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## A Heritage of Wings: An Illustrated History of Naval Aviation

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socially distinct from earlier generations of soldiers, Vietnam veterans changed the vocabulary of war memoirs. They introduced into the genre a more prominent role for sex and a coarseness of language heretofore mostly absent. Hynes also notes the direct influence of music on U.S. soldiers in Vietnam. Rock and roll was the voice of this generation of soldiers, and their music's defiant antiestablishment, and often antiwar, stance is a constant undercurrent throughout most of the narratives. Indeed, Hynes finds that Vietnam memoirs are uniquely filled with bitterness and humiliation.

An unexpected treat is the chapter on victims of war who are routinely forgotten in standard histories of armed conflict. The author makes a compelling case that these individuals' experiences are just as valuable to our understanding of war as those of soldiers in the thick of battle. We learn in their writings much, for example, about the psychology of prisoners of war: how they view themselves, how they view each other, and how they are viewed by their captors. The sections on the survivors of the Holocaust and of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima are also fascinating. They offer gripping accounts of merely surviving in the face of unbelievable horrors.

One useful category of individuals left out of the book is war correspondents. The members of the Fourth Estate make a brief appearance in the chapter on Vietnam, but only to illustrate America's growing disillusionment with the conflict. Their absence from the book is unfortunate. They are distinct from the other groups represented here, as noncombatants who voluntarily place themselves on the

frontlines; yet like the groups represented in the book, journalists have experienced the blasts of war, and many have lost their lives as a result of it (the legendary Ernie Pyle comes to mind). Their inclusion would have offered the perspective of trained observers duty bound to report events as accurately as possible.

Another shortcoming of the book, albeit minor, is the lack of subheadings. The text moves through various topics with no breaks, save for additional space between certain paragraphs. Had the author instead used more prominent visual clues and made more of an effort to divide the chapters into sections, he would have imposed greater order on the text and made it easier to read and understand.

The book's positives far outweigh its negatives. Hynes has sifted through a large set of war memoirs and come up with a gem of a book. *The Soldiers' Tale* is a judicious, entertaining, and sure-handed examination of wartime experience through the prism of twentieth-century war narratives. This book deserves the attention of those who wish to understand war beyond tactics, battles, campaigns, and high policy by confronting the voice of raw experience.

MICHAEL CRESWELL  
University of Pennsylvania

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Knott, Richard A. *A Heritage of Wings: An Illustrated History of Naval Aviation*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1997. 339pp. \$49.95

Interesting and informative, this book offers a well written introduction to

U.S. naval aviation for those new to the subject. It also offers an appealing compendium of facts and anecdotes for the aviation devotee. Dick Knott's book is easy to read and provides well organized summaries of the principal actors and key events in the history of aviation in the maritime service. The subject lends itself to the visual sense, and reader appeal is enhanced by roughly two hundred photographs of notables, aircraft, and incidents, and by helpful diagrams and charts. The illustrations provide the reader with a link to the humanity of the history, to the sometimes obscure and occasionally larger-than-life men about whom the book is written, and to their legacy.

Knott begins by tracing the general evolution of nascent military aviation but soon abandons parallel developments of U.S. Army and European aviation to focus on the United States Navy. For the rest of the book the center of attention, except for an occasional foray to the Marine Corps, is on the Navy and its people. Rich detail is plentiful in the early chapters, less so in the chapters on more recent years—probably reflecting the greater number of primary sources from earlier in this century. The author recounts many hair-raising adventures of the early aviation pioneers, and he details the bureaucratic trials and tribulations of those laboring to establish aviation in a service not noted for easy adaptation to change. All branches of aviation development receive their due: seaplanes, lighter-than-air machines, rotary and fixed-wing aircraft, and naval astronauts in space. The evolution of the aircraft carrier and of its aircraft and the principal role they have played in U.S.

naval history are discussed in detail. The author's background in maritime patrol aviation is evident in frequent references to milestones in land-based naval air. Early aircraft and related equipment designs are chronicled and highlighted as "dry holes" or as winners. The impact of combat, the world wars in particular, and the interesting boost to fledging carrier aviation provided by the 1922 Washington Naval Treaty make good reading.

Knott delivers his punch line midway in the book, at the end of an excellent section on World War II: "Naval aviation was no longer a question mark. . . . The old myth put forth by Billy Mitchell and others that carrier aircraft could not operate against land-based aviation had been debunked repeatedly. . . . The stalwart advocates of naval aviation in general, and carrier aviation in particular, had been fully vindicated."

I concur with the author's assessment in a later chapter that the misapplication of U.S. air power during the Vietnam War presaged eventual defeat for the United States. Knott outlines the errors of civilian leadership and policy in those years, injecting numerous anecdotes highlighting the courage and sacrifice by naval aviators in Southeast Asia, but he fails to hold naval or other U.S. military leaders accountable for not speaking out publicly or exposing the flawed policies.

The most recent two decades of Navy aviation history are examined in less depth than the previous seven, but overall the book provides a good, encapsulated, and visually stimulating history. I found only a few errors regarding units and numbers with which

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I am personally familiar, and I give the author high marks for accuracy.

In conclusion, it was a pleasure for this former midshipman fourth class to read, and an honor to review, this book written by Richard C. Knott, his first naval science instructor at the Villanova University Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC) Unit. No doubt the author's admiration and enthusiasm for, and advocacy of, naval aviation thirty-five years ago had some influence on the future career path of this reviewer. It is a proud heritage of wings.

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Poolman, Kenneth. *The Winning Edge: Naval Technology in Action, 1939–1945*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1997. 256pp. \$32.95

In this study on the impact of technology on World War II's naval campaigns, Kenneth Poolman describes the development of a variety of naval sensor and weapon systems and analyzes their use during the war at sea. Poolman, a World War II veteran of the Royal Navy, is a prolific writer on naval combat, and his book demonstrates his mastery of naval technology.

The author begins by describing how Allied navies turned to new technology—including Asdic (sonar), radar, high-frequency direction finding, antisubmarine mortars, and rockets—in response to Germany's naval campaign against Allied supply lines. He also describes how the Germans fielded acoustic torpedoes, the *Schnörkel*, and

radio-controlled bombs to strengthen their blockade. While the author gives greatest emphasis to the Battle of the Atlantic, he also devotes considerable attention to the war in the Pacific, examining the development of carrier aviation, surface-search and fire-control radar, and cryptanalysis by the U.S. Navy.

Given the breadth of his subject and the brevity of the volume, the author's description of naval technology is occasionally terse to the point of confusion. Even the technologically proficient reader is likely to stumble, for example, over the author's discussion of the evolution of sonar systems. The book also contains a number of mistakes. Poolman argues that the German air force dropped its plans to develop a heavy bomber because such an aircraft was unnecessary; in fact, the Luftwaffe canceled its heavy-bomber programs—the Do-19 and Ju-89—in 1937 because of slow progress in developing engines for the aircraft and resource constraints as much as the low priority of the aircraft in a continental war.

While the book's title makes it "the winning edge," naval technology is at best a partial explanation of tactical success and failure. At the outbreak of World War II the Japanese navy possessed the world's best fighter aircraft, the Mitsubishi A6N Zeke (or Zero), as well as the world's most highly trained aviators. In the end, the United States beat Japan not by fielding its own superior technology but by developing tactics to counter superior Japanese aircraft technology. Similarly, the U.S. Navy took a pounding during the Guadalcanal campaign despite its substantial lead in naval radar. Technology clearly