you can't drink it and the human body has a distressing lack of buoyancy when

immersed in it. All of my father's family for many generations back and most of my mother's were seafarers of one kind or another, largely on the notoriously unforgiving North Sea, "Kipling's old grey widow-maker." All of them had the professional mariner's mild horror of the element on which they were obliged to earn their living (they refused on principle to learn to swim) and at the end of their lives they were only too happy to be buried well inland, feeling that they had beaten the odds by doing so. Like them, I feel that salt water is best avoided except as a means of getting from one place to another.

Was there a particular author who caught your interest?

If there was any single inspiration behind the novels it was probably Conan Doyle's Brigadier Gerard series which I read to my daughter as bedtime stories about 1985. The central character was so engagingly vivid – a gallant, generous, vain, quarrelsome dimwit with a genius for getting into scrapes – that I realised that what counts in historical fiction is not the piling up of detail but having something to say and an interesting narrator to say it. But it was a very, very remote ancestry: for me there's

nothing more depressing than a book which is obviously a crib of another book.

What motivated you to write *A Sailor of Austria*?

I'd been making my living as a writer of one kind or another for about fifteen years by that time, but the book was my first excursion into fiction. I just felt that I had a story in my head that might be worth telling, so why not sit down and see if I could make a competent job of telling it? It was (to use a clunking platitude) as much a personal voyage of discovery as anything else.

How long was your planning process before writing *A Sailor of Austria*?

By 7:30 PM on the evening of 17 November 1987 when I finally put pen to paper I think that the book had been gestating for about a decade past: really ever since I came home from Central Europe in 1975. It wasn't planned as a series though: it seemed so improbable that the fake-memoirs of an Austro-Hungarian submarine captain would ever get published (I well remember the guffaws of ill-natured laughter from literary agents when I tried floating the idea to them) that I wrote just the one for starters, with the others looming vaguely in the shadows somewhere beyond it. But all four books were there from the beginning in outline.

By the way, I always write books longhand first go, then put them onto word processor at second-draft stage. I find

JOHN BIGGINS

From page 4

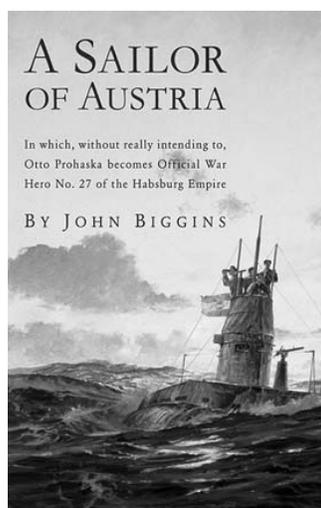
that my brain works about as fast as my hand can write – though as sclerosis progresses I'll probably have to be chiselling them onto slabs of marble before long in order to give my limping neurones a chance to keep up.

Why did you select an Austrian as your hero?

Prohaska wasn't an Austrian: he was a K.u.K. officer which was virtually a nationality in itself. Pre-1918 "Austrian" was a kind of un-nationality – really the only sort which has ever interested me.

I suppose that I wrote the books really in an attempt to purge Mitteleuropa from my system: to try and make sense of that whole strange, sometimes engaging, utterly psychotic Catholic-Baroque civilization which I had accidentally fallen into then found myself trying to escape from. With exclusivist tribal nationalism already on the march again in Central Europe by the mid-1980s I was beginning to have serious foreboding about what might happen when Communism finally gave up the ghost. In the end my fears were not borne out – except in Yugoslavia, of course – but I still felt an urgent need to look at an organization like the Austro-Hungarian Empire which for all its disastrous failings, had at least provided some sort of (albeit tepid) supra-national loyalty: in many ways a bit like the current European Union when you come to think of it.

Also it was interesting to write about the losers – and of course, few lost more comprehensively than the Austro-Hungarians, who ended up

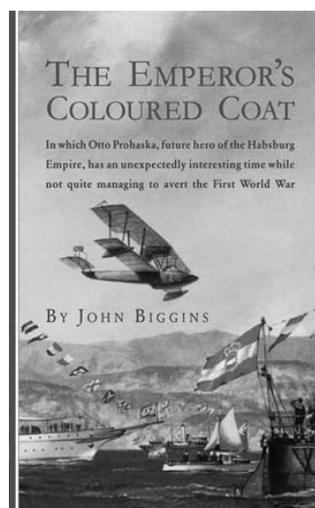


without even a country to go back to. Not the least of the reasons for my long-standing distaste for British "maritime literature" is its relentless triumphalism: Johnny Foreigner (usually the French) is always a hazy presence at the other end of a cannon barrel or at best, a foppish buffoon with a silly accent who couldn't navigate his way from one side of a duck pond to the other. I once idly suggested writing a sort of anti-Hornblower series: the 1780–1800 period seen from the perspective of someone like de Grasse or Suffren who actually gave the Royal Navy a run for its money. The idea was received with horror, on the all-too-plausible grounds that the sort of people who devour C. S. Forester would buy copies only to burn them in the streets.

Finally, there was a certain perverse pleasure, I now see, in deconstructing the seafaring yarn by setting one in what was both geographically and mentally the most monstrously land-locked country ever to have possessed a navy.

What motivated you to write about this period in history?

The First World War was



already sinking below the horizon in the late 1980s as the last survivors of that generation died out. But as it did so people were coming more and more to realise that it was the start of the world we now live in, for better or for worse, with all the rest of the twentieth century contained within it in embryo. It turned out that mine was one of the first of a wave of (generally much better) novels about World War I. Somehow its futility, its epic sacrifice and its baroque horror – also the tragic nobility which often emerged from them – made a much better story than the assembly-line carnage of later conflicts. At any rate, I tried writing a novel about World War II and found that the unrelieved beastliness of it simply got the better of me. Many people have observed that a lot of good literature emerged from 1914–18; very little from 1939–45.

How do you name your characters?

With great care. Few things in fiction are more annoying than to come across characters with improbable or impossible names (cf. Piers Paul Read's

execrable novel *Polonaise* which has Poles with names like "Boris Leninski"). What I do is copy authentic army lists and civil service directories of the period and then select judiciously from them, mixing and matching where necessary. You need to be careful though: at certain times in certain European countries there were some first names which were specifically Catholic and some which were usually Protestant or Orthodox or Jewish. Or some which were very fashionable at one time but then went badly out of favor later. (I mean, how many Adolfs do you meet these days?).

One of the beefs which French readers have about Patrick O'Brian's novels – apart from the French always coming off worse, naturally enough – is that the names which he chooses for French warships are laughably implausible. O'Brian knew French well, so I can't understand why he didn't simply pick up a navy list and abstract a few unused names.

Is Otto Prohaska based on a specific person or persons from history?

Prohaska has no specific single model; he is rather a composite portrait of all the elderly Central European refugees I used to meet in London in the late 1970s: some of them marvellous human beings, others utterly unspeakable. Also Prohaska is a sort of anti-me in many ways: courageous, level-headed and impeccably loyal even to institutions which he is intelligent enough to know are undeserving of his devotion. I don't base characters on people I know, rather chop up people

Turn to page 6

JULIAN STOCKWIN

From page 1

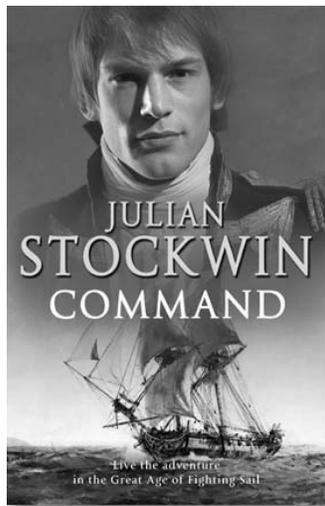
front. I knew where it would start – and I know where it will end.

When I write each book I follow much the same pattern. I decide, in a general sense, the specifics of the book, what characters, details of location and ships etc. Then I go into deep research, both of the period and of the ships and sea, before I feel confident to map out the book in logical segments with the necessary highs and lows, tension build up and release, conflict and so on.

What I think possibly has matured, rather than changed, during the last five years is the way Kathy and I have evolved a seamless working together. She has input at every stage in the planning and of course is my in-house editor. But what is most valuable is the way we can drop everything if there is a stumbling block over some plot point and pace up and down in a nearby woodland area until it is resolved. These paces sometimes last hours – the rule is we may not return until we succeed.

How do you select the settings and historical events into which you place Thomas Kydd and Nicholas Renzi?

This is partly a reflection of the historical record, partly where I want to take Kydd and Renzi for a particular book. You also want to have variety in a series, not have the characters just sail around the Med in each book. The book I am just starting on now, book eight, which will come out in 2007, is set in home waters and is just as exotic in its own way as say *Seaflower*, which was in the Caribbean. Kathy and I spent two weeks in Polperro in



Cornwall in January, and have planned further visits to sites in the Southwest of England.

One thing is certain, though, I have to visit every location I write about. There are certain intangibles about a place – smells, sounds, colours – that you really just can't get without going there. I am a visile and when I write I need to see the story unfolding before me. Perhaps it's just me, but I would not feel confident writing unless I had actually been there. And readers have paid me the great compliment of saying that this gives an extra dimension to the books, especially if they themselves personally know the place I write about.

With *Command*, the seventh title in the Kydd series, in the hands of your publishers, do you have a title for the next story?

Titles are always difficult. I remember Kathy and I thought long and hard about what to call the first book. We came up with all sorts of clever literary combinations but nothing seemed to really hit the spot,

Turn to page 10

JOHN BIGGINS

From page 5

I know and put bits of them together then invent the rest.

What can you tell our readers about *The Emperor's Coloured Coat* without spoiling it for them?

Nothing useful really, except to get hold of a copy and read it for themselves. It's really a sort of sustained counter-argument to all conspiracy theories of history: a hymn to the role of chance, muddle, accident, incompetence, miscalculation, typing errors and bureaucratic dilatoriness in shaping human destinies. It turned out that way in the summer of 1914 not because anyone really wanted it to but because not enough people wanted it not to turn out that way (and a lot of them were out of the office on leave anyway).

I hope, incidentally, that with the United States bogged down in the Iraq mess and now contemplating doing the same in Iran, readers may see even more clearly than they do at present that quite apart from it being cruel, destructive, messy and morally degrading, war should be avoided except as an instrument of last resort because, quite simply, it's hideously unpredictable and never turns out quite the way you intended. The general drift of Anglo-Saxon adventure novels and films over the past few decades seems to have been to suggest the opposite: that military operations do always achieve their desired objective (at least, if you have Arnold Schwarzenegger conducting them). And this is a quite criminal misrepresentation: every bit as pernicious as the "adventure stories for boys" which conditioned the generation of

1914 to shuffle so obediently to their deaths.

But then I don't suppose that Donald Rumsfeld will ever read my books. Or would understand them if he did.

Do you work out your plots in advance, before beginning each novel?

Sort of, though of course with historical novels you're working under certain constraints in that you can't have Franz Ferdinand shot in May 1914 just because the plot requires it. What I do is rough out what I'd like to happen, then draw up a chronology to dovetail it into the real events. But there are sometimes happy coincidences, like finding that the last few weeks of the life of Paul Gauguin did in fact coincide with my scheduled visit of SMS *Windischgratz* to the island of Hiva Oa and Professor Skowronek's lecture on degeneracy in art.

Do your characters ever take on a life of their own and influence the direction of your stories?

If the characters don't take on a life of their own then they're not characters. But you still have to manage them with a firm hand otherwise they'll end up taking the whole thing over.

How important is historical credibility in creating engaging fiction for readers?

While we must take care not to overdo the detail, we also have to make sure that the whole thing is as convincing as possible and contains no egregious factual errors or historical

Turn to page 8

JAY WORRALL

From page 1

each one a half-dozen times or better over the years. Later I picked up the Alexander Kent series. It was while reading the O'Brian books that I decided to try my hand. I am an anthropologist by training. I think what I found so interesting about this era for nautical fiction was that the Napoleonic Wars were in a sense a transitional period just preceding the modern age. I liked what Forester said about Hornblower as "a man alone," making decisions within a context much looser than today, and being solely responsible for them. Also it is interesting how the technology of the day influences culture, expectations and relationships. The world was much larger then, and events – particularly at sea – transpired more slowly. My wife is impressed that a captain's first orders on being informed that the enemy is in sight might be, "Send the men to their breakfast." You could enjoy living in a world like that.

Tell us about the genesis of Captain Edgemont.

Charles Edgemont is a combination of my upbringing and my experiences. My father was a career army officer who, along with my mother, became Quakers during the period between World War II and the Korean War when he was not in the army. I was raised as a Quaker, albeit often for long periods on military bases in Africa and Europe. It is my hope that Charles Edgemont, through the influences of his wife Penny, experiences and ultimately comes to terms with the tension between his basic humanity and what, on a micro level, he is required to

do – namely, kill people and destroy things. As a civilian I worked for two years in refugee camps in Vietnam and have seen this first hand. In addition, most of the novelists I enjoy reading write about otherwise ordinary people who are called to do extraordinary things by the circumstances in which they find themselves. Charles is no superhero. He is however a little stubborn at times. He is quite capable of thinking for himself. Ultimately, he is the kind of person who makes a better commander than a lieutenant. There is a part of him, I imagine, that is the kind of person I would like to be.

What is the role of the modern historical novelist?

Hum..., ah..., er.... Okay, the role of the modern historical novelist (MHN) is to entertain and inform. In particular, the MHN has among his or her tools the ability to expand on the nature of the human experience in differing technological, social and cultural contexts than that the reader normally experiences. All novels, perhaps all literature, are ultimately an expansion on our understanding of what it means to be human. Historical novels add additional dimensions in this respect – they tell us where we come from in addition to who we are.

Why, as an American, did you choose to write from a British perspective?

Don't forget that Charles Edgemont was born in Philadelphia, to a British colonial father and a local Pennsylvania mother. Second, the Napoleonic Wars, as

opposed to the American Revolution and/or the War of 1812, are a very large canvas. It is an epochal period in the history of the western world. I am hopeful that my novels are more than just about Charles and his adventures, but also come to include some taste of these turbulent times, and perhaps even how they echo and re-echo today. Aside from that, why not?

Who are the writers you admire the most and why?

Nevil Shute (Norway) is far and away the single most influential novelist in my pantheon. His most famous works in this country are probably *On the Beach* and *A Town Called Alice*. He was an aeronautical engineer, began writing novels shortly after World War I, had his own experimental aircraft firm in Britain during World War II, and produced some thirty or more wonderful novels on a wide range of subjects and situations during his career. His characters were usually normal, likable people in situations too varied to recount. Very few, maybe none, had to do directly with warfare or combat. Some had to do with its repercussions. Beyond that, I think I am most drawn to writers like James Michener and Leon Uris who write on broad historical themes.

What trouble has Edgemont gotten himself into in *Any Approaching Enemy*?

Not much. Lets see: he directly disobeys orders several times; he ends up sailing the Mediterranean and getting into combat while his wife is on board (which she is not pleased about); he must board and cap-

ture a French frigate that has captured the brig she had just set out to sail home on; he has his precious frigate *Louisa* literally shot out from under him by a French 74 at the Battle of the Nile. There's more, but I don't want to give it all away.

Is a sequel planned?

I have written the third book in the series tentatively titled, *A Sea Unto Itself*. In it, Charles is ordered to the Red Sea to join Admiral Blankett's squadron to prevent the French from sailing from Egypt to foment insurrection in India. He gets into plenty of trouble in this one too.

What kind of response have you gotten from *Sails on the Horizon*?

Pretty good, I think. From the reviews I've seen, regular readers like it. Some of the professional reviewers were a little more critical – mostly of the "he's no Jack Aubrey or Horatio Hornblower" variety. Of course I never meant Charles to be Hornblower or Aubrey, especially not Aubrey. I liked the O'Brien series well enough, I just didn't want to write another one.

Describe your research process for us.

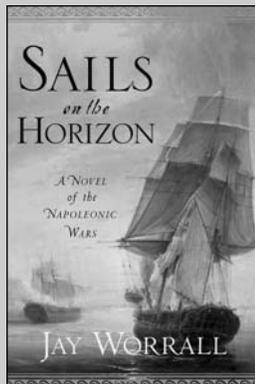
Read, read, read, read, then read some more. I read everything I can find that even remotely touches on the subject: the Navy, society, women, agriculture, etc. I was employed, at least for a portion of my life, as a professional social science researcher. I have also traveled to England, espe-

NAVAL FICTION ... SIGNED EDITION*Sails on the Horizon*

By Jay Worrall

1797 ... Napoleon Bonaparte is racking up impressive wins in the field against the enemies of revolutionary France, while on the seas England is putting up a staunch resistance. Charles Edgemont is second lieutenant aboard the British ship *Argonaut*. When orders come for the *Argonaut* to engage Spanish ships off the coast of Portugal, he leads his gun crews bravely – until the deaths of the captain and first lieutenant elevate him to commander.

Charles is permanently promoted and generously rewarded by the Admiralty, becoming wealthy beyond his wildest dreams. Yet upon his return home, his newfound riches prove no help when it comes to winning the heart of Penelope Brown, who regards war as sinful.



\$24.95 - 284 Pages US Hardcover First Edition
Signed by the Author

\$12.95 - 304 Pages US Trade Paperback Edition

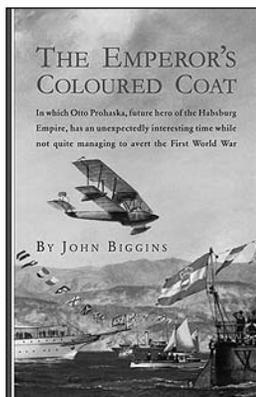
NEW HISTORICAL FICTION#2 - *The Emperor's Coloured Coat*

By John Biggins

The second book in the acclaimed series that follows the hapless Lieutenant Otto Prohaska in the waning years of the Austro-Hungarian Empire finds Otto taking an ill-considered break from duties to engage in a mad fling with a Polish actress.

After a desperate attempt to elude his lover's husband, he finds himself mistaken by anarchists as one of their own. Otto soon masters their code names and secret handshakes, but when he also learns of their plans to assassinate the Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, his duty is clear. He must alert his superiors – now, if only he can find someone who will believe him!

With irony, wit, historical accuracy, and telling detail, Biggins brings alive a time and place that spawned two World Wars, the Cold War, and the Balkan Wars of the late twentieth century.



\$16.95 - 359 Pages US Trade Paperback Edition

Also available ...

#1 - *A Sailor of Austria*

\$16.95 - 375 Pages US Trade Paperback Edition

JOHN BIGGINS

From page 6

anachronisms which would destroy the illusion of reality for an average, well-educated reader. While the point of the books was not historical or technical accuracy – I hope that first and foremost they're good stories – I do take a modest pride in the fact that in 1992 one of the last surviving witnesses of the period I was writing about, the late Baron Gaston von Thierry, whose father makes a couple of walk-on appearances in my first novel, actually asked me out to lunch in London to get me to confess that I'd discovered the personal diaries of one of his father's brother-officers and passed them off as a work of fiction. He said that the atmosphere, the detail and the way the characters speak was so eerily convincing that he simply couldn't believe that I'd created it all by research and imagination alone.

He died a week later in Trieste after writing me a sulphurous letter accusing me of slandering the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. I felt rather badly about this at first – but then he was 92, and I think on reflection that I gave him the opportunity to die a happy man after firing off one last salvo in defense of the Danubian Monarchy which he was slightly too young to have served in person.

I was very impressed a couple of years ago when reading Rose Tremain's excellent *Music and Silence* to see that she had apparently gone to the trouble of learning Danish to do it, because she quoted several sources which I knew for sure were not available in English. This filled me with respect for a fellow professional and as a reader, allowed me to relax and feel confident in her capable

hands as I would in those of a manifestly competent surgeon.

Do you find yourself falling into the past as you write?

Are we ever out of the past? In a sense, all novels are historical novels by definition (cf. French "histoire" for a tale). Certainly you have to get yourself into the likely mindset of your characters if you want to write at all convincingly – and that becomes more and more difficult the further back you go in time. I read Marguerite Yourcenar's splendid *Mémoires d'Hadrien* recently and while I think she's probably got inside the mind of a second century Roman emperor I can't be certain of that and neither could she, impressive classical scholar though she was. The point is that she makes the reader feel that she's done it and suspend disbelief accordingly.

Whom do you write for, your readers or yourself?

I'm absolutely, selfishly, autistically committed to writing the sort of book I would like to read myself and if the readers don't like it then just too bad. It seems to me that doing it any other way you might as well give them an A4 pad and a pencil each and tell them to write their own novel. I write to entertain myself and if I didn't find it entertaining then I wouldn't write it. My trouble all my life has been that I'm formidably good at doing anything I believe in – and totally useless at doing anything I don't believe in. So if I tried writing what I guessed the market would want then it would be pretty poor and unconvincing stuff.

George Jepson

MCBOOKS PRESS - FOUR EASY WAYS TO ORDER ...

Online: www.mcbooks.com

Mail: McBooks Press, ID Booth Building, 520 North Meadow Street, Ithaca, NY 14850

Toll-Free Telephone: 888-266-5711

Fax: 607-273-6068

Name: _____ Daytime Phone _____

Address: _____ Evening Phone _____

_____ Fax _____

_____ E-mail _____

QUANTITY	AUTHOR	TITLE	PRICE
Subtotal			
Shipping charges, if any, are listed below.		Shipping (see below)	
New York State residents add sales tax to both books & shipping.		Sales Tax	
Total			

Shipping is FREE on orders over \$75.00, or \$5.00 on orders under \$75.00.

Foreign shipping by Global Priority Mail: 1-3 paperbacks in North America \$7.50, otherwise \$9.50.

Larger foreign orders will be shipped at cost by U.S. Airmail or DHL.

PAYMENT INFORMATION

Check or Money Order Enclosed: made payable to McBooks Press.

Charge my: MasterCard Visa Discover American Express

Account Number _____ Expiration Date ____ / ____

Signature _____

JULIAN STOCKWIN

From page 4

then my Tasmanian mother-in-law said that there was no title suitable other than *Kydd*. She was so right! Since then we have always had one-word titles, sometimes the name of a ship, sometimes a reference to a major theme or incident in a particular book.

With book eight, I do have several possible titles but I have not decided yet.

How do you select names for your characters?

Obviously in a series you have to keep track of the names of all the previous characters or you might have two with the same name! I have a number of wonderful sources for names for my characters – eighteenth century gravestones, contemporary books and periodicals of the time, the Navy records. I have learned a lesson about names – you have to be happy with a name and not change it later; that causes all sorts of problems as your mind will always come back to the wrong name! Names, too, sometimes suggest a physical or personal attribute but you have to watch that these are not too obvious.

Are aspects of your characters drawn from real people?

I think any author draws on his or her life experiences when writing. I know in my days at sea there were wonderful characters who made a deep impression on me, and while I have not taken any one person as a model for a character, I have used various traits that either impressed me or caused fear or whatever. Kathy says I am half Renzi, half *Kydd*, but I couldn't possibly comment on that ...

You have developed a significant international following for the *Kydd* novels. Are you surprised at the deep personal interest individuals have shown for your work?

I am extremely humbled by this. Every reader who tells me that I have given them hours of reading enjoyment, or helped them relive their own days at sea, gives me special pleasure. And some have taken this one step further. I think of Robert Squarebriggs, a Canadian model maker who hand-crafted a wonderful half-model of *Artemis* and presented it to me. I was deeply touched, even more so in that Bob was injured in an accident and has to cope with disability and pain.

What about Thomas *Kydd* and his times continues to motivate you? Has this changed from the time you launched *Kydd*?

There is so much about the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century that motivates me. It was truly the climax of the Age of Sail, a time when man did not yet have the brute force of steam to conquer the sea, but had to rely on the winds and tides and his own skill. I also relate to the individualism of the eighteenth century. Although there were extremes of poverty and hardship, there was something in that age that is lacking today.

Do you miss *Kydd*'s days "below decks?"

Yes, I do – as I myself missed my days "below decks" when I became an officer. But my tale is of one man's journey from pressed man to admiral. *Kydd* has to move on – and has moved on. In *Quarterdeck* he

became an officer and that was a watershed in the series. But because of *Kydd*'s nature, he will never forget his origins and always have a special feeling for Jack Tar. He is also his own

JAY WORRALL

From page 7

cially so far to Plymouth and Cheshire. I have walked the places Charles has walked and seen his estates in Tattenall. I know where his ship was moored in the Hamoaze across from the victualing dock. I have also gone to Hartlepool and trod the decks of *Tricomalee*, a fully restored Leda-class frigate built in 1817. I love doing things like this.

What is the future of reading and writing in America?

This is a hard one for me to answer with any real insight. I do not watch any television whatsoever anymore. I suppose the future of book reading (the writers will follow) is similar to

man, and on occasion may do things like climb the mast – just to touch base with the past. Or for the sheer physical joy of it ...

George Jepson

that of newspaper publishing. It is no longer a growth industry, but is still a huge and potentially very profitable business. I have heard that more books are being published now than ever before, but their shelf life is shorter. If one is not immediately successful, one is gone. This is a shame because there is a satisfaction from reading a good book that cannot be matched by anything on TV or a computer monitor. A book is slower (like the Napoleonic era) and it forces the reader to think and interact with it. I think that reading and writing will always be around, but there may be fewer big publishing houses – or perhaps more smaller niche ones.

Charles White

McBooks Press, Inc.
ID Booth Building
520 North Meadow Street
Ithaca NY, 14850