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## Fighter Squadron at Guadalcanal

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cooperation." Still, he managed to convince MacArthur that the command and control doctrine developed by the Marines and Navy before the war (and that in 1998 is under attack by some Marines)—that the amphibious task force commander was "to remain in command" of all forces afloat and ashore until "the troops were set up to command their own affairs"—was the soundest way to conduct an amphibious operation. In this fashion he defeated one of his most powerful opponents, Lieutenant General Walter Krueger, who under MacArthur commanded the Sixth Army. Wheeler takes no notice of the fact that during the year Kinkaid was a student at Newport fifteen years before, Krueger had been one of the instructors. Too bad.

With almost all the amphibious ships in the Pacific under his command, as well as numerous escort, bombardment, and support ships, when the United States returned to the Philippines in October 1944 Vice Admiral Kinkaid commanded more ships than any other officer of his rank. It was only the Third Fleet's Task Force 38, the carriers and their screens, under his old commander, William F. Halsey, that remained independent of him. We all know about that story: how at Leyte Gulf Kinkaid came to believe that through poor handling of his carriers Halsey had exposed his amphibious force and supporting shipping to destruction. In the fierce conditions of the Guadalcanal campaign in 1942 Halsey and Kinkaid had become friends. Now that friendship, characteristic of each, had turned to bitterness, characteristic of neither. But the bitterness lasted till the end.

In the meantime both played out their roles in the war, prominently on Halsey's part, obscurely on Kinkaid's. Nonetheless, in April 1945 Kinkaid pinned on his fourth star. However, for Kinkaid the big challenges were over, and five years after the war ended, at age sixty-two, so did his naval career.

In deciding to write the life of a man as unlikely as Tom Kinkaid to reach high responsibility in the most dangerous of times, Wheeler took on a risky task—to make interesting the life of a man who was himself not interesting.

The result is a book that is sometimes slow going but that represents fairly Tom Kinkaid. Taken all in all, this account of Kinkaid's unforeseeable growth earns Gerald Wheeler an A.

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Brand, Max. *Fighter Squadron at Guadalcanal*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1996. 213pp. \$25.95

Every once in a while an interesting piece of literary work comes to light, and a new perspective on an event of historical significance is afforded. This is exactly the case with *Fighter Squadron at Guadalcanal*. Written in 1943, this book was literally lost for over fifty years after the author was killed while covering the Italian front for *Harper's* magazine. Through a remarkable series of events, this wartime legacy of men who fought in the Pacific theater during a nine-month

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period in 1942 has finally been published. The result is a personal account of actual events, as seen not only through the eyes of the pilots who flew the combat missions but also from the perspective of the ground crews, the Marine infantry, and the naval personnel who survived the ordeal.

"Max Brand" is the best-known pen name of novelist Frederick Faust. Born in 1892, he was an established author with over two hundred published books to his credit at the time America entered World War II. His works were to become the basis of and inspiration for both radio and television shows, as well as dozens of motion pictures. Despite a heart condition, Faust was quick to volunteer for wartime duties as an overseas correspondent. Rejected for service, he was forced to rely on meetings with returning veterans to gather materials for his proposed book about the war in the Pacific.

*Fighter Squadron at Guadalcanal* was intended to be neither a comprehensive analysis of Marine Corps combat operations nor a historical documentary. The interviews conducted by Brand were intended to provide a firsthand look into the harsh realities of the war, from the perspective of combat and of the daily battle against the inhospitable elements faced by "our fighting men." In the truest sense of the word, this is a classic piece of oral history, and in the end the only piece of nonfiction ever produced by the author.

As the reader may already know, the situation in the South Pacific was critical during the opening days of 1942. Singapore and Java had fallen, the Philippine defenders were slowly being overwhelmed, and the Japanese had swept

south to occupy portions of New Guinea. With the fall of Rabaul, the capital of the Bismarck Archipelago, on 23 January 1942, Japanese forces threatened all of New Guinea and Australia. To the southeast, the Solomons, New Caledonia, and New Zealand also were in peril.

The Guadalcanal operation had its origin in early February with Admiral King's and the Joint Chiefs' decision to focus the U.S. strategy for the Southwest Pacific on the Solomons: "Let Efate be the first rung in the ladder from which a step-by-step general advance could be made through the New Hebrides, Solomons and Bismarcks" (exactly what was to occur during the coming twenty-four months).

Brand's book picks up in late March of 1942 as elements of the Americal Division, the 4th Defense Battalion, and a forward echelon of Marine Aircraft Group (MAG) 24 arrive in Efate. Their mission is to build an airfield, under Captain John K. Little, commanding officer of MAG 24's headquarters squadron. The conditions are less than optimum, but through sheer determination an airfield soon appears out of what was once dense muddy jungle. Shortly thereafter we are introduced to Marine Fighter Squadron 212, when on 11 May twenty-one F4F-3s under the command of Major (soon to be Lieutenant Colonel) Harold W. Bauer arrive. MAG 24 has been given its "teeth," and the Marines are ready to carry the fight to the Japanese. It is this snapshot of time between March and November that is the focus of Brand's efforts. In a loosely connected

series of stories, the reader becomes surrounded by the miserable conditions that the men endured: scorching heat, monsoon rains, disease, the threat of overwhelming numbers of the enemy, and always the knowledge that death was all around.

The book was written in an era when the free world's survival was at stake, and it is somewhat crude in its references to the enemy. Depictions of fanatical banzai charges "by crazed Japs, all in a rush to get to heaven," of their being "scythed down by solid swathes of machine gun fire," or of the "hapless nips wiggling in the water after having their landing craft strafed by the Wildcat's .50 cals . . . swimming in circles because an arm or a leg had been blasted off" leave no doubt about the national psyche. By today's standards, the tone is derogatory and even racist, but for the intended audience of that day the approach was acceptable. The author's treatment of American losses is more poignant. "Like a chess game, you've got to let that piece go, but you always remember just the same."

As with many "eyewitness" accounts of a dynamic series of events, *Fighter Squadron at Guadalcanal* is not without historical discrepancies. Personal interpretation and biased recollections of individual triumphs and tragedy amidst chaos result in an inevitable blending of fact and legend. In the end, though, it makes for good reading and does not detract from Brand's manuscript. By the conclusion of the book the reader has experienced a personal glimpse into events that are indelibly etched into the annals of military history, offered in a fashion reminiscent of a heroic tale being

retold to a captivated and hushed audience.

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Kahn, David. *The Codebreakers: The Comprehensive History of Secret Communication from Ancient Times to the Internet*. New York: Scribner, 1996. 1,181pp. \$65

David Kahn's massive book is fascinating and absorbing. He covers the full spectrum of ciphers and encryption, as well as methods of uncovering the meaning of such coded messages. Kahn addresses not only their use by governments to support diplomatic and military activities but also their use by businesses, by criminal organizations, for personal communications, and in espionage. He even shows the similarities between the processes employed in cryptanalysis and those used by historians and archeologists to discover the meaning of ancient languages. An editor for *Newsday* with a Ph.D. from Oxford in modern history, Kahn has been visiting historian at the National Security Agency and has been aptly described as the world's leading expert on the history of cryptology. It should be noted that this book is an updated and revised edition of a 1967 publication that Kahn intended to be the definitive history of cryptology.

*The Codebreakers* is filled with stories about approaches to concealing the meanings of messages and efforts to discover the meanings of the