



# Tales of a Cold War Submariner (Williams-Ford Texas A&M University Military History Series)

*Dan Summitt*

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Following the Second World War, Dan Summitt cruised the China Sea in a destroyer. During the Cold War, he worked with Adm. Hyman Rickover and commanded two nuclear submarines. In Tales of a Cold War Submariner, Summitt tells the dramatic story of his military life on and under the sea, focusing on his experiences with nuclear submarines and Admiral Rickover, “the father of the nuclear navy.” His stories, anecdotes, and detailed descriptions bring this tense era to life for the reader. Summitt recounts his service as commander of the USS Seadragon on its secret mission to the North Pole, where he rendezvoused with the USS Skate to conduct experiments under the ice. Following a posting to Naval Reactors, Summitt then took command of the USS Alexander Hamilton, one of forty-one Polaris submarines in the U.S. fleet. A submarine of this class was 425 feet long and carried sixteen Polaris missiles, each 35 feet high and weighing 35,000 pounds. Summitt takes the reader on a tour of the spacious vessel, describing everything from its living quarters to practice missile launches to the coveralls worn by the crew. He recounts Christmas at the Duke of Argyle’s castle, discusses the difficulties of steering with a single propeller, and describes how the Alexander Hamilton was almost lost because of a faulty needle piston in the snorkel head valve cylinder, a reminder that even the most sophisticated machine can be undone by a simple mechanical failure. In the best tradition of naval literature, Summitt’s memoir offers a first-person view of life in the navy during a crucial period in our history. Readers will enjoy weighing anchor with Captain Summitt, and scholars will find his memoir an important contribution to the literature on the U.S. Navy and the Cold War.



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