

Farragut and Family: The Making of an Elder Hero

Robert L. Caleo

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Both informative and interesting, this is an excellent historical book on the Civil War era navy.

Centered on the family and the military career of America's first admiral, *Farragut and Family: The Making of an Elder Hero*, by Robert L. Caleo, explores how family can influence a person's life. This book depicts exciting battles and shares endearing information about the Farragut and Porter families (the admiral's adoptive family), while nature-versus-nurture plays out on a maritime stage.

When David Glasgow Farragut is only seven years old, his mother dies, and his father's superior officer offers to adopt one of the Farragut sons. So begins David's life aboard a ship with his adoptive father, Commodore Porter, where he learns much about maritime leadership. As he grows up, he advances in rank, eventually commanding his own ships. After abandoning his home in the south for New York, he helps to lead the Union Navy up the Mississippi River during the Civil War. Following his great triumphs there, he is named a Naval War hero and the US Navy's first full admiral. The book concludes with a brief biography of Farragut's son, Loyall, his own biographer.

Caleo has been a technical writer and a magazine editor, and has also written on historical subjects and taught college. His background lends itself to an incredibly well-organized book, in the chapter ordering as well as in the appendixes, bibliography notes, and index.

The author succeeds in keeping interest and adding emotion without flowery text: "When Farragut learned of that failed attempt to block Confederate traffic flowing from the Red River up to Vicksburg, he reacted quickly, his patience no longer able to check his impulses." Caleo does an excellent job of portraying these real-life characters, both by quoting from their correspondence—inferring mood from interactions—and by providing his own interpretation: "The captain's devotion to his wife, Virginia, over twenty years younger than he, was surpassed only by his allegiance to the flag."

The format of the book's interior is clean and crisp, with the occasional map, photo, or reproduced painting. Unfortunately the book cover's design is lacking; the top half of the front cover and the image on the back cover are both relatively blurry in comparison to the rendering of the maritime battle on the lower half of the front cover.

An excellent historical book on David Glasgow Farragut, his family, and their accomplishments, *Farragut and Family* is a well-organized, educational read that offers much in the line of maritime and Civil War battles.

BETH VANHOUTEN (April 21, 2015)

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