

2013

In My View

Martin Bennett

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Recommended Citation

Bennett, Martin (2013) "In My View," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 66 : No. 3 , Article 18.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol66/iss3/18>

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IN MY VIEW

FIRESIDE CHATS AND CHASING RABBITS

Sir:

I believe that Parshall and I would probably agree on 99.9 percent of all things Pacific War. I also believe that his theories and speculations are totally appropriate for a group of friends huddled around a fireplace sipping their drinks and throwing out “what if” scenarios about the Pacific War. But Parshall’s theories, speculations, and conjecture regarding Fuchida are anything but “history.”

Parshall strongly implies [“In My View,” Spring 2013] that I “quietly removed” my initial article responding to his charges from a website because of his “point-by-point rebuttal.” In fact, I took the article down, in “an abundance of caution,” in order to meet the *Naval War College Review*’s concerns about prior publication and exclusivity of publication. He ought to have known that—those concerns are expressed on the *Review*’s website and in the standard acknowledgment that I expect he too received back in 2010; also, I had explained this to him in early December 2012. It is dishonest for him to continue to misrepresent those facts.

One of my biggest questions is why Parshall didn’t run his theories past other experts who may have been able to steer him straight before launching into publishing his thoughts. I spent a great deal of time and money submitting my research on my script and book to many experts, including Parshall, to ensure I didn’t make such a faux pas. So I submitted both his article of charges against Fuchida and my response to no fewer than eight experts—experts in either the Battle of Midway, the Attack on Pearl Harbor, or on Fuchida himself, and sought their unbiased opinions. I could find no experts willing to accept Parshall’s stance.

Parshall’s false charge that my “scholarship on these matters is equally superficial and does not withstand serious scrutiny” is blown to pieces by the world’s leading combined authority on Fuchida, Pearl Harbor, and Midway—Dr. Donald Goldstein, who, after reading both articles, commented about my reply: “Great article. . . . I always thought that [Fuchida] basically told Prange the truth. *Shattered Sword* destroyed *Miracle at Midway* and really shouldn’t have. . . . Parshall

was able to destroy us with nickel and dime corrections. He makes many claims in his introduction that are not true, but being eighty-one years old, I have not rebutted[;] . . . you have put [Fuchida] and his story in the proper perspective. There is more that I could say and if [Pacific War author] Roger Pineau and others were alive, they would support you. Good job.”

Parshall actually read Goldstein’s comments when he made the above false charge, so why did he make that statement?

Dan King, unlike Parshall and myself, is perfectly fluent in Japanese at the university level and is an extraordinary Pacific War expert who’s worked for Clint Eastwood, HBO, and The History Channel, and interviewed hundreds of former members of the Imperial Japanese Navy for his book *The Last Zero Fighter: First-hand Accounts from WWII Japanese Naval Pilots*. He studied both articles as well and said that Parshall’s article was full of “high school girl reasoning” that was “embarrassingly silly.” He was also well aware of Parshall’s poor research habits (as I was also told by other experts). In the end, King’s statement summarized the feelings of the experts, “Jon Parshall simply isn’t a reliable source of information.”

Regarding the Senshi Soshō, the official 102-volume military history of Japan’s involvement in the Pacific War, Parshall seems to imply it’s flawless and without error. As I pointed out in my article, when it first appeared in 1975 it came under immediate attack for being too military-friendly and far from objective or neutral.

Dr. Yoneyuki Sugita, Associate Professor (Japan-US Relations, International Relations in the Asia-Pacific Region) at the Graduate School of Language and Culture, Osaka University, has this to say about the Senshi Soshō: “Because this was an official project, the editors focused solely on the documentation of the available records and accepted them as faithful representations of historical evidence, without examining or interpreting . . . the work was clearly deficient. Because the research had begun ten years after the end of the war, many documents had been destroyed or scattered, numerous important officers had died, and the memories of survivors could not be considered reliable.”

But perhaps the most damning judgment of the primary authors of the Senshi Soshō, former members of the military, comes from none other than Parshall himself, who stated (on his website): “The Japanese military was riddled with delusional outlooks on its role in the world, and its conduct during the war. It routinely underrated the intentions and strengths of its enemies, overrated its own capabilities, and then lied to itself after each new calamity inexorably pushed it ever-closer to defeat. Likewise, this was a military culture that placed a premium on producing the sort of ‘information’ that superiors wanted to hear, regardless of whether it bore any relation to reality.”

These are the men Parshall now implies he trusts for the total accuracy of the Senshi Soshō.

Lastly, Parshall says that the photo of the person that might be Fuchida on board USS *Missouri* was “shown to be that of an American sailor” but fails to provide a name, rank, number, I.D. photo of the “American” with the Hitler mustache, or *any* supporting evidence of this obvious conjecture. Again, conjecture does not equal facts or history.

The onus is on Parshall, the one making the sweeping charges, to prove his case for his theories, which he consistently fails to do. As I stated in my article, no living witnesses ever contradicted Fuchida’s testimonies, including Genda. Regarding Parshall’s additional charges, having struck out three times, he’s out, and I’m not interested in chasing any rabbits down any further holes.

In conclusion, my facts stand on their own and Parshall’s theories, conjecture, and speculations should remain in their place, which may be in fireside chats, but not in history.

MARTIN BENNETT