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TALES OF WAR PILOT (Smithsonian History Of Aviation And Spaceflight)



Synopsis

FROM ONE OF THE NATION'S FIRST ROTOR PILOTS, A BLAZING ACCOUNT OF HIS MOST TOP SECRET, DANGEROUS MISSIONS Richard Kirkland would never have imagined that anything could compare to tangling with Zeros in life-and-death dogfights over the South Pacific—but that was before he traded his fighter-pilot wings for rotors. It was a move he never regretted, and the riveting experiences he chronicles in *War Pilot* provide ample reason why. From the first primitive Sikorsky and the sophisticated choppers of Vietnam to flying medevac choppers and saving countless soldiers from certain death in Korea, Kirkland's firsthand accounts of pilots under fire provide a gripping portrait of not just one American hero, but the many courageous others with whom he flew. . . . --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

Series: Smithsonian History of Aviation and Spaceflight

Hardcover: 160 pages

Publisher: Smithsonian (February 17, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1560988886

ISBN-13: 978-1560988885

Product Dimensions: 9.2 x 6.2 x 0.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars See all reviews (16 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #2,949,162 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #95 in Books > History > Military > Korean War > Personal Narratives #148 in Books > History > Military > Korean War > Aviation #7050 in Books > History > Military > Aviation

Customer Reviews

I purchased this book out of curiosity as the author's son is a life long friend and recently told me about it. I first purchased a gift copy, to be sent to my father who served with Dick Kirkland, SR. at Stead AFB in the late 50's & early 60's. It was during this time that Dick Jr. and I became friends. Despite a life long friendship with the author's son I never new of his father's historical adventures until we began discussing this book. I purchased my own copy after my father had read his and highly recommended it. I had no preconceptions when I began reading it, but I must admit I was a bit skeptical about a "first full length effort" at the authors stage of life. I needn't have been. It was an exciting read, very comfortable in it's pace with good character development and surprising content.

I thoroughly enjoyed the book and would highly recommend it to any reader interested in the military during the 40's & 50's or, for that matter, practically anyone who enjoys a good historical tale, spiced up with interesting characters and personal experience!

The real world experiences of Richard Kirkland provide a wonderful source of engaging tales. Although most of the stories involve military aviation, the diversity of the subject matter and truly likeable characters in this book go well beyond the field of flight. From detailed accounts of the action of fighter combat in MacArthur's Pacific campaign to compelling stories of unique cultural experiences in Japan, Kirkland brings his characters to life. He has been fortunate to have flown with (and even rescued) some of America's greatest combat pilots. This book is a fantastic opportunity to gain some insight into a not only military aviation, but the life and feelings of pilots in Korea and the Pacific theater of WWII. This book presents a great combination of fun stories, historical insights, and compelling characters.

This story is very interesting and gives a lot of insight on the conduct of the air war in the Pacific in WWII. The author, Richard C. Kirkland, was a pilot very early in his life, age 20 or around that age. He is assigned to some very noteworthy units, one the famous Black Sheep Squadron where he was acquainted with Mjajor Richard Bong, the noted ace. He was also fortunate to fly with Lindberg, the Lone Eagle who first flew the Atlantic alone. He flew the P-38 and other aircraft and was a very good pilot apparently. The story is not strictly his however, he tells a couple of tales about pilots that he has heard about who have survived stressful situations. They are all interesting, but they are not his story. After WWII he serves in the newly formed Air Force and he is picked to transition into helicopters and this is a fine story of his exploits as one of the first chopper pilots in Korea and one of the first to airlift casualties from battle in a helicopter. This part of his book is superb. I gave this three stars because his tales of WWII in some instances seem contrived. Maybe it is just that he has waited too long to write this, and he does not remember clearly what he writes about. All in all it is a great read of air combat from first hand experience.

Richard takes you through his life during WWII right through Korea. His stories will have you wanting to keep reading. I got a lot of great laugh through out the book but one of the best was as he is getting ready to bail out of his aircraft and the has the thought "When was the last time I checked my survial kit" I can tell you from first hand knowledge that most pilots or aircrewman in general dont gkive there survival gear a second though until it come time when they might need.

You see I was a Parachute Rigger while in the Navy. One of my duties was seeing that those Aircrew had the equipment they needed when and if the time came. But as Richard can tell you it was up to them to be sure it was ready on a daily basis.

Tales of a War Pilot is about pilot Richard Kirkland who took me to islands near Japan. He flew treacherous rescue missions for the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (M.A.S.H.) in North Korea. The book includes stories like "Escape from the Stone Age" where a good friend of LT. Kirkland makes a critical mistake and is forced to bail out and survive alligators, malaria, and cannibals. Another memorable story, "Mystery of the Magnificent Beast," involved a huge Convair B-36 that disappears on Valentine's Day with an A-bomb in its bay. I very much liked the book. It was filled with tragedies and successes that kept me on the edge of my seat. I would highly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in airplanes and WW2 or anyone who is an Air Force fanatic like me.

A truly fascinating collection of tales. It really portrays the human element of World War II. The author is to be commended for bringing this aspect of the war to light as the 21st century begins.

This easy but captivating read of short stories from a military pilot's accumulated and varied experiences gives the reader an incredible insight into our past world of war and aviation. Probably never again to be duplicated, the military flying career of the author left me aghast at the breadth of poignant events and weighty situations faced by this one flyer in his long military career. I definitely yearned for more tales, more insight and more learning about the life of this man - which was spent significantly in the air! This is a winning first publication for Kirkland. I wish him many more.

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