

1995

Okinawa 1945

James J. O'Rourke

Simon Foster

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

O'Rourke, James J. and Foster, Simon (1995) "Okinawa 1945," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 48 : No. 4 , Article 28.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol48/iss4/28>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

28,000 Marines, of which only 9,000 were infantrymen—far from the optimum three-to-one ratio for a successful landing. It was Puller's men who landed on White Beach 1 and 2, probably the most heavily defended part of the coast. Puller fought his troops to the utmost, insisting to the high command that they only needed a bit more time and another assault to achieve their objectives. Even when his troops had sustained crippling casualties Puller refused reinforcement. One wonders if the loss of his brother, Sam, on Guam and the pain from shrapnel left in his leg since Guadalcanal may have colored his judgment. Some of his decisions were more reminiscent of the battlefields of France in 1915 than of the Pacific campaigns of the 1940s.

At the same time, the reader might have benefited from an expanded examination of Rupertus's role in the operation. Having broken his ankle in practice maneuvers prior to the landing, he was forced to remain aboard USS *DuPage*. While Hallas deals to some extent with the effect of Rupertus's restricted participation in the early hours of the landing, a more thorough examination of his command activity is in order, as well as of his subsequent actions ashore and the performance of his staff.

This minor suggestion notwithstanding, *The Devil's Anvil* is an outstanding study of an often neglected element of the Pacific War, and it is a substantial contribution to the body of literature on the conflict.

ANNE CIPRIANO VENZON
Darnestown, Maryland

Foster, Simon. *Okinawa 1945*. London: Arms and Armour, 1995. 192pp. \$24.95

The current popularity of Second World War histories brought about by the fiftieth-anniversary remembrances has unfortunately cluttered the shelves with weak offerings, new titles rushed to market to cash in while the topic is hot. *Okinawa 1945* is long on detail (much of questionable accuracy), short on analysis, and offers little new insight into the bloodiest campaign of the Pacific War.

This work recounts primarily the war at sea, with just enough description of the operations ashore to keep clear the context of the overall campaign. Foster's "pro-Navy" view gets in the way of a balanced assessment of the importance of the ground war versus the naval war. He contends that the success of the Okinawa operation hinged upon the Americans retaining "command of the sea," while the ground war, although bitterly fought, "was a foregone conclusion." Foster implies that the war at sea was a near-run thing. In fact, however, after the beatings taken at the "Marianas Turkey Shoot" and later in the defense of the Philippines, the Imperial Japanese Navy was in no shape to contest American dominance. The massed suicide attacks by Japanese land-based air inflicted a horrible toll on the ships screening the island, but there is no evidence, nor does Foster offer any, that the American high command considered abandoning the waters around Okinawa because of the *Kikusui* ("Floating Chrysanthemum") attacks.

Okinawa 1945 is uneven. Sometimes it is enjoyable and entertaining, yet a turn of the page can present a seemingly endless stretch of colorless prose of the kind one expects in a Navy "oporder." This reviewer was prepared to attribute the annoying and persistent typographical errors (e.g., "Admiral Kummel" instead of "Kimmel") to poor editing until the next to the last page of the book. There I was surprised to discover that "on 6 September the Americans dropped the first A-bomb on Hiroshima; on 7 September the Soviet Union declared war on Japan; and on 9 September the second A-bomb was dropped on Nagasaki." The actual dates for these events were 6, 8, and 9 August respectively, and this final bit of sloppiness caused me to question the blizzard of statistics Foster offers. It was time to cross-check *Okinawa 1945* against Samuel Eliot Morison's *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II: Victory in the Pacific 1945*. I am a great admirer of Morison's history of the war, and apparently so is Simon Foster. The author's account of the *Kikusui* attacks reads remarkably like Morison's—occasionally word for word. Although Foster does cite several long passages from Morison, he needs to be more forthcoming as to his reliance upon Morison's scholarship.

I was unable to locate any information about Simon Foster, the author, in either *Contemporary Authors* or the *Book Review Digest*. Also, the editors of this journal and I were unsuccessful in obtaining a biography of him from the book's publisher.

Save yourself the hefty price tag of this book and go to the library or your

favorite used book store and get a copy of Morison's work. It is a more readable and engaging account of the naval action around Okinawa. For an excellent depiction of the battle ashore, try James and William Belote's *Typhoon of Steel: The Battle for Okinawa*, or William Manchester's *Goodbye Darkness: A Memoir of the Pacific War*—a compelling, personal description of the fierce fighting on Okinawa from a Marine infantryman's point of view.

JAMES J. O'ROURKE
Commander, U.S. Navy
Naval War College

Bruce, R.W. and Leonard, C. R.
Crommelin's Thunderbirds: Air Group 12 Strikes the Heart of Japan. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1994. 228pp. \$26.95

This work is a narrative history of the activation, training, and combat deployment of CAG (Carrier Air Group) 12 in USS *Randolph* (CV 15) during the waning months of World War II. The group adopted its nickname from its first "skipper," Commander Charles Crommelin; the three (later four) assigned squadrons all adopted emblems employing a stylized southwestern Indian thunderbird. Bruce and Leonard were assigned to Fighting Squadron 12 and Fighting-Bombing Squadron 12 respectively.

They wrote this book as a result of their 1987 air group reunion in Charleston, South Carolina, onboard the USS *Yorktown*, in order to preserve the memories of air wing personnel for future generations. It is a