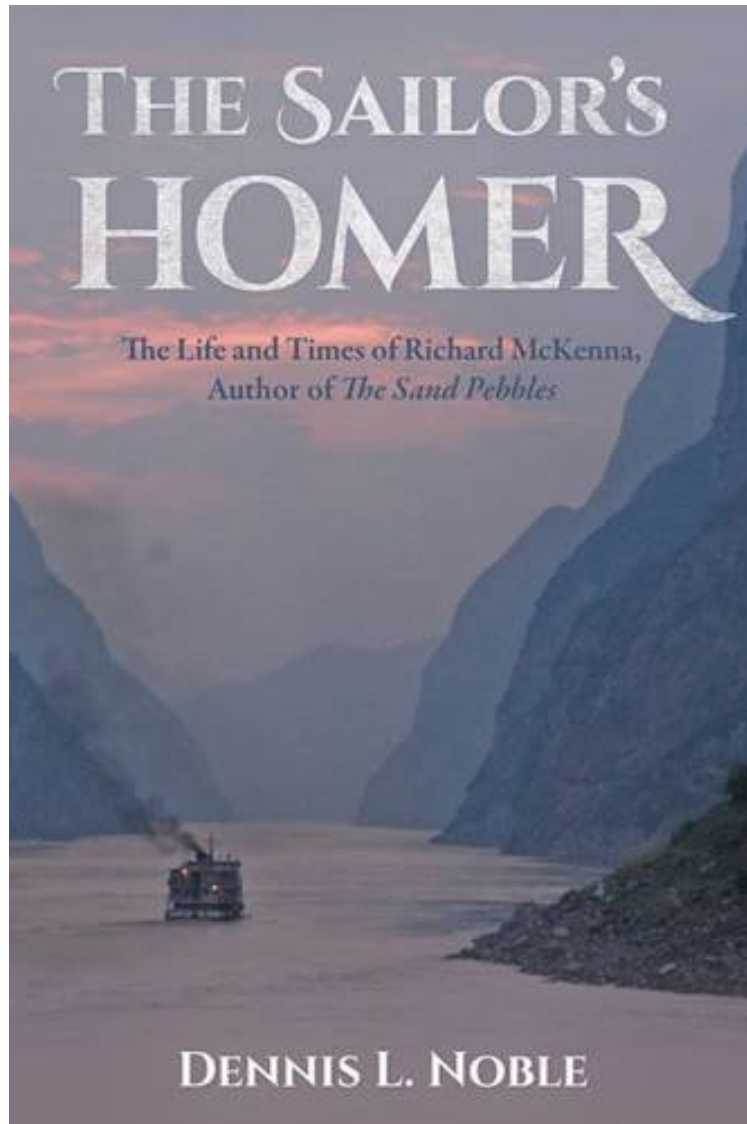


[Free download] The Sailor's Homer: The Life and Times of Richard McKenna, Author of The Sand Pebbles

## The Sailor's Homer: The Life and Times of Richard McKenna, Author of The Sand Pebbles

*Dennis L. Noble*

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**Dennis L. Noble : The Sailor's Homer: The Life and Times of Richard McKenna, Author of The Sand Pebbles** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Sailor's Homer: The Life and Times of Richard McKenna, Author of The Sand Pebbles:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. His Life and Times Ended Way Too soon By William L. Willard, Sr. I'm a huge Sand Pebbles fan (book and movie) and continue to enjoy Left Handed Monkey Wrench. Author Noble

also gets McKenna, who died too soon and wrote too little, and that comes across in the entertaining page-turner (to coin a phrase). 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By James Flynn Extremely Well done 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent insight into Richard McKenna's writing By e9snipe If you liked Sand Pebbles this is a very memorable read!

There are virtually no biographies of naval enlisted personnel, making Dennis L. Noble's book wholly unique. Richard McKenna was an enlisted sailor for twenty-two years, from the late 1930s to the end of the Korean War. Like most of his shipmates, he was one of many "faceless" enlisted sailors. McKenna, who eventually became a writer, did not hide the fact that, like the proverbial sailor, he enjoyed going ashore to such colorful-sounding establishments in China as "Nagasaki Joe's." Nor did he hide his interest in Japanese and Chinese women. While all of this would seem to indicate McKenna had become the stereotypical enlisted sailor, he did not fit neatly into this niche. Two important qualities made McKenna stand out among the many enlisted sailors. The first was his indomitable will, his desire to rise up against seemingly great odds and continue onward even when events seemed to conspire against him. The average person might have given up and moved on without trying to overcome the many adversities placed in their path. The second distinguishing quality was his desire to be educated and to write. McKenna set out to record his experiences in a novel. His love of machinery, his acceptance by the sailors he served with, his experiences ashore with crews at their normal haunts, his interest in other cultures, and his natural intelligence all influenced his writing. For the first time readers could understand the typical life of a sailor. His book, *The Sand Pebbles*, became a classic in naval literature and a major motion picture starring Steve McQueen in 1966. While McKenna focused largely on the enlisted force, his work applies to anyone in the military, especially those in the sea services. *The Sailor's Homer*, in addition to giving context to McKenna's writings, includes his short story "Hour of Panic," which is difficult to find in its entirety. This biography offers more than just a frame for McKenna's work. It provides a fuller perspective on the life of all enlisted sailors of his era, showcasing the oft-forgotten good alongside the bad. Cdr. Thomas Cutler, USN (Ret.), author of *A Sailor's History of the U.S. Navy*, best sums up Richard McKenna's life and work: they are "a virtual training ground for those who must encounter other cultures in their travels and a study in human character with a particular relevance to those who wear uniforms."

"Noble's diligent research has produced an excellent portrait of McKenna. He concludes the biography with the fair observation that through McKenna's writing about enlisted sailors, readers 'can observe a largely overlooked aspect' of Navy life. (p. 168) Readers interested in 20th century American naval history and the life of enlisted sailors should enjoy this well-crafted book." *JAMP: The Journal of America's Military Past* "The Sailor's Homer is a masterful book, a first-rate biography of a complex and overlooked author. Noble shows how to write a nautical biography." *Naval Historical Foundation* "It is brilliantly researched and written by a distinguished author who served as a CPO in the US Coast Guard, about a man of similar background and career. The book is largely based on McKenna's writings and some 200 pounds weight of diaries and papers that he left behind. It is a good read though, particularly for those with a little knowledge of the US influence in Asia between the wars. It has been noted by at least one historian that enlisted personnel have often been forgotten in military and naval history. More so in the United States, perhaps, so this publication is timely." *The Naval (UK)* "McKenna's own experiences as a 'China Sailor' offer a rare perspective of an enlisted man, one who loved the machinery like the novel's protagonist as well as books, a combination that enabled him to put in print an account of ordinary men operating and sometimes thriving in alien cultures." *Seapower* About the Author Dennis L. Noble entered the enlisted force of the U.S. Coast Guard in 1957 and retired as a senior chief marine science technician in 1978. Upon retirement, he attended Purdue University, receiving a PhD in history. He is the author of fifteen books and has received numerous awards. He lives in Sequim, Washington, with his wife, Loren and a spoiled cat.