

PROFESSIONAL READING

By Cdr. Peter B. Mersky, USNR (Ret.)



Left to right: bombardier navigator Cdr. Richard J. Cassara, VA-145's XO, and pilot Cdr. Richard Noble pose in front of their Rockeye-armed A-6E *Intruder* on board *Ranger* (CV 61) for a strike during the Persian Gulf War. This aircrew participated in the Bubiyan Turkey Shoot described in *Shield and Sword*, pp. 229-231.

Marolda, Edward J., and Robert J. Schneller, Jr. *Shield and Sword: The United States Navy and the Persian Gulf War*. Naval Historical Center, Washington, DC. 1998. 540 pp. Ill. \$46 paperback; \$59 hardbound. Order from Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954.

This excellent book belongs in any library of Navy references covering recent events. Written by two knowledgeable authors, it presents the entire historical experience of the war in the gulf in a logical, scholarly manner, free of the heavy academic flavor that often characterizes such studies.

Several introductory chapters set the scene for the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, and the intense allied response in the buildup of Operation Desert Shield. When the war begins on 17 January 1991, the narrative shifts into excellent historical reporting, including one of the best descriptions I've read of the cumbersome U.S. Air Force Air Tasking Order and its effect on Navy and Marine Corps air operations. The narratives of Desert Storm's water, land and air battles are well done, as is the final ground-war phase. The Marine Corps' experiences

are an important part of the book and are written with a personal flavor that makes the text more than a dry account.

The summary chapter gives a lucid distillation of the six-week war. It also provides a good assessment of Navy and Marine aircraft, particularly the veteran A-7 *Corsair II* and A-6 *Intruder* squadrons who were on their last combat deployments.

Considering the number of photos taken during the buildup and war, the book lacks good photography, and there are a few errors in captions and text. The photo on page 349 of a VFA-136 F/A-18 *Hornet* on "a no-fly zone patrol over Iraq" shows the aircraft devoid of missiles, carrying only fuel tanks. How would the pilot have been able to confront any Iraqi violator of the prohibited zone? The text states on page 132 that VR squadrons have 12 C-9 *Skytrain IIs* when in fact these reserve units each have only 2 to 3 aircraft, totaling 12 C-9s distributed among the four squadrons noted.

Nonetheless, *Shield and Sword* is a first-rate account of the war, and it certainly fills a major hole in coverage of Navy and Marine Corps participation.

Carey, Alan C. *The Reluctant Raiders: the Story of United States Navy Bombing Squadron VB/VPB-109 in World War II*. Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 4880 Lower Valley Rd., Atglen, PA 19310-9717. 1999. 237 pp. Ill. \$29.95.

Surprisingly, the relatively unknown activities of the Navy's long-range bombing squadrons, which flew the PB4Y *Privateer* in the last year of WW II, have benefited from several accounts in articles and books. Carey's book is nicely printed, with a wealth of detail and many photos that show a lot of actual combat.

There are a few mistakes in captions, mainly regarding Japanese aircraft. One example is on page 65: the Mitsubishi Ki-21 army medium bomber received the code name "Sally," not "Nell," which was assigned to the G3M2 naval bomber. So, what did the VPB-109 aircraft encounter? An army or navy bomber?

A series of appendices detailing the squadron's record rounds out the book—overall an interesting read.

Wise, James E., Jr., and Anne Collier Rehill. *Stars in the Corps: Movie Actors in the United States Marines*. U.S. Naval Institute, 2062 Generals Highway, Annapolis, MD 21401-6780. 1999. 247 pp. Ill. \$28.95.

This book is a natural follow-on to the authors' book about movie actors in the Navy, *Stars in Blue*, which we reviewed in the Mar-Apr 98 column. Like the earlier volume, this effort is a pleasant browse, filled with interesting, little-known facts and revelations. And, like *Stars in Blue*, it helps if you were born before 1950, or you happen to be a movie buff, because the people described were from the WW II generation—with a few bridging the period up to Vietnam.

There are some factual errors. Ed McMahon probably flew the Cessna L-19 *Bird Dog*, not the 180, which didn't appear until after the Korean War. His aircraft might also have been the Consolidated OY-1 *Sentinel*, which was more active than the Cessnas. One glaring omission was mention of George Peppard's most well-known film, *The Blue Max*, a colorful WW I aviation film showing the German side of the war.

If you have an interest in movies, these two books make a great two-volume reference.

Lambert, Jack. *Atlantic Air War: Sub Hunters vs. U-Boats*. Specialty Press, 11481 Kost Dam Rd., North Branch, MN 55056. 1999. 112 pp. Ill. \$18.95 plus \$4.50 S/H.

The fourth in this series of large-format photo collections on WW II air combat, this volume is the best so far. The photograph selection is excellent, with many shots of actual engagements between Allied aircraft and German submarines, as well as good detailed views of the many aircraft that hunted U-boats from the coasts of the United States, Europe and the Mediterranean. U.S. escort carrier antisubmarine warfare is also well shown.

The supporting text is kept to a minimum, but that's OK. The photos are really the focus of the series, and the author has once again assembled a nice assortment for the enthusiast and researcher.

Smith, Peter C. *Ship Strike: A History of Air-Launched Anti-Ship Missile Systems*. Specialty Press, 11481 Kost Dam Rd., North Branch, MN 55056. 1999. 184 pp. Ill. \$29.95.

Books by this author, who has written several interesting works on dive-bombers and dive-bombing, are very British in phrasing, philosophy and presentation. This book is no exception. However, *Ship Strike* will be entertaining and enlightening to American readers, with so much current attention focused on air-launched weapons.

Starting with pre-WW I experiments and developments during the war, Smith brings his narrative along through the varied designs of the between-war period and eventually winds up in the busy WW II era. His discussion of early Pacific battles is well written and serves to help the reader understand the arenas in which air-launched weapons really got their start. One account details the benchmark Japanese attack on the small Royal Navy task force led by *Prince of Wales* on 10 December 1941, which truly signaled the arrival of the torpedo-bomber and its weapon as a combination to be noted and feared.

He focuses on a few unusual examples, including the Italian SM.79 force. Since very little has been written in English about this evocative, tri-motor bomber and its crews, the diversion is welcome. There is also a nice section on Soviet crews; I've never seen anything on these folks, although there is probably a lot in Russian-language publications.

This book's photo selection runs the gamut from very good to so-so. Several of the pre-Korean War views are particularly good, but the small color folio is disappointing and very dated.

Ship Strike is a good reference on a subject whose coverage is usually confined to a chapter or less in a larger work.

Treadwell, Terry C., and Alan C. Wood. *The Royal Naval Air Service*. Arcadia Publishing, 2A Cumberland St., Charleston, SC 29401. 1999. 128 pp. Ill. \$18.99.

This small publisher has appeared in this column before with Sean Milligan's two volumes on NAS Quonset Point, R.I. This time, it has co-published a book from the UK on the RNAS in WW I. It's a nice little book but sadly lacking in coverage of the American link with the British service. American Naval Aviators served many exchange tours with RNAS units. In fact, our Navy's first ace, David S. Ingalls, made all of his kills while flying with No. 213 Squadron. U.S. Navy and Marine Corps participation in 1918 also involved flying with RNAS DH-4 bomber units, but there is no mention of this important fact.

That said, the photos are unique. One shows a captured British *Camel* fighter, which was marked with German crosses and became the victor over other British aircraft—a circumstance that has seldom been proven with pictorial coverage. It's the first confirmation of such a kill that I have seen.

This slim volume is a good reference addition to an enthusiast's library.