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## City at Sea

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Kaufman, Yogi and Kaufman, Steve.

*City at Sea*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1995. 192pp. \$39.95  
Retired Vice Admiral Yogi Kaufman and his son Steve have teamed up on an interesting project about naval aviation that is part coffee-table book and part status report. The project is all the more interesting because neither Kaufman possesses any experience with their subject; it is to their credit that they have produced a book, as good as any that I have seen, that captures the feel of life aboard the modern aircraft carrier. *City at Sea* tells its story through over 170 color photographs and interspersed text that is just terse enough to avoid putting off the casual browser, yet compelling enough to capture the reader's interest. (The danger of placing this book on your coffee table is that you may lose a guest for long periods of time.)

There are plenty of similar books on the market containing pictures as dramatic and artistic, but what distinguishes this book from the others is the authors' decision to tell the carrier story through the words of the crew. From captain to mess cooks, key crew members have their say, which makes this a book with a surprising and gratifying edge to it.

While you will not find any of the profanity that sailors are known for, you will find an honest critique of the Navy. As a result, the reader gets a good feel for the pulse of today's naval aviation. Although the aircraft squadron commander expresses concern about future reductions and seems to feel that naval career progression consists of "just getting checkoffs," and the Marine grouches about being stuck on a ship, the main impression that comes through is the

intense pride, commitment, and professionalism that characterize all ranks of today's "airedales." While recent scandals may have dented naval aviation's image among the public, the Kaufmans have clearly observed an organization that is self-confident and reflects the best of our society.

No book is perfect, however. There are some technical flaws. For instance, in several photos the captions refer to the subjects as pilots when their breast insignia clearly indicate that they are not. And while the Kaufmans state, on page 25, that the carrier can carry eighty-five to ninety aircraft, anyone familiar with carrier operations knows this is a bit of an overstatement. (That number is certainly possible, but a carrier normally operates with seventy-five to eighty-five.) Although these errors are minor and do no harm to the book's overall accuracy, what does make me a little uneasy is the feeling that some of the sailors' words had been edited. The authors visited seven different carriers while researching their book, and it may be that some of the "monologues" are composites of what a number of people said; it is not clear which are direct quotes. If any quotations are in fact composites, the authors should have made it explicit in their preface.

One person's words that were not "edited," however, are those of Admiral Arleigh Burke. His foreword must be one of his last written statements. As such, it alone is worth the price of the book. Burke's description of his transition from destroyer squadron commander to chief of staff to Admiral Marc Mitscher, Commander Fast Carrier Task Forces, Pacific, is an especially

compelling narrative that is must reading for anyone interested in naval aviation.

My compliments to the Kaufmans. They have produced more than just another coffee-table book; they have created a conversation piece.

ROBERT C. RUBEL  
Captain, U.S. Navy

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Webb, Thomas G. and Dulin, Robert O., Jr. *Battleships: United States Battleships, 1935-1992*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1995 (first edition 1976). 404pp. \$65

This is an update of the first definitive book on U.S. World War II battleships. As in the first edition, the authors, both of whom are formally trained naval architects, rely heavily on official plans and data. The most significant change is a new chapter, "Return of the Dreadnought," which covers the reactivation and employment of four ships of the *Iowa* class—the last U.S. battleships and the only ones still available to the Navy. This is an excellent summary of the extensive updating and recommissioning of these ships from 1981 to 1988, and it includes details on many of the more ambitious design conversions that were to take place in subsequent years. Of course it was cost that limited the modifications to the bare (but still expensive) minimum, and none of the second-phase conversions studied was ever realized.

Webb and Dulin provide a thorough summary of the turret explosion on the USS *Iowa* in April 1989, as well as all the known facts about the case, but offer no

conclusions. They do, however, criticize the newly reported captain of the *Iowa*, who was a missile and machinery specialist, for not paying closer attention to 16-inch turret-crew training. Ironically, the previous skipper, Captain Lawrence Seaquist, a gunnery specialist, had made *Iowa* "the best shooting battleship ever." Eventually, the entire class, but particularly the *Iowa*, achieved "deadly accuracy at any range with little shell dispersion." The book follows all four ships of the *Iowa* class operationally until their decommissioning, the last being *Missouri*, in 1992. The ultimate fate of these beautiful ships, favorites of the Marines, remains unresolved.

The first six chapters, which cover the other three battleship classes and the controversial battle cruisers of the *Alaska* class, remain as they were in the original, with some updated text and a few additional and more interesting photographs. The conclusions in chapter 8 have been suitably modified. The appendixes now include "President Roosevelt and His Navy" and "Preliminary Designs of *North Carolina* and *South Dakota*." Dropped from this edition, however, is the original chapter "The Tosa Experiments."

The *Montanas*, which would have had twelve 16-inch, 50-caliber guns in four turrets and displaced 68,000 tons of water, were never built. That is regrettable for the battleship enthusiast, for they would have been the size of the Japanese *Yamato* class, the world's biggest. It was the advent of the aircraft carrier and the realization of its potential that doomed the *Montana* class. Their complex machinery space arrangement did, however, survive in the *Midway*-class carriers, our most formidable at the time.