



Sailors and Sexual Identity: Crossing the Line Between "Straight" and "Gay" in the U.S. Navy (Haworth Gay & Lesbian Studies)

Steven Zeeland

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In *Sailors and Sexual Identity*, author Steven Zeeland talks with young male sailors--both gay- and straight-identified--about ways in which their social and sexual lives have been shaped by their Navy careers. Despite massive media attention to the issue, there remains a gross disparity between the public perception of "gays in the military" and the sexual realities of military life. The conversations in this book reveal how known "gay" and "straight" men can and do get along in the sexually tense confines of barracks and shipboard life once they discover that the imagined boundary between them is not, in fact, a hard line. The stories recounted here in vivid detail call into question the imagined boundaries between gay and straight, homosexual and homosocial, and suggest a secret Pentagon motivation for the gay ban: to protect homoerotic military rituals, buddy love, and covert military homosexuality from the taint of sexual suspicion. Zeeland's interviews explore many aspects of contemporary life in the Navy including:

- gay/straight friendship networks
 - the sexual charge to the Navy/Marine Corps rivalry
 - the reality behind sailors' reputations as sexual adventurers in port and at sea
 - men's differing interpretations of homoerotic military rituals and initiations
 - sex and gender stereotypes associated with military job specialities
 - how sailors view being seen as sex objects
- Everyone interested in the issue of gays in the military, along with a general gay readership, gay veterans, and gay men for whom sailors represent a sexual ideal, will find *Sailors and Sexual Identity* an informative and entertaining read. Visit Steven Zeeland at his home page: <http://www.stevenzeeland.com>

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