



John Paul Jones: Sailor, Hero, Father of the American Navy

Evan Thomas

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John Paul Jones, at sea and in the heat of the battle, was the great American hero of the Age of Sail. He was to history what Patrick O'Brian's Jack Aubrey and C. S. Forester's Horatio Hornblower are to fiction. Ruthless, indomitable, clever; he vowed to sail, as he put it, "in harm's way." Evan Thomas's minute-by-minute re-creation of the bloodbath between Jones's *Bonhomme Richard* and the British man-of-war *Serapis* off the coast of England on an autumn night in 1779 is as gripping a sea battle as can be found in any novel. Drawing on Jones's correspondence with some of the most significant figures of the American Revolution -- John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson -- Thomas's biography teaches us that it took fighters as well as thinkers, men driven by dreams of personal glory as well as high-minded principle, to break free of the past and start a new world. Jones's spirit was classically American.



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