*The following is his biography excerpted from the Naval History & Heritage Command website:*

Samuel Eliot Morison, son of John H. and Emily Marshall (Eliot) Morison, was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on 9 July 1887. He attended Noble’s School at Boston, and St. Paul’s at Concord, New Hampshire, before entering Harvard University, from which he was graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1908. He studied at the Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques, Paris, France, in 1908-1909, and returned to Harvard for postgraduate work, receiving the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 1912. Thereafter he became Instructor, first at the University of California in Berkeley, and in 1915 at Harvard. Except for three years (1922-1925) when he was Harmsworth Professor of American History at Oxford, England, and his periods of active duty during both World Wars, he remained continuously at Harvard University as lecturer and professor until his retirement in 1955.

He had World War I service as a private in the US Army, but not overseas. As he had done some preliminary studies on Finland for Colonel House’s Inquiry, he was detailed from the Army in January 1919 and attached to the Russian Division of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace, at Paris, his specialty being Finland and the Baltic States. He served as the American Delegate on the Baltic Commission of the Peace Conference until 17 June 1919, and shortly after returned to the United States. He became a full Professor at Harvard in 1925 and was appointed to the Jonathan Trumbull Chair in 1940. He also taught American History at Johns Hopkins University in 1941-1942.

Living up to his sea-going background – he has sailed in small boats and coastal craft all his life. In 1939-1940, he organized and commanded the Harvard Columbus Expedition which retraced the voyages of Columbus in sailing ships, barkentine Capitana and ketch Mary Otis. After crossing the Atlantic under sail to Spain and back, and examining all the shores visited by Columbus in the Caribbean, he wrote "Admiral of the Ocean Sea", an outstanding biography of Columbus, which won a Pulitzer Prize in 1943. He also wrote a shorter biography, "Christopher Columbus, Mariner". With Maurico Obregon of Bogota, he surveyed ads photographed the shores of the Caribbean by air and published an illustrated book "The Caribbean as Columbus Saw It" (1964).

Shortly after the United States entered World War II, Dr. Morison proposed to his friend President Roosevelt, to write the operational history of the US Navy from the inside, by taking part in operations and writing them up afterwards. The idea appealed to the President and Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, and on 5 May 1942, Dr. Morison was commissioned Lieutenant Commander, US Naval Reserve, and was called at once to active duty. He subsequently advanced to the rank of Captain on 15 December 1945. His transfer to the Honorary Retired List of the Naval Reserve became effective on 1 August 1951, when he was promoted to Rear Admiral on the basis of combat awards.

In July-August 1942 he sailed with Commander Destroyer Squadron Thirteen (Captain John B. Heffernan, USN), on *USS Buck*, flagship, on convoy duty in the Atlantic. In October of that year, on *USS Brooklyn* with Captain Francis D. Denebrink, he participated in Operation TORCH (Allied landings in North and Northwestern Africa - 8 November 1942). In March 1943, while attached to Pacific Fleet Forces, he visited Noumea, Guadalcanal, Australia, and on Washington made a cruise with Vice Admiral W. A. Lee, Jr., USN. He also patrolled around Papua in motor torpedo boats, made three trips up “the Slot” on Honolulu, flagship of Commander Cruisers, Pacific Fleet (Rear Admiral W.W. Ainsworth, USN), and took part in the Battle of Kolombangara before returning to the mainland. Again in the Pacific War Area in September 1943, he participated in the Gilbert Islands operation on board USS Baltimore, under command of Captain Walter C. Calhoun, USN. For the remainder of the Winter he worked at Pearl Harbor, and in the Spring of 1944, again on board Honolulu, he participated in the Marianas operation before returning to the United States to write.

In November 1944 he sailed for Europe in the cutter Campbell with Captain W.A.P. Martin, USN, Commander of a convoy escort group. He left Campbell at Gibraltar to visit scenes of recent action in Italy and France, and flew back to the United States in January 1945. In February he joined USS Tennessee, commanded by Captain Heffernan, and flagship of Commander, Gunfire and Covering Force (Rear Admiral Morton L. Deyo, USN). During the amphibious assault upon and subsequent conquest of Okinawa he witnessed many actions under enemy air attack. He later visited Iwo Jima and the Philippines and spent some time working on files in Guam.

In July 1945 he returned again to the United States to work. Released to inactive duty in September 1946, he returned to duty at Harvard, maintaining an office in the Navy Department under the Director of Naval Records and History, to continue his work on the History of United States Naval Operations in World War II. The introduction to the history was written by Commodore Dudley W. Knox, USN, Retired, and in a preface to the first volume, the Secretary of the Navy had made it clear that the author, not the Navy, is responsible for the work. He was assisted from time to time by various Naval Reserve officers and others who had active war service. On 1 March 1963, the International Balzan Foundation announced that Admiral Morison was winner of its cultural prize ($51,750) for his 15-volume history and other maritime research. The 15 historical volumes, published by Little, Brown & Company of Boston, are as follows:

1. The Battle of the Atlantic, September 1939 – May 1943, (1947)
2. Operations in North African Waters, October 1942 – June 1943, (1946)

III. The Rising Sun in the Pacific, 1931 – April 1942, (Bancroft Prize), (1948)

1. Coral Sea, Midway and Submarine Actions, May 1942 – Aug 1942, (1949)
2. The Struggle for Guadalcanal, August 1942 – February 1943, (1949)
3. Breaking the Bismarcks Barrier, 22 July 1942 – 1 May 1944, (1950)

VII. Aleutians, Gilberts and Marshalls, June 1942 – April 1944, (1951)

VIII. New Guinea and the Marianas, March 1944 – August 1944, (1953)

1. Sicily—Salerno—Anzio, January 1943 – June 1944, (1954)
2. The Atlantic Battle Won, May 1943 - May 1945, (1954)
3. The Invasion of France and Germany, 1944 - 1945, (1955)

XII. Leyte, June 1944 – January 1945, (1956)

XIII. The Liberation of the Philippines, 1944 - 1945, (1959)

XIV. Victory in the Pacific, 1945, (1960)

1. Supplement and General Index, (1962)

Little, Brown & Company, also published Morison’s Strategy and Compromise in 1958, and The Two Ocean War in 1963, a one-volume history of the US Navy in World War II.

Rear Admiral Morison was awarded the Legion of Merit, with Combat Distinguishing Device “V“, for “exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services to the Government of the United States as Historian of United States Naval Operations, World War II…” In addition, he received the Victory Medal (World War I); American Campaign Medal; European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon; and seven engagement stars on his campaign ribbons. He also was Commander of the Order of the White Rose of Finland. He had the Vuelvo Panamericano Medal, awarded by the Republic of Cuba in 1943; in 1961 he was created Cavaliero Ufficiale of the Italian Order, “Al Merito della Republica;” and in 1963 he was made Commander of the Spanish Order of Isabella the Catholic.

In 1910 he married Miss Elizabeth S. Greene of Boston, Massachusetts, who died on 10 August 1945. Their children were: Elizabeth (wife of Edward D.W. Spingarn, retired Colonel, US Army); Emily (wife of Brooks Beck, former Lieutenant Commander, USNR); Peter Greene Morison (former Lieutenant Commander Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve, later Captain, US Army Air Force); and Catherine. On 29 December 1949 he married Mrs. Priscilla B. Shakelford of Baltimore, Maryland. A grandson, Samuel Loring Morison, served as a US Navy officer off South Vietnam from 1967 to 1968 and in the Naval History Division from 1968-1972.

Dr. Morison was author of a number of other works and textbooks, including: Life of Harrison Gray Otis (1913); Maritime History of Massachusetts (1921); Oxford History of the United States (1927); Builders of the Bay Colony (1930); Tercentennial History of Harvard University (awarded Jusserand Medal and Loubat prize, 1930-36); Growth of the American Republic (with Henry Steele Commager) (1937- in its 5th edition, 1962); Portuguese Voyages to America (1940); Admiral of the Ocean Sea (1942) (awarded Pulitzer Prize for biography); Oxford History of the American People (1965); By Land and By Sea (1953); Spring Tides (1965); and “Old Bruin”, A Biography of Commodore Matthew C. Perry (1967). In 1960 he was awarded his second Pulitzer Prize for his biography of John Paul Jones (1959).

He was editor of The American Neptune and The New England Quarterly and brought out a new edition of William Bradford’s History of Plymouth Plantation (1952). He was awarded the Emerson-Thoreau Medal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Gold Medal for history and biography of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. In 1963 he won the Balzan Award for excellence in history, in competition with the historians of the entire world. The ceremony he described in his *Vistas of History* (1964). He was cited as the foremost authority on US Naval history and a major contributor to American history. Other honors: Past President of the American Historical Association (1950), of the American Antiquarian Society (1938-1950); Vice President of the Naval Historical Foundation, and of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts; Fellow of American Philosophical Society, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and British Academy; member of the Royal Academy of History, Madrid. He was an honorary member of the Massachusetts Historical Society and the Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati, and a member of the Charitable Irish Society.

He received honorary degrees from Trinity College, Hartford (1935); Amherst College (1936); Union College (1939); Harvard University (1936); Columbia University (1942); Yale University (1949); Williams College (1950); University of Oxford (1951); Bucknell University (1960); Boston College (1961); and College of the Holy Cross (1962). He was a member of the Army-Navy Club, Washington; Harvard Club, New York; St Botolph Club and Somerset Club, Boston; and Athenaeum, London.

He died on 15 May 1976 of a stroke at Boston, Massachusetts, and his ashes are buried at Northeast Harbor, Maine.

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Source: Adapted from "Rear Admiral Samuel E. Morison, United States Naval Reserve, Retired" [biography, dated 4 December 1967] in Biographies, 20th century collection, Navy Department Library.