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The Luck of the Draw: The Memoir of a World War II Submariner: From Savo Island to the Silent Service

USN (Ret.) Captain C. Kenneth Ruiz

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A coin flip likely saved the life of Kenneth C. Ruiz. It was August 1942 and he was fresh out of the U.S. Naval Academy. He and a classmate flipped a coin to see who would stand watch on the bridge of their heavy cruiser, the *USS Vincennes*, off Savo Island as the Marines were landing on Guadalcanal. Ruiz was on the bridge when the ship took a direct hit and sank. He ended up in the Pacific without a life jacket, but his classmate and the entire radio room crew perished in the attack. "The luck of the draw" is a recurring theme in this powerful memoir. Following the demise of the *Vincennes*, Ruiz volunteered to serve on submarines for the balance of the war and had numerous harrowing experiences. He spent most of his time on the USS Pollack, which was sub-standard in terms of technology, but was still deadly and made a significant impact on Japanese shipping in the far reaches of the Pacific. A worthy addition to the litany of WWII books on submariners, *The Luck of the Dr*aw is filled with heartbreaking stories of how the smallest decisions made the difference between life and death for soldiers and sailors in the war.

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