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Billy, Navy Wife

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or the situations they had been forced to confront. It is a problem not unlike what women in the armed forces struggle with today.

There is one notable slip in this otherwise exceptional book—stereotyping. While praising the remarkable women of World War II, Norman tells us that "a man's notion of honor was driven by ego, a woman's by an inviolable sense of self built on the sentiment of sacrifice." I must say that when I was commanding officer of a naval station, I found no discernable difference in the character of my sailors based upon any demographic variable, let alone gender. In fact, both types of honor were demonstrated by both genders. Perhaps the author allowed a bit of understandable romanticism to creep in.

This is a powerful story of raw courage. It speaks to who we were as a nation in the early 1940s and to who we became when our collective character was measured. The book also makes clear that during the war Americans usually rose to meet challenges wherever they found them. Meeting our challenges today is the best way to honor the sacrifices and achievements of the men and women who wore the uniform before we were born.

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Miles, Wilma Jerman. Edited by Charles H. Miles. *Billy, Navy Wife.* Chevy Chase, Md.: privately published by Charles H. Miles and Murray Miles, 1999. 587pp. $25

Billy, Navy Wife is the autobiography of Wilma J. Miles, wife of Vice Admiral Milton E. Miles, for whom the Naval War College's Milton E. Miles Chair of International Relations is named. This book begins in 1904, the year of Wilma Miles's birth, and it ends in 1961, the date of her husband's death. An epilogue written by her sons, Charles and Murray, contains an account of their mother's activities and travels until her death in July 1996. Vice Admiral Joseph Metcalf III provided the foreword. In the introduction, Wilma Miles tells why she wrote her story: to inspire and encourage young Navy wives who must cope with their husbands' long absences and with economic privations, to recount her own life experiences in a smaller and less technologically complex Navy, and to laud the unsung fraternity of Navy wives who play a part (albeit indirect) in all that the Navy does.

By all indications, Wilma Miles's life was an extraordinary one, marked by adventure; travel to exotic places; social contacts with royalty, heads of state, and diplomats; strong family ties; and loyalty to her husband and to the U.S. Navy. She saw herself first and foremost as a Navy wife, as a

helpmate and partner to her husband in his career—but she was much more. Wilma wrote, "[A] Navy wife couldn't really advance her husband in his career, but . . . as sure as Christmas, she could hold him back."

Wilma met her husband when she was fifteen years old and married him in Hong Kong in 1925 at the age of twenty-one (not having seen him for three years), to be left alone for the greater part of the next two years while he cruised the West and Pearl Rivers in the gunboat *Pampanga*, chasing pirates and protecting missionaries. Always eager to travel and learn about other cultures and people, Wilma and Milton, during his leaves, visited Canton, Peking, and Macao, attempted to learn Chinese, and became fascinated by the Far East. When they returned to Chefoo in 1936 for a three-year tour of duty, she continued her travels, while Milton served in the destroyer tender *Black Hawk*, and then as commanding officer of the destroyer *John D. Edwards*. In 1938, she traveled alone throughout the Dutch East Indies and Southeast Asia, photographing the harbors. Her photographs, the only ones available at the time, proved to be invaluable to the U.S. Navy at the beginning of World War II—unwittingly, she had aided the war effort. The Mileses were the first Americans to exit China over the Burma Road in 1939. The journey took a week, and Wilma recorded it in detail, as well as her travels through India, Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq—including the couple's arrest in Mashad for photographing the city. This was the first of their six arrests in foreign countries.

During World War II, Milton Miles was stationed in China for three years as head of the Sino-American Cooperative Organization (SACO), which was involved in intelligence work and weather forecasting in preparation for an American invasion of the mainland. Wilma, who had received a master's degree in home economics from Columbia University in 1929, spent the war years in Washington, D.C., where she served as head of the nutrition services for the Red Cross and taught classes. When the war ended, she continued to teach nutrition, edited a monthly newsletter, lobbied for school lunches, helped popularize skim milk as healthful, and appeared on one of the first cooking shows on television. She maintained a lifelong interest in nutrition education.

In 1954 Milton Miles went to Panama as commanding officer of the Fifteenth Naval District for a two-year tour of duty. He and Wilma traveled throughout South America, where they made three harrowing and dangerous transcontinental treks through jungles in search of an alternative canal route. Whether having tea with

Anastasio Somoza or traveling by bus through Bolivia, Wilma was always interested in experiencing to the fullest the culture, language, historic sites, and people of each country. Her descriptions of the places she visited read like travelogues, with full historical background provided.

Wilma Miles was a Navy widow for thirty-four years, during which time she was instrumental in the publication of *A Different Kind of War*, the story of SACO, which she had researched and compiled with her husband after his retirement. She traveled, worked, attended SACO reunions, and deposited her personal papers and extensive photograph collection in the U.S. Naval War College archives.

This book is illustrated with Miles's trademark—the "What the Hell?" pennant—as well as signature whales and pencil sketches. Readers interested in the life of an independent, courageous, and intrepid Navy wife of the "old Navy" will find this personal story enjoyable.

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Hone, Thomas C., Norman Friedman, and Mark D. Mandeles. *American & British Aircraft Carrier Development, 1919–1941*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1999. 248pp. $39.95

Working from the premise that a truly revolutionary military innovation is one that changes an armed service as an institution, *American & British Aircraft Carrier Development, 1919–1941* studies how two such institutions, the American and British navies, incorporated naval aviation, and also why airpower developed very differently in those fleets. It is a social analysis, not a design or tactical history. Although published more than six decades after the events, this book provides notable new insights and highlights. The authors, all naval experts, collaborated in finding whether the development of the aircraft carrier before World War II offers parallels for how military services might capitalize today on high-speed networks and miniature sensors.

The book is particularly interesting in its revelation that issues more fundamental than uncooperativeness on the part of the Royal Air Force (RAF) weakened tactical aviation in the Royal Navy. After the transfer in 1918 of most naval aviation personnel and all aircraft to the RAF, neither service's personnel saw sea-based aviation as a good career path. No internal organization turned innovative aviation tactics into correspondingly sound technical decisions about ships, aircraft, or air defense weapons. Anticipating frequent bombing attacks