

1993

## The Naval Air War, 1939-1945

Robert B. Pinnell

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### Recommended Citation

Pinnell, Robert B. (1993) "The Naval Air War, 1939-1945," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 46 : No. 3 , Article 16.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol46/iss3/16>

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revel in the taut depiction of man and machine engaged in a contest of wills, but the most richly rewarded will be those looking for insights and analysis.

Every military professional should read this book. It includes issues such as joint operations, doctrine, fog of war, women in combat, and the importance of leadership. This reader found it difficult to remember that the author was referring to the 1940s. For example, the similarities between Hitler's strategic objectives for the Battle of Britain and General Schwartzkopf's strategic objectives in the Gulf are uncanny.

Finally, should there be any lingering doubt about this book's applicability, consider the following Trenchard quote: "How much easier our task . . . would be if the older services had always said, 'How can we help you?' instead of . . . 'How can we destroy you?'"

Townsend has provided us with lessons as timeless as they are timely.

KEVIN CURRY  
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Miller, Nathan. *The Naval Air War, 1939-1945*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1991. 175pp. \$24.95

Despite the title, this is primarily an overview of the employment of aircraft carriers, rather than of naval aviation as a whole, during the Second World War. Miller offers a readable account of the carrier operations in all theaters, but makes only occasional

references to shore-based naval aviation, and there is little background information about why the major powers entered the war with the types of naval aviation they had.

Miller makes clear that during World War II the aircraft carrier reached a degree of maturity that surprised all but its most ardent supporters. Unfortunately, he does not fully discuss the development of carriers during the inter-war years. Although carriers were the subject of intense development in the United States and Japan, that was not the case in the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Italy. The varying degrees of interest and support in these countries had a dramatic and direct impact on the naval campaigns of the Second World War.

Despite a few annoying errors—for example, the biplanes were *not* canvas-covered—his coverage of British fleet carrier operations is extensive and generally good. The 1945 operations of British escort carriers in the Atlantic and the British Pacific Fleet carriers are also mentioned, but in both cases one might have hoped for more detail.

The United States and Japan entered the war with large, well trained carrier forces, which became their primary striking arms—particularly for the United States after the loss of the majority of its battleships to Japanese carrier aircraft at Pearl Harbor. Miller offers a thorough account of the operations of the Japanese and American carrier forces, with an emphasis on fast carriers and only a brief discussion of the escort carriers, which

served well in tasks ranging from anti-submarine warfare and ferrying aircraft to support of amphibious operations. His documentation of the operations of Japanese carriers is extensive, beginning with the attack on Pearl Harbor (which is described out of chronological sequence in the first chapter), through their successes in the Western Pacific and the Indian Ocean, their setbacks at the Coral Sea and Midway, to their final destruction.

The author's account of the American carrier forces' risky and costly operations of 1942, and their dominance over Japanese sea and land-based air power, is similarly well told. But Miller's title warrants greater coverage of shore-based naval aviation: the Japanese navy's powerful 11th Air Fleet; the Luftwaffe's *Fliegerkorps X*; the Royal Air Force Coastal Command; the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, and Army Air Force patrol and bomber squadrons; and shore-based navy and Marine fighter, bomber, and torpedo squadrons. All made significant contributions to the naval air war.

Furthermore, a history should provide photographs and text that are mutually supportive. In this book, they are too often at cross-purposes, which is a significant distraction. Photographs are often separated from the related text, and in several cases they raise expectations that the text does not address. For example, there are no less than four photographs of the U.S. Navy's PB4Y-1 Liberators in the Pacific, but their activities there

receive little mention. The four photographs of the last moments of the *Lexington* are disproportionate to the two paragraphs that describe her demise. Additionally, there are several annoying errors in the labeling of plates. The photographs of the Hurricanes aboard *Illustrious* shown on pages 28 and 29 are actually Fulmars; the picture of the *Victorious* on page 31 is reversed (only the Japanese built an aircraft carrier with the island on the port side); and one of the Spitfires shown at the bottom of the same page is an F4F Wildcat.

This book is suitable for the first-time student of aircraft carrier operations in World War II, but for readers familiar with the naval history of the Second World War it will offer nothing new. For those requiring more complete coverage of naval aviation in that war, Norman Polmar's *Aircraft Carriers*, published by Doubleday in 1969, covers this period in greater depth.

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Stillwell, Paul. *Battleship Arizona*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1991. 480pp. \$48.95

This is an illustrated history of the life and times of the battleship that was sunk at her berth in Pearl Harbor by the Japanese on 7 December 1941 and lies still in the mud beneath the *Arizona Memorial*.