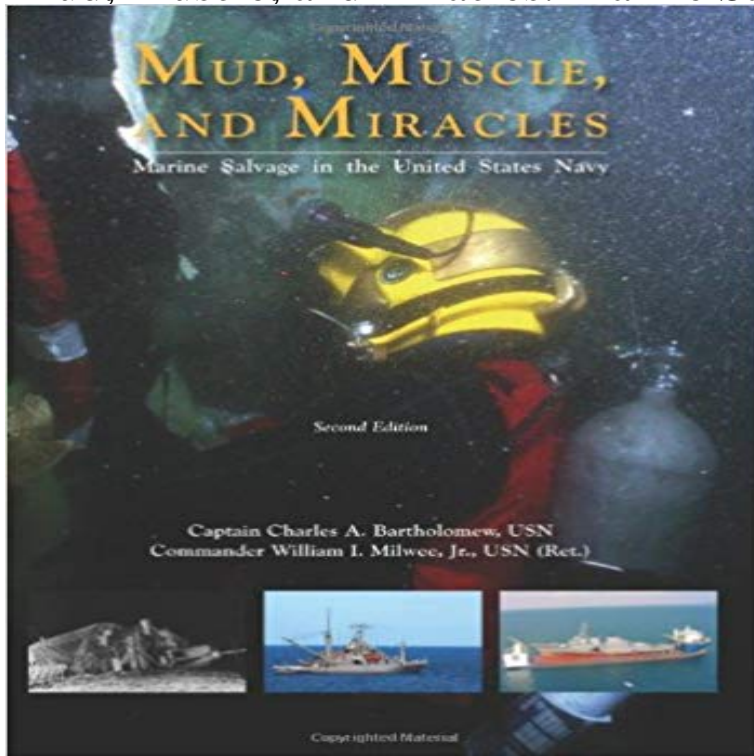


# Mud, Muscle, and Miracles: Marine Salvage in the United States Navy



In the days when wooden sailing ships made up the fleets of the world, a ship that ran ashore could sometimes be freed by the judicious use of ground tackle and muscle. Most of the time, however, there was little to do other than rescue the crew and save the cargo. The rules of the sea began to change, however, in the mid-1800s. With the advent of steam power and a growing understanding of how human beings can work underwater, it became increasingly possible to refloat wrecked vessels, clear harbors, and locate and raise sunken ships, their cargoes, and other objects lost at sea. By the start of the twentieth century, the U.S. Navy had developed a fledgling salvage capability. Today, under the aegis of the Supervisor of Salvage, the Navy routinely handles assignments around the world, guarding U.S. naval and maritime interests and responding to requests for assistance from our allies. Mud, Muscle, and Miracles takes its reader on a gripping journey through the evolution of salvage from the construction of a cofferdam to reveal the battleship Maine at the bottom of Havana harbor to the use of side-scan sonar and remotely operated vehicles to recover aircraft debris and complete vessels from the depths. The story is one of masterful seamanship, incomparable engineering, and absolute ingenuity and courage. It is also the history of one of our nations longest lasting public-private partnership that of the commercial salvage industry and the U.S. Navy. Along the way there emerges more than a century's worth of strong, colorful, and supremely competent personalities, most of whom gained their understanding of salvage on the muddy sea bottom or on a slippery deck with winches groaning and wire ropes singing. Until the publication of these comprehensive editions on naval salvage, they were among the last of our nations unsung heroes.

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