

AVIATION LITERATURE

Edited By ROBERT B. CASARI

THE AIRSHIPS AKRON & MACON - Flying Aircraft Carriers of the United States Navy.

By Richard K. Smith, 1965. Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute. 228 pages, 98 photographs, drawings, maps, appendices, index and bibliography. Large 8" x 10.5". \$12.50 (\$10.00 to U.S.N.I. members).

On rare occasions, an aviation book appears that is everything an historian wants: a treatise which is based on original research, on a subject hitherto barely covered in available writings, and that is complete and accurate enough that it will remain for many years as a standard and lasting reference. This book is one of these. The author is well known to most readers of the JOURNAL for his articles have appeared in a number of publications and have long identified him as an authority on lighter-than-air history.

Navy rigid airship experience dates from 1919 when the ZR1 and ZR2 were authorized, being the Shenandoah and the British R-38 respectively. During the next decade, the long-lived Los Angeles was built, leading finally to the tremendous sister ships, the Akron and Macon of the early 1930s. These two, the ZRS9 and ZRS5, are the subject of this volume with a brief discussion of the early years preceding their construction and operation.

Drawing on material from the National Archives, official Navy files, Goodyear Aerospace Corporation, the recollections of men associated with the dirigibles, and many other sources, the author has recreated the story with all its political ramifications, technical difficulties, heartbreaks and accomplishments. Most of his source material has never been utilized before.

Design of the ships began about 1927, erection of the Akron was started in March, 1930, and her first flight took place in September 1931. Her operations during the next 19 months are described in detail, including the experiments with Curtiss F9C airplanes, until late on the night of April 3, 1933 when she was lost 30 miles off the east coast in the Atlantic with only three survivors. The same month, the Macon made its first flight in an atmosphere of doubt and criticism. Continuing the experiments in working with the fleet and in developing operational tactics for airships, the Macon flew on to that rainy day in February 1939 when she, too, went down, off the Monterey coast, after an even shorter life. The rigid airship in the U. S. was at an end.

This book covers virtually every aspect of these two dirigibles from design to the court's investigation of their loss. Of great interest to many readers will be the descriptions and photographs of the hook-on operations with the small Curtiss planes and the designs of later airships never built. Mr. Smith corrects most of the errors that have persisted over the years and puts them in their proper perspective.

The near 100 photographs are beautifully reproduced and accompanied by maps of the last flights of both ships, drawings of the crash sequences, official layouts of several designs of the late 1930s, political cartoons, drawings of the Akron, and a detailed three-view of the F9C-2 by Willis L. Nye.

For casual readers this volume may have many technical details, but to most it will be and remain the last word in the history of the Navy's two largest rigid airships.
Robert B. Casari

Two articles have recently appeared by Smith covering the Navy's hook-on aircraft, sometimes in more detail than the above book. "The ZRCV-Fascinating Might-Have-Been of Aeronautics" appeared in Aerospace Historian, October 1965, pages 115-121 and traces developments up to the ZRCV of 1937 which was designed to carry nine dive bombers.

"The U. S. Navy Skyhook Aircraft" in the December 1965 issue of Flying Review International, pages 232-236 deals more specifically with the aircraft, is more detailed, and better illustrated. It contains some facts not included in the book.

FIGHTER ACES

By Colonel Raymond F. Toliver and Trevor Constable. 1965. New York. Macmillan and Company, 359 pages, 69 photographs, glossary. \$7.95.

Here is the saga of the American fighter ace from the days of the volunteers of the Lafayette Escadrille of World War I to the Sabre jet professionals of Korea. Colonel Raymond Toliver, the official historian of the American Fighter Aces Association, has teamed with Trevor Constable to bring to the reader the most definitive book that has ever been presented in this fascinating field.

The book leads off with a special treat in the form of a chapter dealing with just what goes to make a fighter ace. Tactics and personality traits are covered in a most readable and comprehensive fashion that sets the stage for the oncoming legion of stories and incidents in which American fighter aces were involved over the years.

Not only have the authors covered the better known fighter pilots of World War I, such as Rickenbacker, Luke, Lufbery and Campbell, but here for the first time are men like Capt. Frederick Libby and Capt. Alan M. Wilkinson who flew with the Royal Flying Corps of Great Britain. Few people have ever read of Wilkinson, but he was the first American fighter ace of WW I, having scored his fifth victory on August 31, 1916.

The exploits of America's fighter aces of World War II are well covered in chapters broken down by theaters and branches of service. These pages are crammed with highlights from the combat careers of fighter pilots from the dark days of Lt Boyd 0. Wagner's victories in the Philippines, until the final victory of the war was scored by Lt Cdr Thomas H. Ridy over Tokyo Bay on August 15, 1995. The encounters and victories of scores of AAF, Navy and Marine pilots are excitingly told by the authors and quite often by the pilot as he recalls them.

While this book is primarily a coverage of American aces, one of its most fascinating features is the long chapter on the enemy aces. Intriguing stories are told of Japanese pilots such as Nishizawa who was credited with 103 victories and Temie Akamatsu, the "Black Sheep" whose skill in the air alone kept him from being dismissed from the service in disgrace. Also covered in this chapter are some of the foremost fighter pilots of the Luftwaffe such as the world's top ace, Erich Hartmann, with 352 confirmed victories and Helnz-Wolfgang Schnauffer "The Night Ghost of St. Trond" who downed 121 Allied aircraft during the nocturnal hours.

The last chapter covers the "old pros" of the Korean War and their exciting high-speed combats with the Russian-built Migs. Many of these exploits are told in the pilot's own words, which certainly adds to the intensity

of the story.

A complete list of all American fighter aces of all conflicts plus such interesting items as lists of "tops and firsts", top fighter aces of other nations and an excellent glossary of combat terminology close out this volume. This book cannot be too highly recommended to any aviation buff whose mind has ever soared into the skies through the media of exploits of men like these who bear the title - fighter ace.

William N. Hess

BILLION DOLLAR GAMBLE - The Story Behind the "Impossible" 727 Project.

By Harold Mansfield, 1965. New York: David McKay Co., Inc. 184 pages, 16 pages of photographs. \$4.95.

This book was undoubtedly written for the reader who has a casual interest in airplanes and has heard about or flown in the 727 as a passenger. A much-traveled businessman might pick it up at an airport book stall and find reading it an interesting way to pass several dull flight hours, however, to the serious aviation enthusiast or historian, the book has limited appeal.

The author obviously attempted to avoid presenting technical details and succeeded admirably. Several times the reader is led up to an interesting situation and then left completely unsatisfied as the author skips over it. For example, surging in the center engine showed up on the first flight, according to the author who covers the incident in two sentences. One wonders how serious it was, why it was overlooked in wind tunnel tests, how it was cured, how much the fix cost, and how long it delayed the program. These questions are left unanswered and the reader is treated instead to stilted conversations between uninteresting engineers on the demonstration flights and description of flip charts used in planning meetings.

About the only positive contribution the book makes is the picture it creates of how a large, modern airplane is the result of a committee's efforts, rather than those of a single man or even a handful of men. Even here, the author leaves the reader wondering what management tools were used to control such a large project.

BILLION DOLLAR GAMBLE is a disappointingly shallow story of the 727's development, and an airplane as good as this one deserves better treatment.

Charles E. Anderson

WINGS OF GOLD--The Story of United States Naval Aviation.

By Roger A. Caras, 1965. New York: J. B. Lippincott Co. 240 pages, 131 photographs, appendices, index. \$4.95.

This profusely illustrated history of naval aviation is an eye-catcher on a book counter or in an advertising list, but is far from being "especially valuable to the student of air history" as is claimed. Since it is obviously written for the general public, one would not expect a thoroughly researched and documented work, but it is difficult to justify some of the contents even on this basis.

Beginning in 1910, the slow development of the naval air arm is traced to the present in an exuberant account, and the author is at his best in retelling the early years. His style is fast moving and he touches on most facets of naval flying, including lighter-than-air, polar exploration, all three wars, etc.

The appendices are unusual in listing the first 50 naval aviators, the first 10 Navy helicopter pilots, the first 20 jet pilots, plus a list of carriers. The index is reasonably complete and useful. Photographically, this volume has a lot to offer which partly makes up for the too frequent errors.

Within this framework, the detail writing is often misleading and inaccurate, and it is impossible to read

more than a dozen pages without encountering an error or a generalization that cries for correction. For example, we are told that the reason the Navy received so few Capronis in WW I was due to interservice wrangling which prevented either of the fighting arms from getting any from U. S. production. Actually, unbeknownst to the author, the Navy's Capronis came solely from Italy where they received priority in deliveries over the Army. None were ever planned from the U. S.

On page 45, the text says Navy aviators sank an even dozen submarines in WW I, whereas, they actually sank none. A few pages later, a fictional skirmish between sub and plane is given with patriotic fervor that went out with the 1920s. Not satisfied with dropping a bomb down an Open hatch, it had to smash the skull of a German climbing up! Nor is there any explanation of why another plane carried rocks to throw at subs after running out of ammunition, instead of carrying more ammunition in the first place.

Nor do things improve much in later chapters. It appears that "the Grumman F11F Super Tiger (sic) is one of the few combat planes in the world capable of supersonic speeds in level flight". Also, the F7U-3M is currently "a magnificent weapons system" when this plane was actually phased out EIGHT YEARS AGO! It is obvious that much of this volume has been borrowed from updated clippings and inaccurate references.

The illustrations, contrary to the text, are well selected and reproduction is good. There are a number of rare pictures, such as a three-shot series of the AH-1 being catapulted in July, 1912; a Caproni on a sea sled; 35 planes in front of the blimp hangars at Pensacola; 16 lighter-than-air photographs; and a good collection of modern jets.

With the current flood of aviation material being published, it is more than ever necessary to be selective in what you purchase.

Robert 8. Casari

VETERAN AND VINTAGE AIRCRAFT

By Leslie Hunt, 1965. Published by the author. 80 pages, 106 photographs, no index, 5" x 7", paper bound. \$1.00 (See last paragraph of this review).

This small booklet contains a good coverage of surviving vintage aircraft of the world regardless of location and is an excellent check list with serial numbers and location. While not absolutely complete, it certainly omits very few of the many hundreds still in existence. There are minor mistakes and an occasional typographical error, but the book is very nicely done and well worth the moderate donation asked.

Photographs are generally of the actual planes but a few are merely of the type. Reproduction varies from excellent to only fair and most are perfectly acceptable.

All profits are to go to the Truloves School, Ingatstone, for children with muscular dystrophy. The suggested donation of \$1.00 should be in funds payable to and ordered from Mr. L. Hunt, 90 Woodside, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, England,

Robert B. Casari

ME 262

By Edward Maloney and Frank Ryan. 1965. North Hollywood California. Challenge Publications Inc. 48 pages. 86 photographs, 4 three-views. \$3.95

At long last someone has seen fit to do a book on an aircraft that could possibly have turned the aerial tide over Europe in favor of the Luftwaffe; the Me 262. Here for the first time is presented in brief form the story of this revolutionary craft in all of its variants.

The photos are quite good and are undoubtedly the largest collection that has been assembled and published of the German jet craft to date. Modelers will be en-

thused with this feature and even more so with the three-views of the major modifications of the aircraft.

Another excellent feature is the heretofore unpublished story of Colonel H. E. Watson and his group of pilots who went into Germany right after the war to fly out all the various types of Luftwaffe aircraft for technical evaluation.

Pilot Operating instructions and a directory of surviving Me 262s round out a most colorful and informative book. The one thing that this reader would have liked to have seen greater coverage on was the actual combat operations of this plane. However, the book can certainly be recommended to all interested in the combat aircraft of World War II and to model builders interested in this era,

William N. Hess

LIGHTER THAN AIR IN THE NAVY AND THE SHENANDOAH STORY By LCdr Frederick J. Tobin, USN (Ret.). An address to the Texas Aviation Historical Society, Dallas, Texas, December 1964. Available from T.A.H.S., Box 6701, Dallas Texas. 9 pages, illustrated. \$.50.

LCdr Tobin's career in the Navy dates from before WW I and he gives a series of interesting anecdotes about Naval aviation, including the origin of the term "airedale". He transferred to aviation duty on reenlistment in the Navy in 1917 in lighter-than-air training at Pensacola and continued through the construction of the Shenandoah and its assembly at Lakehurst. Later assigned to the big airship for research. Tobin stayed with the Shenandoah until its fatal crash near Ava, Ohio in 1925.

Major feature of this paper is its authenticity as an eye-witness account, particularly of the final crash. It suffers from fact, of specific dates and will require comparison with other records for these. It is, however, valuable for the background concerning research projects conducted on the Shenandoah.

James J. Sloan

AVIATION BROWSING

Unlike the tremendous publishing response to the centenary of the Civil War, the advent of the fiftieth anniversary of World War I and the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of World War II has elicited slight reaction. The dramatic aeronautical aspects of 1914 and 1915 so far have awakened little interest. It is true that the momentous events of 1916, 1917 and 1918 were far more spectacular and their remembrance should stimulate a number of books and articles. American military men, however, have been notorious in their complacent attitudes toward the memorable events in which they had participated. Unlike their British, French and German counterparts, Americans did not record systematically their wartime experiences in letters, diaries, log books, articles and books.

From the flood of claries and letters existent of Civil War participants, it is rather obvious that in the intervening half-century, habits changed. This shortcoming becomes even more obvious in World War II, the Korean War and now the Vietnam War. Modern Americans are not great letter writers; most feel more at ease with the telephone, thus robbing the historian of much of his raw material. But even the use of modern electronic devices has not been exploited to its utmost to interview and preserve the experiences of World War II and Korean War leaders. Peppery, old Major General Benjamin Foulois, one of the Wright Brothers' first pupils, is now enjoying the eighty-seventh year of his life undisturbed by historians or biographers. Imagine the newspapers, radio and television men neglecting John Glenn that way!

A number of fine aeronautical history books appeared

during the latter half of 1965. For those who missed the earlier editions, Harleyford Publications has republished their magnificent (and costly--\$10.50) edition of VON RICHTHOFEN AND THE FLYING CIRCUS. It is available in the U. S. from Aero Publishers of Fallbrook, California. Edited by Bruce Robertson, this is undoubtedly the most definitive work on the incomparable Von Richthofen and the formidable unit which he commanded. The photographs and diagrams are superb. No collector or library should be without this book. Another interesting book is news writer Herbert M. Mason's HIGH FLEW THE FALCONS (Lippincott \$9.95). This is a well-written story of the French aces of World War I. Included is a fine selection of unusual photographs of World War I aircraft. Lt Colonel Gene Gurney has added another fine book to his growing Hangar of aeronautical books. This time it is FLYING ACES OF WORLD WAR I (Random House \$1.95. Gurney is rendering a valuable service by introducing a whole new generation of Americans to the exciting gallery of aces who became the legendary figures of aerial warfare. The photographs alone are more than worth the price of the book. Arch Whitehouse, himself a Royal Flying Corps ace of World War I, has highlighted the first 15 years of aviation in THE EARLY BIRDS (Doubleday \$4.95). This is Mr. Whitehouse's twenty-fifth book on aviation. All of his devoted readers will appreciate his masterful coverage of these heroic and often misunderstood years. The section on military aviation is especially enlightening. Another delightful book which all collectors will wish to purchase is THE FIGHTERS by Thomas R. Funderburk (Grosset and Dunlap \$7.95). The endpapers are splendid color reproductions of World War I fighters with full insignia. Unlike many aviation books, Mr. Funderburk has included a bibliography and an index. The format is enhanced by many photographs and detailed drawings. Colonel Raymond F. Toliver and Travor J. Constable in FIGHTER ACES (Macmillan \$7.95) have produced an invaluable reference work--reviewed above, THE THOUSAND PLAN (London, Chatto and Windus \$7.50) by Ralph Barker is the story of the RAF's greatest raid on Cologne on May 30-31, 1942. This mission was a turning point for Bomber Command and may be considered equivalent to significant land battles like El Alamein and Stalingrad. Noble Frankland's THE BOMBING OFFENSIVE AGAINST GERMANY (London, Faber and Faber \$9.50) is concerned with the rationale behind the decisions responsible for the strategic air offensive. This is a profound, authoritative study by an airman and trained historian. The book resulted from Dr. Frankland's collaboration with the late Sir Charles Webster in producing the four volume official THE STRATEGIC AIR OFFENSIVE AGAINST GERMANY, which appeared in 1961.

George V. Fagan

ITEMS OF INTEREST

1) The remaining stocks of the AAF Publication Co. (a private business) have been obtained by John W. Caler, 7506 Clybourn, Sun Valley, California and are now available for sale at \$3.95. Each is a soft cover book of 80 pages telling of a numbered U. S. Air Force in WW II with a reprint of the history of the Air Force prepared by the AAF Office of Information and some 75 pages of photos of aircraft, men and places pertinent to the subject. Available are: THE 5th OVER THE SOUTHWEST PACIFIC, THE 9th SEES FRANCE AND ENGLAND, THE 12th OVER THE MEDITERRANEAN, and THE 15th OVER ITALY. There are some excellent and rare photos in each although the 15th includes too many shots of historic buildings and places.

2) A review of the book, MOFFETT FIELD..., available from the Wingfoot Lighter-Than-Air Society, appeared in the JOURNAL, Vol 10, No 3. Unfortunately, shortly after A.A.H.S. orders began coming in, stocks were exhausted and the publisher advised the WLTAS that the book is now out of print. Both the WLTAS and the reviewer regret the inconvenience thus caused A.A.H.S. Members.