

# *More than Rick Brant*

*Other Books and Articles by Harold Goodwin*

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As I write, I am wearing my Rick Brant tee-shirt, a comfortable light gray garment emblazoned with the famous lightning bolt logo on the front in the upper right and the Palacio map of Spindrift Island spread across the back. I wear it proudly but infrequently, wanting to prolong its life. Each time I do sport it while performing errands, I am vaguely hopeful that someone will stop me and say, “Rick Brant, eh? I remember those books!” It hasn’t happened yet but my hope isn’t completely extinguished.

The Rick Brant series, written by Hal Goodwin, was published from 1947 to 1968, with the final volume published in 1989 in a limited edition for the fans. (Goodwin’s friend Peter Harkins is credited with co-writing the first three Ricks, but most likely the greater part of the work was Hal’s.) Though the Ricks are Hal’s greatest claim to fame in the series book world, he wrote other books, stories, and articles as well. He wrote dozens, maybe hundreds, of professional articles, a number of pulp romance stories, wartime articles in the 1940s, and special interest articles, as well as a few books in those and later years.

In 1998, Fred Woodworth put out an appealing booklet called “Real Characters in Rick Brant”, subtitled “And Other Essays from The Mystery and Adventure Series Review”. In this absorbing assembly of fascinations is an article on *Rick Brant’s Science Projects* and another called “Hal’s Other Books”. The latter features sound reviews of Hal’s two non-Rick juveniles, *Assignment in Space with Rip Foster* and *Divers Down!* There is also an item called “The Author’s First Novel”, which was *A Microphone for David*, published in 1942 when Hal was only 28. I do not intend to duplicate Fred’s monumental work, but perhaps it wouldn’t be amiss if I were to jot a sentence or two of my own on these volumes when the time comes.

## **Hal’s First Book**

Hal’s first published book was *A Microphone for David*. The book is about a young man named David Gale, newly graduated from high school, who has a fascination for working in radio. The story was written when radio was immensely popular for news, dramas, advertising, and public service. Television had been invented but would not begin its incursion into home life for another decade or so.

*A Microphone for David* has various plot lines including interpersonal competition between David and other students who are eager to land a permanent job and a scholarship for a career in radio, the



developing relationships between several of the main characters, and the technical side of radio announcing. All of these aspects of the story are developed in the wider context of adventuresome newsworthy events that the radio station has to deal with, culminating with but by no means limited to a major hurricane that ravages the community. David's role in these events shows that he is a youth of gumption, ambition, courage, and warmth.

I don't want to tread where Fred's article has already trod, so I'll just say that this was an impressive story, especially for a 28-year-old author. It reminded me a great deal of several of the books by Graham M. Dean, who was writing at the same time. Dean wrote a number of adventure stories that feature a young man just getting started in an exciting career, usually journalism, who shows an attractive wholesomeness and a commitment to hard, honest work. Dean's books are worthy of a separate article of their own, which will be my next project for the *Review*.

### Writing for Magazines

Somewhere, sometime, I don't remember where or when now, I heard that Hal Goodwin had written some pulp love stories in the 1940s under the name Shelby Grant. I began the almost hopeless task of trying to find some; fortunately the largest used bookstore I patronized at the time (now out of business) had a huge display of old magazines, tens of thousands of them. Nowhere else have I ever seen such a magnificent collection, nor so well organized. Eventually I found three magazines, each in appreciably good condition, that contained a story or article by Hal Goodwin.

Interestingly, two of them were written under his own name, even though I was looking for Shelby Grant. I have a copy of the January 29, 1944 issue of *Liberty*, price ten cents, in which



T/Sgt Hal Goodwin has an article called "Hook On! Stand By! Go!" It's about Marine paratroopers. The author writes compellingly of what it is like to be a Marine who makes parachute jumps. It contains these evocative descriptions: "Tiny figures hurtle clear of the plane in fast, regular succession, sixteenth notes on a giant musical score. The unfolding chutes string out like wraiths of smoke, then inflate like weird sky flowers."

Next is a copy of *Blue Book*, price 25 cents, with its subtitle "Magazine of Adventure for MEN, by MEN". My issue came out in July 1945. The Goodwin article is called "Above Rabaul". It is a riveting account described as "The true story of a crowded hour of action in the air war". Though claiming to be factual, it reads like fiction, and conjured images in my mind of the war movies I used to watch fifty and more years ago.

Finally I have a copy of *All-Story Love* from February 1945, priced at fifteen cents, with a tale called "Come Back to Me", by Shelby Grant. In this story, Sergeant Johnny Reynolds is returning home at the end of the war after two and a half years away, returning to Joyce, the girl he'd left behind and had promised to marry. Problem is that his feelings had changed, and he

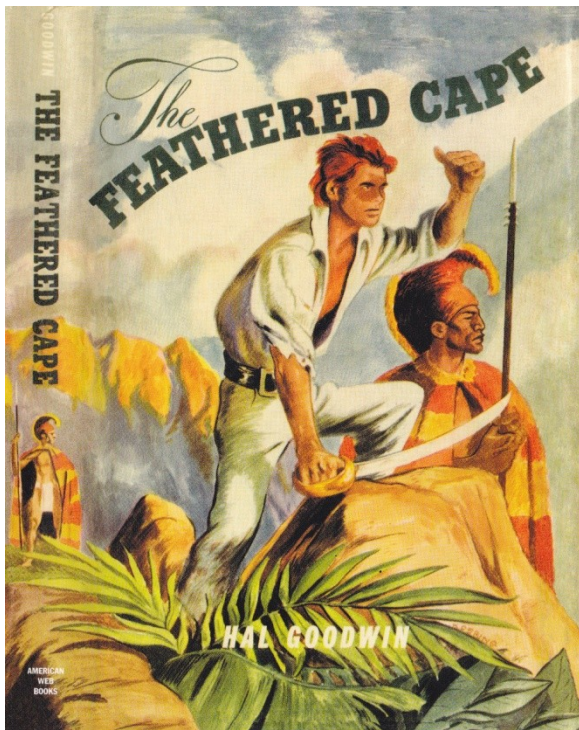
dreads the encounter when he'll have to tell her. It's good writing. As Johnny's train approaches his stop and he's about to see Joyce, "A feeling swept through him, one that he recognized. It was as though he was manning a waist gun again, and Pete's voice was calling through the inter-phone, 'Seven bandits, high at six o'clock. Here they come!' It was that feeling of something about to happen, of tension, of fear."

Well, it all turns out okay. Maybe Johnny and Joyce have recently celebrated their seventieth anniversary.

### **The Hawaii Stories**

In the late 1940s, just before he began work on Rick Brant, Goodwin wrote two stories set in late eighteenth century Hawaii. They are independent but loosely connected tales; one minor character appears in both stories, but that's about it. *The Feathered Cape* is a full-length novel, published in 1947. Set in 1795, it begins when its protagonist, youthful Jonathan Blaine, escapes from Lieutenant Peter Puget, the sadistic commander of his ship. Blaine had been pressed into service, an execrable but legal practice in Britain that allowed ship's crews to kidnap men off the streets of their own village and force them into service aboard ship. Blaine ought to have been exempt since he was not a British citizen, but was rather a national of the United States which had recently won its independence from Britain. This made no difference to the British captain, who had forcibly taken Jonathan from his own ship not far off the East coast of the U.S.

Jonathan makes good his escape in the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), although he is pursued throughout the rest of the book until Puget's ship finally takes leave of the islands. In the meantime, Jonathan makes friends with the natives and several British sailors who likewise have decided to make their home on the islands.



He is caught up in the intertribal warfare in the time when Kamehameha is striving to unify the several islands and their clans into a single nation. His attempts are not everywhere gladly received and war results, but Kamehameha is sympathetically described. In the end, Kamehameha protects Jonathan and other escapees from the British ships even while Jonathan works heroically to further Kamehameha's cause.

The other story set in Hawaii is called *Sons of the Thunderer*. It was printed in 2010 in a limited edition for fans; the book was a reprint of a four-part magazine serial published in 1946-1947. It is much shorter than *The Feathered Cape*, but its story is similar. A young man named Jeff Quintin escapes from a cruel taskmaster aboard ship and seeks refuge in the islands. He makes friends with a Hawaiian lad who has been taught to speak English. The lad's father is called "The

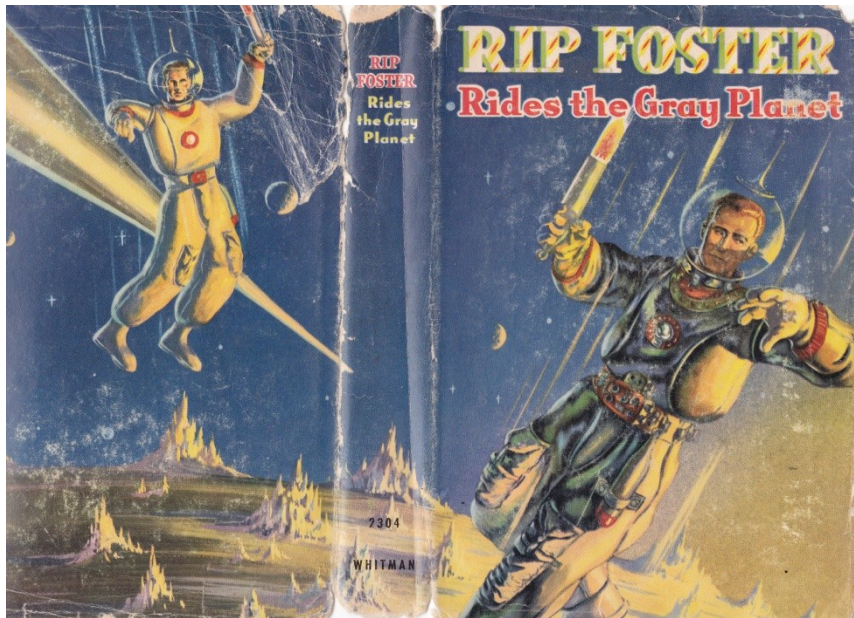
Thunderer", and Jeff is quickly adopted as a foster son—hence the title of the book, *Sons of the Thunderer*.



This is an unusual book for Hal Goodwin as it is filled with disturbing and extreme violence, mostly motivated by racial enmity. The cruel taskmaster, Captain Simon Metcalfe, destroys a village with cannon fire over a supposedly stolen rowboat, and later, in another place, an entire fleet of friendly natives that had approached the ship to trade is blown to pieces at point blank range after Metcalfe had ordered the cannons filled with bent nails and other scrap metal. A hundred people were killed, including children, and many were maimed. Naturally the survivors hunt down as many white men as they can find to exact a reprisal. Those they kill are innocent of the atrocity that Metcalfe had ordered. There is no real satisfying resolution to the story.

Personally I found these Hawaiian episodes to be not as entertaining or edifying as Hal's other works.

### The Two Other Juveniles

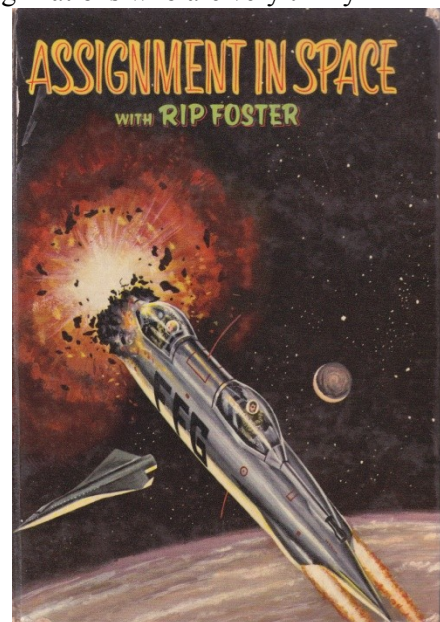


*Rip Foster Rides the Gray Planet* was published by Whitman in 1952, when the Rick Brants were going strong. It's an interesting space tale reminiscent of the 1950s when the Space Race and the Cold War were the order of the day. The story presents newly-graduated Planeteer Rip Foster and a select team that has been charged with capturing a recently-discovered asteroid

made completely of the very rare element thorium, and bringing it back to Earth for the United States. They are opposed by a consortium of "freedom hating" nations who are very thinly disguised Communists.

I've seen correspondence between the author and the publisher in which Hal offered to make the Rip Foster book the first in a series, but Whitman did not accept the offer. However, they reissued it in 1958 with its alternate title, *Assignment in Space with Rip Foster*. The formatting and artwork were redone, but the artwork in both editions is forgettable.

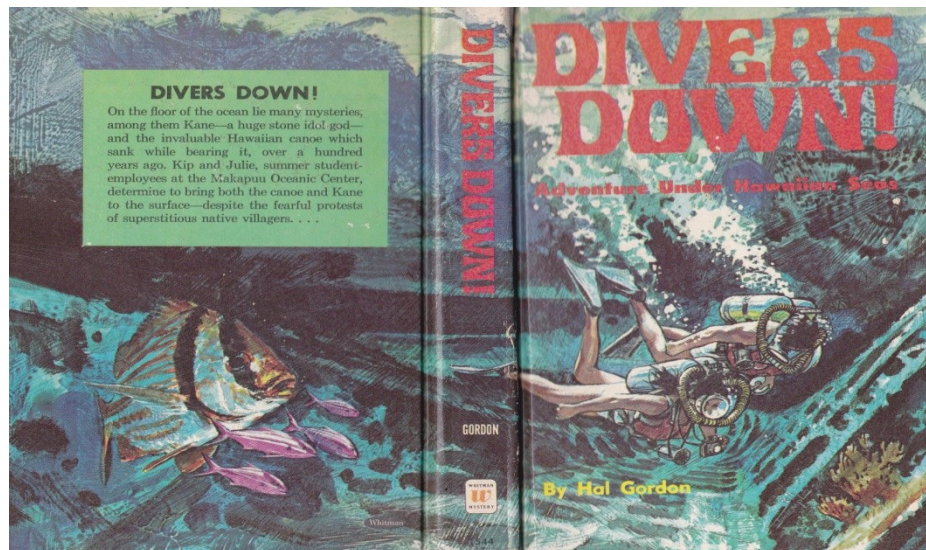
One element of the story which marks it as a period piece is the militaristic hierarchical organization of the Space Patrol, or whatever organization it is that Rip and friends belong to. The Tom Corbett series of eight books, begun just a year or two later, has the same trait. The heroes appear to love being shouted at by near-apoplectic bullies in uniform, screaming capricious and unjust orders that



must be obeyed immediately and without question or severe consequences will follow. The heroes gulp and say “Yessir” while gladly, instantly, and without a qualm or a look back dropping their long-awaited visits to their families on Earth which they haven’t seen during their three years of training. I can only conclude that in the years following World War II, the military was in a hero’s place and young boys longed to imagine themselves to be among the heroes, which apparently meant being screamed and snarled at while snapping to attention and saluting.

*Divers Down!* was published in 1971, three years after the Rick Brant series came to an end. I don’t know for sure, but my guess is that this is the last book Goodwin wrote. The story is set in the Makapuu Oceanic Center, fifteen miles from Honolulu, Hawaii. An introductory paragraph in the book states that this “is a real place—the home of Sea Life Park, the Oceanic Institute, Makai Undersea Range, and the Oceanic Foundation.” The paragraph further informs the reader that these places are “as described in the story.” Further, “all the place names are real.” The two ships that appear in the story are also real, and the director of the Oceanic Center, Taylor A. “Tap” Pryor, is also a real person; the story is dedicated to him and his staff.

A little research reveals that the Oceanic Center was founded by Tap Pryor in 1960, just months after Hawaii became the fiftieth state. Pryor was only 29 years old. At that time there was a lot of excitement in Hawaii over its potential for development and research. The Center featured a large aquarium and park for visitors, a marine research facility, and a test range for ships and submarines. It was an exciting time, and a terrific setting for a story by Hal Goodwin, fresh from the closure of the popular Rick Brant series. Hal served on the Board of Directors of the Oceanic Institute.



Briefly, *Divers Down!* relates the adventures in a summer program offered by the Oceanic Center in which worthy high schoolers from all over the country are given a residential work/training experience. Many apply, but only a few are chosen, with the selections being made on the basis of essays the applicants write to describe their qualifications and why they want to be a part of the program.

The major character is Kip Morgan, whose romantic interest becomes Julie Scott. (There is no indication whether she is any relation of Don Scott of the Rick Brant series.) There are a good number of secondary characters including a few Hawaiians. (It is noteworthy that *Rip Foster Rides the Gray Planet*, a space adventure set in the twenty-second century, includes a character



who is a full-blooded Hawaiian. Goodwin clearly had a genuine connection with and affection for Hawaii, as is also evident from other writings.)

The first part of the book describes how the young people are given their assignments after they are introduced and their qualifications are revealed. This takes up just about the first half of the book. Although this is interesting, at times it seems more like a school report than an adventure story. The characters' relationships are gradually developed, including the place of the adult supervisors with their charges.

The adventure gets under way when Julie's work bears fruit. She is a skilled researcher whose qualifications gave her one of the coveted places in the program even though her skill was not along the usual lines of mechanic, experienced diver, sea animal expert, or any of the other fields generally desired for the summer program. Her research, however, leads to the discovery of a sunken ship which had lain unseen in forty feet of water and under sand for about a century. Once her discovery was confirmed by experts, the project of raising the ship safely is undertaken, and a selection of the young people is organized for the work. Our protagonist Kip Morgan is chosen to oversee the entire project, and we deal with all the problems from his viewpoint.

Not only is the required engineering an adventure in itself, but there is also some opposition that must be overcome. One of the best features of the book is to see how the adults in charge of the program train the young people by just about leaving them to solve the problems on their own. They only step in to prevent a major blunder, and even then they teach by asking questions rather than giving answers. This is totally opposite to the red-faced spittle-spouting shouters of orders in the Zip Foster book, written twenty years earlier.

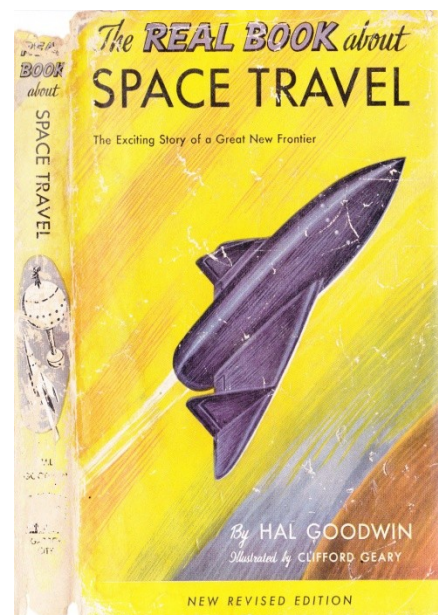
*Divers Down!* is not a Rick Brant. There are no desperate criminals, no major inventions, no threats of violence. It is a book that is as instructive as it is adventuresome. The reader can learn a lot about scuba diving and all that is necessary to raise a fragile ship while keeping it intact. It also puts a lot of emphasis on interpersonal relationships, both in overcoming stresses and personality clashes as well as making the most of individuals' gifts, skills, and talents to create a smoothly-working team. The reader knows that, once again, Hal Goodwin has written of what he knows personally, and has made it interesting and enjoyable.

Sadly, one year after *Divers Down!* was published, the Oceanic Center was reorganized under bankruptcy proceedings. Nevertheless, it continued under new circumstances and remains active today. In 2003 the Oceanic Institute, as it is now called, was merged with Hawaii Pacific University.

My research also showed that as of 2013, Tap Pryor was still alive at the age of 82. He was living in Brunswick, Maine. I wrote to him but received no answer.

### **The Non-fiction Juveniles**

Hal also wrote several non-fiction books for youths, some of which I have in my library. The ones I have are *The Real Book About Stars* (1951); *The Real Book About Space Travel* (1952); *The Science Book of Space Travel* (published in Great Britain in 1957); and *All About Rockets and Space Flight* (1964). These are attractive volumes in



well-designed dust jackets (the latter is a picture cover). Today, of course, they are far outdated and only interesting as period pieces. They remind me of my childhood when space travel was a popular topic and the moon landing was a few years in the future.

### **Seafaring**

Fred Woodworth put together a neat little volume of Hal's articles that appeared in the early 1980s in *Current*, the Journal of Marine Education published by the University of Delaware; this entertaining item is called *Seafaring* (1984/5). It contains eighteen essays of a few pages each on a wide variety of topics all of which are connected to the sea. There are research, history, humor, fiction, and folk tales to be found.

### **The Rick Brant That Never Was**

Guess I'll close this article with an item that is a little off-topic of non-Rick Brant writings by Hal Goodwin, but which I hope will be of interest to fans of Rick Brant. In 2004, with a couple of other fans of Rick's adventures I visited Boston University and located the archives where Hal Goodwin had deposited his papers. There were several dozen boxes containing typescripts, correspondence, news clippings, and so forth. There was a box dedicated to each of the Rick Brant books. Anyone can come in and ask to see the material. The inquirer is asked to fork over any cameras he may have, and then must don simple white gloves before being given up to three boxes at a time. He is also allowed to photocopy up to twenty-five pages.

We spent several hours browsing the material, and made many intriguing discoveries. One was that *The Magic Talisman* had been written between *Rocket Jumper* and *The Deadly Dutchman*, and not after *Danger Below!* as had been assumed.

An even more eye-opening discovery came when I investigated the typescript of *Danger Below!* and found the original ending, along with related correspondence between the author and the publisher. Evidently when Hal submitted the typescript to Grosset & Dunlap, the decision to end the Rick Brant series had either not yet been made or had not yet been announced; astonishingly, there was a teaser for a subsequent Rick Brant adventure.

Here is the original ending to *Danger Below!*

Tony Briotti, youngest of the staff scientists, came in with the girls as they finished hanging the giant lobster in place.

"Quite a decoration," he observed.

"It's unique," Barby said proudly.

"And it tasted wonderful," Jan added.

Tony had received his doctorate in anthropology, but had done extensive work in archeology. The boys had been on expeditions with him. He cocked an eyebrow at them.

"As professional divers, what would you think of diving into a well?"

"Not very exciting," Rick answered promptly.

"This one is."

"How do you know when a well is exciting?" Scotty demanded.

"When it's a sacred well into which sacrifices were dumped for centuries, including gems, handwork of gold and silver, artifacts of bronze—and people."

Rick felt excitement rise in him. Tony had something in mind. "Do you want to hunt for something particular in some special well?" he asked.

"A very special well." Tony nodded. "And the thing I want to get most of all is known as 'The Tiger's Eye.'"

That was how it started, a trip to a volcanic island in the South Pacific ending in near disaster, a tribal war, and finally, a surprise that shook the scientific world, an adventure to be told in:

#### THE TIGER'S EYE

It's an intriguing teaser indeed, though the proposed plot does seem a little reminiscent of *The Golden Skull*; the story even includes the presence of the same Tony Briotti. Was there ever a typescript or even an outline of this story? Forty-eight years later, it is unlikely that we will ever know.

Correspondence shows that in Hal's proposal for *Danger Below!*, the working title for the book was *The Deep Divers*. His letters also showed that he was delighted to be writing and was pleased with the result. Thankfully, he ended his work on the Rick Brant series on a high note.

When I go to the Post Office to mail this article to the worthy editor and publisher of *The Review*, I will wear my Rick Brant tee-shirt, still hopeful that someone will stop me and say, "Rick Brant, eh? I remember those books!" Real Rick Brant fans will know that the author produced a lot of other worthwhile books and articles as well.

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