



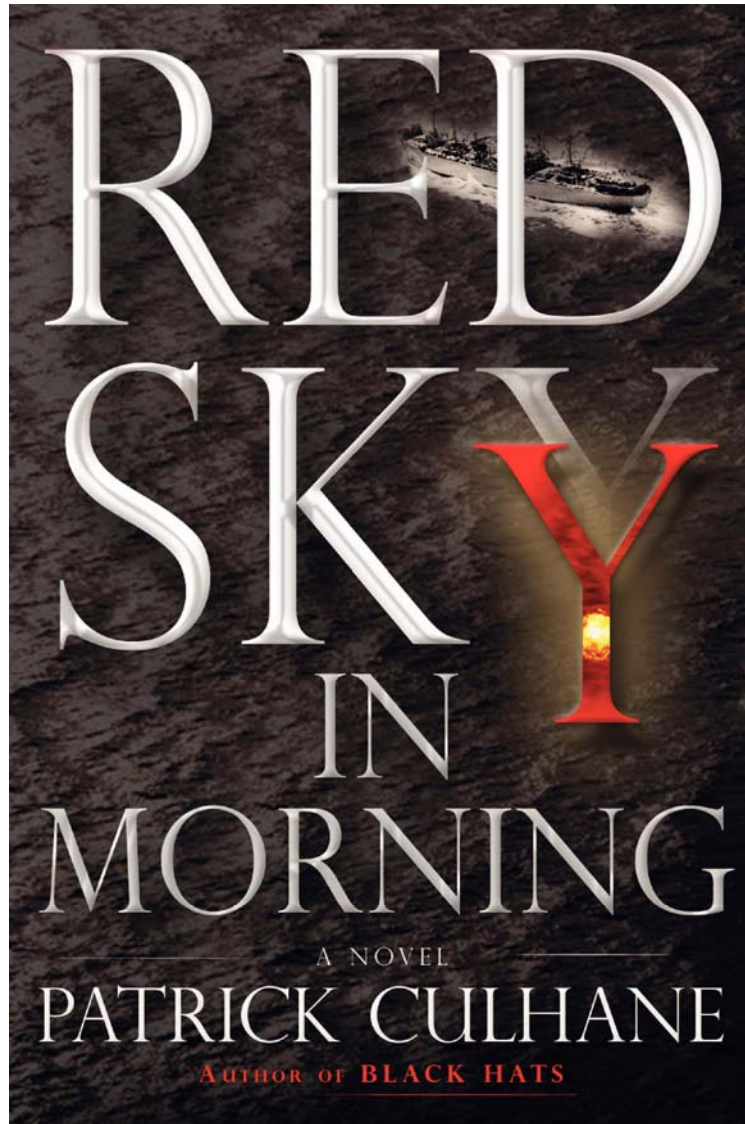
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Ensign Pete Maxwell always imagined that life in the Navy would be filled with epic battles where he would defend his country with honor and valor as World War II raged across the Pacific. But when he finally gets the chance to head out to sea he's faced with tracking down a very different enemy—a killer onboard his racially-divided ship who's taken down one sailor and may be hunting for more.

RED SKY IN MORNING (William Morrow/An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers; July 22, 2008; \$24.95; Hardcover) is a gripping novel of murder set during World War II from Patrick Culhane, the pseudonym for Max Allan Collins, the critically-acclaimed, *New York Times* bestselling author of the *Road to Perdition* trilogy who has been hailed as “the master of true crime fiction” (*Publishers Weekly*). A masterful work of historical fiction based on the real-life experiences of Culhane’s father, a World War II veteran, **RED SKY IN MORNING** is not only a gripping tale of suspense, it is also an affecting and candid look at how even though racism once ran rampant throughout the military some courageous sailors fought to rise above the adversity.

Though Maxwell wants nothing more than to get out on the high seas and fight in the wake of Pearl Harbor, the Navy brass decide that he would be of better use on dry land—conducting the Navy choir and entertaining the VIPs with his quartet, the Fantail Four. When the chance comes for a post on a new ammunition ship docked, Maxwell and his fellow musicians volunteer for what may be their only chance to finally see some action.

But not long after they set foot on the USS *Liberty Hill* (coincidentally named in honor of the fallen soldiers from Maxwell’s own hometown in Iowa) the four young men realize their battles have only just begun. The *Liberty Hill*’s captain, Lt. Commander John Jacob Egan, a man who openly professes his hatred of “commies, coloreds, and college boys,” shows nothing but disdain for his educated junior officers and the largely untrained African-Americans that make up the ship’s crew. The tension between the crew and their white officers soon becomes more volatile than the load of ammunition they’re sitting on. But Maxwell’s cordial relationship with Ulysses “Sarge” Washington—an African-American musician and former detective from Chicago’s South Side—keeps things from overheating.

Upon returning from their first cruise to reload, the men watch in horror as the massive ammunition depot Port Chicago is decimated by a catastrophic explosion. In the wake of the tragedy, Maxwell pledges to work with the crew to not only help better educate them but to also bring a stronger sense of unity and camaraderie aboard the *Liberty Hill*. But when one of the ship’s handful of white officers is found brutally murdered, Egan puts Maxwell in charge of tracking down the killer.

Maxwell enlists the help of Sarge to help investigate the crew and uncover the killer before he strikes again. But there are shocking accusations being made aboard the *Liberty Hill* that no one will own up to—until Maxwell and Sarge put themselves on the front line of danger and uncover the startling and shocking truth.

More than just a taut and deeply engaging work, **RED SKY IN MORNING** is a brilliant exploration of the complicated relationships between young men from disparate backgrounds who became World War II heroes, the social issues that defined the time, and the enormous personal challenges faced not only by those endured the pain of racism but also those who dared to fight against it. **RED SKY IN MORNING** is a compelling and enlightening thriller by one of the genre’s most widely acclaimed and gifted talents.

Q & A WITH PATRICK CULHANE

Q: You've said that Red Sky in Morning is based on your father's World War Two experiences. Have you taken liberties?

A: Well, all sailors need a liberty now and then, right? The thing is, my dad's experiences always seemed like the makings of a good yarn - I knew that for years. But I had trouble getting a fix on how to approach it. My father's specific duty is mentioned toward the end of the novel - he was stationed on what was called a "hotel" ship, which was a ship without an engine, between the islands of Leyte and Samar. My idea for the mystery aspect of the novel - a closed environment mystery, where a murder of a white officer put the other officers in a precarious position with the many, many black sailors under them - would be better served by getting them out on a ship at sea. Isolated. I wanted two explosive situations: the racial one, and the ship itself, loaded down with explosives. Had a murder happened on Dad's hotel ship, Port Authority personnel from the nearby islands would have come to investigate.

Q: Were there any real ships with black crews and white officers?

A: Yes, the USS Mason. That ship provided me with the precedent. I should say that my father's experiences also tapped into two novels I read in junior high that were favorites of mine - The Caine Mutiny and Mr. Roberts. Looking back, I was probably attracted to those novels because of my dad's wartime duty - it was a way I could learn about what he went through. In a way, Red Sky in Morning is The Caine Mutiny with a black crew...and a murder.

Q: You obviously had the idea for this novel for a long time. Why did it take you several decades to get around to writing it?

A: I admit to being intimidated by the material. I've never served in the military, and I wanted to get the Navy stuff right...and knew that would be hard. Plus, dealing with African Americans of that period was tricky. What happened was, several other books of mine (under my real name, Max Allan Collins) paved the way. Murder by the Numbers is largely about the black numbers racket in Cleveland in the '30s; Neon Mirage features a tough black Chicago detective who is the first cousin of Sarge Washington, the second lead in Red Sky. The Million-Dollar Wound deals with Guadalcanal, Road to Purgatory with the Philippines. Then over the last several years, I've written the novel versions of several major WW 2 movies, notably Saving Private Ryan, Windtalkers, and U-571.

Q: Was it difficult writing about your father?

A: Pete Maxwell is based on my father, but he isn't my father. I had to get around that immediately, since there's a sex scene involving Pete and his wife in the first chapter, and if I were writing a sex scene about my dad and mom, I would either go mad or be arrested. Anyway, Pete is probably more me than my dad, as I might have been in that situation – I only hope I'd have had as much class as Dad did. Pete's wife raises another interesting issue – I didn't want the book to be strictly a "boy" book; I didn't want to do a military hardware novel, since that's not my style or strength. So I wanted a strong female character to give women readers someone to hang onto. Since most of the book takes place at sea with a shipful of men, that's not easy. I think I came up with a good way to give Kay Maxwell a major role when she isn't really always around.

Q: What's the story behind the Patrick Culhane penname? As Max Allan Collins, you're a New York Times bestselling writer, with some very famous credits, including the graphic novel Road to Perdition that led to the Academy Award-winning Tom Hanks film.

A: That byline, which first appeared on Black Hats, is an attempt to create a brand-name for standalone historical thrillers. A lot of what I've done as a mystery writer has been series, and I continue to do series – in fact, I'll be resuming the Shamus-Award-winning Nathan Heller series soon, and recently have done novels in my Quarry and Ms. Tree series. Plus, there are the many tie-in novels I do – novels associated either with movies or TV. The movie novels are adaptations of the scripts of a film, like my recent X-Files 2 for HarperCollins. The TV novels tend to be original novels, like the current Criminal Minds books. With my byline associated with these other areas of work, we wanted to set the Culhane novels apart as something if not more serious, certainly different. Perhaps more major.

Q: Why the fascination with history?

A: It's the "story" part of the word, I guess. I was always the kind of person who, after seeing a historical movie or reading an historical novel, went straight to the source materials to see what really happened. I suppose this began with The Untouchables on TV, wanting to read about the real Eliot Ness and Al Capone – an obsession that led many decades later to my play and film (now on DVD!), Eliot Ness: An Untouchable Life. Oddly, when my career started, I was known for doing topical material – that was my trademark when I was writing the DICK TRACY comic strip. The MS. TREE graphic novels of the '80s and '90s were topically driven – gay bashing, date rape, abortion clinic bombings.

Q: So how much research do you do?

A: There's more research than writing! It's an ongoing thing - I began collecting books and magazines for Red Sky probably twenty years ago. I do have help, though - often it's been my Nate Heller series research associate, George Hagenauer, who was involved with this novel, but the primary researcher here was Matthew V. Clemens. Matt was involved with this book every step of the way, helping on the plot, too. He and I have done lots of tie-in novels together, including all of the CSI and Criminal Minds books.

Q: What's next for Patrick Culhane and Max Allan Collins?

A: I'm just noodling with another Culhane right now - I have an historical idea that I hope my editor will like. There's lots of movie interest in Black Hats, which could lead to a sequel. As for Max in real life, I have several books out right now under the M.A.C. byline, including Strip for Murder, which combines a prose novel with graphic novel elements. I've been writing a cozy series about antiquing with my wife Barb, under the name "Barbara Allan" - the third of those, Antiques Flee Market, will be out before Christmas. There's a movie I wrote, based on my novel The Last Quarry, called "The Last Lullaby" that should be out sometime in 2008.

Q: What's the story on your association with the late, great Mickey Spillane, dean of noir mystery writers?

Mickey was my literary hero as a kid, and we became friends early in my career. I did a bunch of projects with Mickey, mostly anthologies we put together and also a comic book called MIKE DANGER. During the last several decades of his life, Mickey had numerous books going in several offices, and left a surprising number of half-finished manuscripts, usually with extensive notes. In the last week of his life, he asked me to take these manuscripts and finish them. The first one, a crime novel called Dead Street, was published last year by Hard Case Crime to incredible reviews. And I'm completing at least three Mike Hammer novels (two more half-complete manuscripts await after that) for Otto Penzler at Harcourt, starting with The Goliath Bone in the fall of this year. This is a labor of love for me and a great honor. Mickey knew about Red Sky, incidentally, and was anxious to read it. That's a real sadness for me - that neither of my fathers, the literary one or my real one, lived to read this book.

WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

BEHIND RED SKY IN MORNING BY PATRICK CULHANE

My pop, like most Greatest Generation veterans, didn't volunteer much about his wartime experiences, and when he did, it was mostly humorous anecdotes. In passing, the uniqueness of his duty would be touched upon – that as a Lieutenant Junior Grade, he was one of a handful of young white officers in charge of a large group of African-American sailors. By my teens, I began to understand just how dangerous it must have been to be stuck out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean in such a racially charged environment, a kid of 22 supervising hundreds of black stevedores as they loaded ammunition and explosives. Any moment a race war might ignite, if a blast didn't.

My father had been raised in a small town in Iowa where the African American population was zero. He had seen a few black people in Des Moines, going to the state fair with his folks. But to be plopped down in the midst of sailors from the ghettos of Detroit and Chicago and the fields of Alabama and Mississippi, leading them in perilous duty under sweltering sun on islands and ships, must have been like being assigned to Mars or Oz.

I wouldn't say my father was without racial bias – he was a man of his times – but I found it interesting and gratifying that his proudest accomplishments were all related to seeing to it that his men were treated fairly and with respect. Only now do I realize just how young my dad was when he bucked the brass to insist on proper meat rations and work boots for his men, and took it upon himself to teach many of them to read.

And here he was, just a boy from Iowa, going to bat for his “colored” men, and I'm proud of him for it. He was proud, too, because he said that his company had spotless work records compared to the other white-run black stevedore companies, who were plagued with court-martials and other racially-driven problems. The Port Chicago disaster, in which hundreds of sailors (mostly black) were killed, due to slack training and poor conditions, put young white officers like my pop on the spot. I asked him how he pulled it off so successfully, and he said, “We just treated them as people. That's all it took.”

In the mid-'80s, I began to build a reputation (under my real name, Max Allan Collins) as an author of historical crime fiction. I began spending more time in the past, in my novels (and sometimes in real life, doing research), than the present; and I knew something both contemporary and timeless was waiting for me when I got around to writing a novel based on my father's wartime experiences. In 1999, I sat down with Dad (who was suffering from Lupus) and did an in-depth interview with him for a novel I was then calling U.S.S. Powderkeg; a few months later, he passed away on his 78th birthday. I believe he was pleased, perhaps even honored, and he gave me great material whose potential I hope I've lived up to in the pages of Red Sky in Morning.