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Flying Station: A Story of Australian Naval Aviation

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material. Even the photographs are printed without credit lines.

There is a bibliography, a very skimpy one listing fewer than three dozen titles, and these almost entirely volumes from the Boston Publishing Company's *Vietnam Experience* series and the official Marine Corps history of the Vietnam War (but not the very important volume covering 1968). Presumably these two series are the sources for the large number of unattributed quotations. Nevertheless, the publisher (specifically, this book's editor) ought to have required the author to comply with one of the most basic obligations of scholarship: acknowledgment of one's reliance on the achievement of others.

Those major shortcomings detract greatly from the usefulness of the work. What does come through, however, is the valor of individuals and small units in what Murphy concludes was for the Marine Corps "the most difficult mission in its history."

LEWIS SORLEY
author of *Thunderbolt*

Friends and Volunteers of the Australian Naval Aviation Museum. *Flying Stations: A Story of Australian Naval Aviation*. New York: Allen and Unwin, 1998. 289pp. \$A45

This book is a celebration of fifty years of Australian naval aviation. It accomplishes this celebration in two ways: first, it allows several of the participants of that history to tell their stories, humorous and sad. Second, and more important to the foreign or serious naval affairs reader, it tells the

trials and tribulations of interservice rivalry, politics of economy, strategic choices, and attempts to stake out a specific naval aviation role.

The first chapters deal with the years when naval aviation in Australia simply meant aviators assigned to shipboard flying (the scout/spotter plane role) or flying in support of naval operations (antisubmarine warfare in and around a land operation). Concurrent with the place of Australians in these operations are the stories of the development of naval aviation in the British navy and the U.S. Navy. The role of the Aussie aviator was within the framework of the Royal Navy, but that was to change with the Second World War.

By the 1950s, Australia was no longer a simple pastoral nation within the Commonwealth. The Aussies looked about and saw their place—naval aviation had a role to play in protecting Australia, as well as in keeping problems from its shoreline. After all, several Japanese attacks on parts of Australia had exposed its vulnerability. So began the real story of Australian naval aviation.

The problems were monumental. Like the big-bomber people of the fledgling U.S. Air Force, so too the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) challenged the need for maritime aviation. It controlled several of the pilot training bases. Many aviators, deck handlers, etc., were borrowed from the Royal Navy. The RAAF was a difficult partner in defense. Because the Australian population grew from five million in 1945 to fifteen million today, social service demands on tax dollars generally meant that defense budgets were slim, making demands on tax dollars even greater. Also, lacking a major

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shipbuilding and aircraft construction capability, Australia depended at first on Britain and then on the United States for its ships and aircraft. Even overhaul and repairs were points of political pressure; there was no natural constituency to benefit from increased appropriations. These problems, along with their solutions, are explored in a fashion that will keep the serious student of naval aviation attentive.

The two light carriers Australia once possessed had their share of problems. HMAS *Sydney* was already old at the time of its acquisition, and its glory days were short. During Vietnam it was brought out of retirement to serve as a troop transport—dubbed the “Vung Tau ferry.” However, the story of HMAS *Melbourne* was different: it would be a mainstay for close to forty years. It lent its name to two major collisions with plane-guard destroyers—HMAS *Voyager* and later the USS *Frank E. Evans*.

An aside, but an important one in the story of naval aviation “down under,” was suppressing illegal activities along the very long and sparsely populated Australian coastline. Indonesian fishermen, as well as others (like the Japanese pearl-ers prior to World War II), have preyed on the coastline with an eye toward scarce wildlife resources. Originally, several S2F Trackers were assigned to remote settlements, and they played a major role in interdicting and deterring incursions. Today that same service, now called Coastwatch, is contracted out, with Australian Customs being the lead agency. The Navy still assigns *Fremantle* class vessels at Darwin to Coastwatch.

Flying Stations is an excellent combination of serious study and a “looking

back” by personnel who served. The unknown author(s) did an excellent job of combining the two. This book should interest the scholar, veterans of Australia’s Naval Air Service, and the general reader.

PETER CHARLES UNSINGER
San Jose State University

Labaree, Benjamin W., et al. *America and the Sea: A Maritime History*. Mystic, Conn.: Mystic Seaport, 1998. 686pp. \$49.95

This is a gorgeous book—big, colorful, user friendly, and authoritative. The first thing you notice is its size: the 686 glossy pages are laid out in double or even triple-column format, so the book is packed with information. Indeed, one of the few disappointing things about this volume is that it is so big (and heavy) that it is difficult to read lying down or even while sitting in a chair; this book requires a table—though not necessarily a *coffee* table! Second, it is a colorful book. There is full color on virtually every page, with hundreds of museum-quality reproductions of contemporary paintings and photographs to illustrate the text. Even the subheadings and captions are rendered in color. Third, in addition to the rich narrative, which is a chronological narrative of America’s maritime history from the colonial era to the present, there are scores of stand-alone essays and sidebars on specific topics, which allow the reader to dip into the book like a Christmas pudding. Fourth, it is authoritative. The six