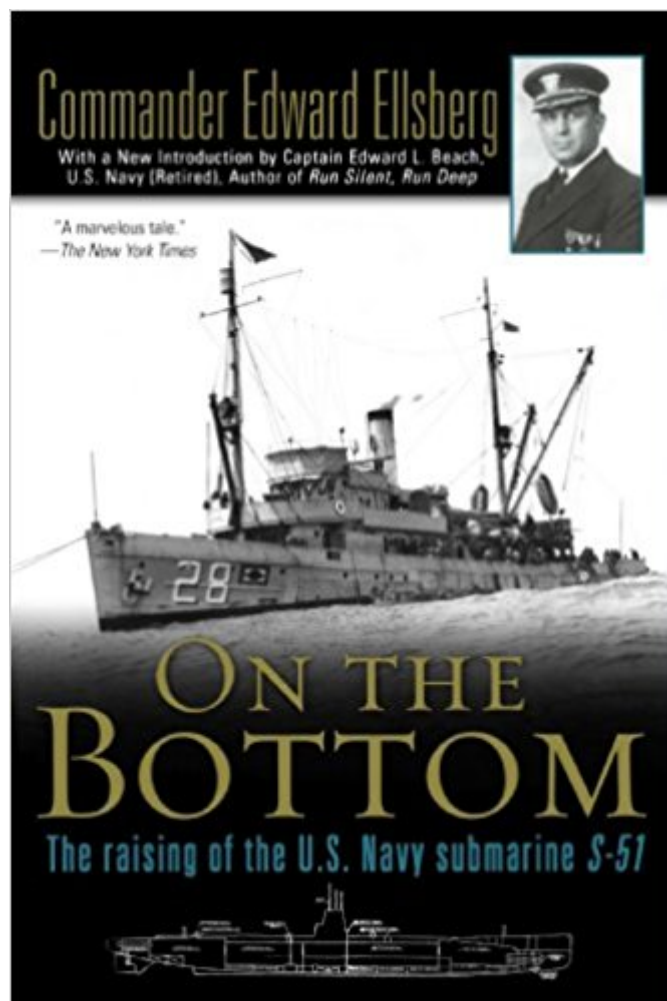


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# On The Bottom: The Raising Of The U.S. Navy Submarine S-51



## Synopsis

In a collision with a steamship, City of Rome, on the night of September 25, 1925, the U.S. Navy Submarine S-51 sank in 132 feet of water, taking 33 sailors to the ocean floor. This is the story of the men charged with doing the impossible—raising the thousand ton sub from the bottom of the sea. Added to this modern classic of true adventure are a foreword and afterword giving specifics of the accident and the aftermath, additional photographs, a publisher's preface, and appendices.

## Book Information

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: Berkley; Reprint edition (April 6, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0451211510

ISBN-13: 978-0451211514

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.7 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 54 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,155,542 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #41 in [Books > Engineering & Transportation > Transportation > Ships > Submarines](#) #2430 in [Books > History > Military > Naval](#) #11941 in [Books > History > Military > United States](#)

## Customer Reviews

"A marvelous tale, filled with moments of horrified expectancy, of impossible deeds and endurances, of achievements that smack of magic." -- The New York Times  
"A narrative more thrilling than any imaginative tale of adventure in the dark depths of the sea." -- San Francisco Chronicle  
"For sheer vividness this battle with the treacherous waters has no equal in recent fiction or nonfiction." -- William McFee in the New York Herald Tribune --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Originally published in 1929, this magnificent account of the struggle on the ocean floor to salvage the sunken U.S. Navy submarine, S-51, has become a modern classic of the sea. What was not included in Edward Ellsberg's gripping account are specifics of the accident, the aftermath, and the extent that the event touched the nation. This expanded edition presents this and more by including an introduction by renowned submariner and author Edward L. Beach; a publisher's preface;

additional photographs; an afterward; and appendixes. Also added is a CD recording of the period ballad "Sinking of the Submarine S-51," an oral interview with Rear Admiral Ellsberg, and a DVD of rare on scene newsreel footage. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Very, very, very detailed information about every step of the recovery of the submarine. However, the reader might want to go on YouTube to watch two videos about the dive suits mentioned in this book. One video is from the 1950's and one is from some time in the 2000's or 2010's. The author of On The Bottom assumes the reader knows all about the dive suits and how they work and all about submarines. But there is no information as to why the captain of the freighter that hit the sub made a sharp right turn. The author mentions the cause of the collision, but nothing to explain the captain's actions. Also, the book just stops when the sub is brought to dry dock. No further discussion of the recovery of the 18 bodies inside. And keep in mind, the book was published in 1946.

I hesitated between a four and five. I went with the four because although it is a good slice of naval history and an interesting read there is a lot of naval terminology which keeps this reader looking in the glossary, and often times not finding term wanted. However, that being said it is a good read, a good slice of U.S. Navy history and captures the flavor of the times. And perhaps most importantly Ellsberg re-creates the dedication, even the heroics of the seamen involved both officer and enlisted. And typical of that time period no one is afraid to work beyond all expectations. That said I think I'll change the four to a five.

An excellent, first hand account of the salvage of SS 51. Although I wound up looking up many technical or naval terms that I was unfamiliar with, I thoroughly enjoyed this book. Admiral Ellsberg's descriptive narrative had me right there on bottom with each harrowing dive. He described ingenuity that is not uncommon in Naval service, which allowed on site salvage to continue when it may well have been delayed days or weeks until proper parts were developed or supplied. This could be made into a great motion picture, showing uncommon valor and devotion to duty. They're all hero's in my book

When I was a kid, browsing a used book sale at a mall in San Antonio, I bought a book named "Thirty Fathoms Deep" by Commander Edward Ellsberg. It was a pretty good yarn about diving on sunken treasure, not very plausible but a good read. I still have the book, and a few years ago

(probably after reading "Run Silent, Run Deep") I started wondering who this Ellsberg guy was, especially as there were a bunch of other books by him printed on the flyleaf of "Thirty Fathoms Deep". Google to the rescue - I found a website containing the US Navy report on the raising of the S-51 (which seemed to be the "Columbia" incident of its day) in 1926, written by Ellsberg. Here was the source of technical themes repeated in "Thirty Fathoms Deep" and I read it thoroughly. In spite of the dry Navy language, it was a thrilling story, and then I read "On The Bottom". This book is more or less the same information found in the Navy report, of course, but with a more human touch. While still somewhat dry and full of technical details, the picture painted is one of men struggling to perform a herculean task in extreme conditions with primitive tools (some invented as they went along), against cruel setbacks seemingly thrown by a pantheon of laughing gods. This is truth on par with Spielbergian fiction and worth a movie, with no embellishment required.

As an ex Navy 1st Class Diver I cannot emphasize enough the courage these divers possessed. Page after page I expected to hear of a diver casualty. I was once sent down to rescue a diver that had a valve stuck open and over inflated suit and inside a tunnel. He made it but never dove again. These divers had nerves of steel and commitment much like our special ops forces today. They make me feel like I was in the pee wee league even though some of my dives were at the 300 ft depth. This is a hard book to put down once started. Heros!, Everyone of them.

For those with an interest in diving, diving medicine, and salvage, this is an excellent introduction written by one who was there when many of these disciplines were first developed. This is not a superficial "I was there" type of book, but a description of the problems encountered by the Navy, the salvage divers, and the engineers who were on scene. Each problem is well described and the multiple unsuccessful attempts and eventual solution to each problem are described in clearly understandable prose.

This is the second time I have bought this book. The first one was borrowed time and again, but not returned. A real life story of peril on the sea bottom. This was way before all of the modern high seas equipment we have today. They were the pioneers in their field, having to deal with what nature threw at them. It shows what grit and determination can do when you are faced with one disaster after another. One of the divers is my grandfather.

I realized one of those lost, Rudy Firm, was related to a friend. Rudy was buried at Arlington Cem.

and Dean had photos taken just prior to the sinking. I found the accounts to be very technical and maritime, out of my class, but this just authenticated the book. I told my brother in law ,who had been an officer on a nuclear sub about the book,so he took me on a tour of the USS Blueback in Portland,Or., the last non nuclear sub built.

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