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Admiral Jerauld Wright: Warrior among Diplomats

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the cruise missile has long since replaced the aircraft as the primary means of strike from the sea.

This volume does add some historical substance to the important topic of military innovation, but the prospective reader should be cautioned that it is neither a well balanced nor a comprehensive account of the impact of technological change on the U.S. Navy from the Civil War through World War II.

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Key, David M., Jr., *Admiral Jerauld Wright: Warrior among Diplomats*. Manhattan, Kans.: Sunflower Univ. Press, 2001. 438pp. \$22.95

For more than two-thirds of a century, a host of diplomats, military officers, and statesmen have been entertained in their wardrooms, clubs, and drawing rooms from London to Manila by Jerry Wright's stories and vignettes drawn from his remarkable career. After every session, the inevitable reaction would be, "Jerry, you've got to write a book."

Now that book has been written by David M. Key, Jr., a nephew of the admiral. Key, making good use of his Harvard A.B. in English, does an excellent job in letting his uncle and his contemporaries tell the story, while himself providing the historical context, one that is unusually rich in drama and import. Fortunately, Key had much to draw on, and he has done a thorough and discriminating job in his research. Wright wrote copiously—leaving journals, memos, articles, and letters—all flavored with the special brand of low-key, wry wit that was characteristic of him. Wright had plenty to write about. His career was replete with

one-of-a-kind assignments, from being in charge of President Calvin Coolidge's yacht to commanding a British submarine in World War II (though he was neither British nor a submarine officer).

Born in 1898 into an Army family, Wright adored his father, and clearly the feeling was mutual. "Pop" took his son on hunting and fishing trips around the world, and the young boy relished the experience. When Wright was only thirteen, then-Major William Wright, stationed in Luzon as commander of the Philippine Scouts, took the youngster, armed with his own shotgun, on a military expedition to Mindanao to suppress an uprising by the rebellious Moros, Philippine Muslims. It was an adventure from America's brief colonial period, more Kipling than Hemingway.

In 1914 Wright entered the Naval Academy (at sixteen) because there was no appointment available at West Point. He graduated in only three years, because of World War I. He was sent to Europe on blockade duty, which also provided the opportunity to visit his father, now Major General Wright, commanding the 89th Infantry Division on the Western Front. However, the trip became more than just a visit with "Pop" at his tented headquarters when Ensign Wright was caught in a German artillery barrage.

It did not take the young naval officer long to realize that the U.S. Navy was the right place for him. He derived personal as well as professional satisfaction from his assignment as naval aide to Coolidge and from his subsequent deployment to the China Station as executive officer of a four-pipe destroyer.

Wright remained a bachelor as a junior officer, but with his special charm and tall good looks, he was much in demand

in the social whirl of Washington, D.C. There he met Phyllis Thompson, a society reporter for the thriving *Washington Star*. They were married within a year. Throughout the rest of his career they remained a devoted couple. Phyllis was always the exemplary Navy wife (she published a book by that title), uncomplaining about the frequent moves and long separations, and a pillar of support for her husband in all his varied endeavors and often bizarre adventures.

During World War II, Wright commanded major forces in action and served on personal liaison missions for the Allies. After the war he served in the Pentagon, where, because of his combat experience, he was assigned to develop the operating policies for the postwar Navy.

The real star in Wright's crown, however, was his tour as Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic, one of the two top posts in Nato. He handled that job with such distinction that he served for six years in what was normally a two-year assignment. His experiences in that critical post at the height of the Cold War should be of special interest to naval historians and students of modern history.

After retiring from active duty as a four-star admiral in 1960, he performed his final service to the country in 1963, when, at the urging of the secretary of state, President John F. Kennedy appointed Wright to serve as U.S. ambassador to Taiwan. Again Wright answered the call of his country to serve in an assignment of great responsibility and unusual sensitivity, one especially significant because of the instability of the Chinese Nationalist government and the potential threat to U.S. vital national interests.

David Key's lack of familiarity with military jargon has allowed an occasional

error to creep in, but these are few and minor, limited generally to a garbled acronym or the misspelling of a ship's name. Otherwise the book rings with the authority of an action report.

Admiral Jerauld Wright is a delightful book, easy to pick up and hard to put down. It is a biography of a splendid individual whose service and contributions to his country constitute a significant historical record in itself. It is a story that unfolds with the candor and humor of a special person whose intellect and charm made him a "diplomat among warriors."

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Hoffman, Jon T. *Chesty: The Story of Lieutenant General Lewis B. Puller, USMC*. New York: Random House, 2001. 629pp. \$35

In the heralded history of the U.S. Marine Corps, Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller occupies a unique position. Long revered as the greatest hero in the Corps, Puller is the only Marine to earn five Navy Crosses. His career spanned thirty-seven years, during which he mastered the entire spectrum of warfare, from chasing the guerrilla leader Augusto Sandino in the jungles of Nicaragua to commanding a Marine regiment in the bitter fighting near the Chosin reservoir. Most Marines are familiar with Burke Davis's 1962 account of Puller's life, but fellow leatherneck Jon T. Hoffman has produced what is likely to become the definitive biography of this extraordinary officer.

Hoffman is no stranger to biography. His *Once a Legend: "Red Mike" Edson of the Marine Raiders* earned rave reviews from a number of distinguished military historians and editors. As he did with Edson,