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Kinkaid of the Seventh Fleet: A Biography of Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid, U.S. Navy

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This is important to the historian but a bit dull in the reading.

In the operational arena, air intelligence grew to encompass the examination of captured aircraft, the gathering by ferret aircraft of electronic emanations, eavesdropping on operational radio transmissions, photographic reconnaissance and interpretation, and strategic interpretations drawn from ULTRA intercepts and decoding. Kreis describes each of these in depth. Ferret missions and the "Y" service picked up clear or lightly coded enemy radar and communications signals that yielded valuable information for tactical operations, such as routing bombers around defense concentrations. Optical technology and high-flying P-38s and B-29s (in the Pacific) brought photographic reconnaissance and interpretation to a refined level. Throughout the campaign in Europe, photographic intelligence was the major tool used for assessing the state of the enemy's infrastructure. Perhaps its most dramatic application was the identification and targeting of the German V-1 and V-2 launch sites on the Continent.

Much has been written on the extraordinary work done to break German and Japanese codes. Kreis discusses how the MAGIC, PURPLE, and ULTRA material was applied to aid the air campaigns. This intelligence gave crucial insights into the state of the German air force, the readiness and logistic depth of German forces, and the state of industrial production—all essential for the planning and execution of an air campaign.

Finding the targets that count (strategic targets whose destruction will break the enemy's war machine) was the ultimate demand on air intelligence. Unfor-

tunately, Kreis does not develop this theme as well as one might hope. While the shifts of strategic target priorities between transportation, fuel, electrical power, and key industrial products are well documented, there is insufficient discussion of the role that intelligence played in these selections and changes.

Also, there is only fragmentary mention of the Committee of Operations Analysts. This group of intelligence analysts, industrialists, engineers, and economists appears to have had a significant impact on the selection of strategic targets. It is a pity that their role is not better reported, for they seem to have worked at that pivotal point where intelligence becomes military application.

All that notwithstanding, this is a valuable book for both historians of intelligence and those who will plan air campaigns in the era of precision warfare and joint operations.

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Wheeler, Gerald E. *Kinkaid of the Seventh Fleet: A Biography of Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid, U.S. Navy*. Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1996. 531pp. \$37.95

Thomas C. Kinkaid graduated from Annapolis in the lower half of his class in 1908. During the next thirty-three years of his career, he spent only as much time at sea as was required to make him eligible for promotion to the next higher grade. He preferred duty in Washington, D.C. (his family

home), or in Philadelphia (home of Helen, his vivacious, intelligent, and perceptive wife), though he was, and they were, happy in London, Rome, Constantinople, and Newport, Rhode Island. In Washington he toiled obscurely but usefully, always in the palaces, never in the dungeons, of the naval bureaucracy. He served in the bureaus of Ordnance and Navigation, and as secretary of the General Board; all three were powerhouses in the Navy of Kinkaid's time. Ashore or afloat, he helped others, high and low, and they helped him. He also helped himself, though clearly with the approval of others. As director of the officer personnel division, Bureau of Navigation, he arranged to have himself ordered early to a deep-draft command. The ship he picked was the famous heavy cruiser *Indianapolis*. His immediate predecessor in command had been the excellent Henry Kent Hewitt, and under Hewitt the *Indianapolis* had been chosen to carry President Franklin D. Roosevelt on a long cruise to South America. So Kinkaid had arranged for himself to inherit a well run, well cared for ship. As Wheeler notes, Tom was, in Ernest J. King's scornful phrase, a "fixer."

Thus it was that late in 1941, after thirty-three years of service, this unimaginative and unadventurous but decent, efficient, and well liked officer became one of the U.S. Navy's seventy-odd flag officers. He was the last member of his Annapolis class to reach that rank.

Kinkaid arrived at Pearl Harbor a few days after the Japanese carrier planes had paid their visit. Just as did the slightly senior Raymond A. Spruance, Kinkaid spent the first few months of the war

commanding the screen around one or another of the carriers. Though much of that time was a bore for Kinkaid, Wheeler pays considerable attention to it, for it was during those months that he learned as much as he was going to about carrier warfare before he himself was placed in command of a carrier task force, relieving Spruance of the *Enterprise* task force shortly after the latter's victory at Midway.

Wheeler's longest chapter focuses on the next five months, July through November 1942. They are filled not only with fierce battles but also with flaming controversies, and some of the embers of these controversies have not yet burned out. Though many have argued forcefully that Vice Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher, in tactical command of the Guadalcanal invasion early in August, exposed the amphibious and landing forces to destruction through poor handling of his carriers, Kinkaid, commanding one-third of that carrier force, was not among them. Under Fletcher, Kinkaid's ships took part in the successful battle of the Eastern Solomons late in August.

By late October Fletcher was among those who had departed the South Pacific for good. Vice Admiral William F. Halsey replaced Robert L. Ghormley as the local theater commander, but he had hardly arrived when the Japanese began a powerful offensive against the Marines on Guadalcanal, by land, air, and sea. Halsey sent his remaining carriers, now only two in number, to halt the advance of a Japanese fleet that included four carriers. In what came to be called the

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battle of the Santa Cruz Islands, Kinkaid, in tactical command of the American force, rebuffed the enemy's advance, at the cost of the *Hornet* (sunk) and the *Enterprise*, which was severely damaged.

As often happens after a naval battle, highly emotional claims arose that if the officer in tactical command had fought his battle differently, the results would have been better. And so they might have been. But even the best of battles is likely to be an imperfect event. The most important fact on 26 October 1942 was that it was essential for the Japanese carrier force to be rebuffed, and under Kinkaid, it was.

Kinkaid's tour in the South Pacific was soon to end. But first Admiral Halsey ordered him, as Wheeler tells us, to "write a plan of operations for fighting the Tokyo Express," the name the Americans gave to the Japanese destroyers that under cover of night raced swiftly toward Guadalcanal with supplies and reinforcements for the Japanese troops. Kinkaid did as Halsey wished, but before he could fight the cruiser action he had planned he was detached for duty in the North Pacific. His successor, Carleton Wright, who fought the battle as Kinkaid planned it, was defeated severely in the disaster known as the battle of Tassafaronga.

Little was happening in the North Pacific. One reason for this was that the area's joint operational commander, Rear Admiral Robert Theobald, found it so difficult to get on with others, especially commanders from the Army and Army Air Force, that even Admiral King noticed. When Kinkaid took command that changed, and though hardly anything the Americans did under Kinkaid was done very well, nonetheless by

mid-August 1943 the islands of Attu and Kiska, occupied by the Japanese in June 1942, were back in American hands. The author deals well with the multitude of failures and embarrassments with which the campaign was filled, but he kindly neglects entirely the night battle Kinkaid's battleships and cruisers engaged in against the radar echoes of distant mountains. Perhaps his reason was that Kinkaid was not among those present on the occasion. In any event, Kinkaid was now a vice admiral, and a new assignment was soon in prospect.

Once again, there was a difficulty among senior officers in a distant theater. General Douglas MacArthur, commanding in the Southwest Pacific, who had not liked the first admiral whom King had sent to command the naval forces in that area, did not like the second one either. Kinkaid was the third. He was to command the Seventh Fleet and as such to report directly to MacArthur, but "King wrote Kinkaid's fitness reports."

Wheeler does not address the point, but beginning in the Aleutians and coming to fruition in the several invasions of the Philippines, Kinkaid was to experience and understand the second of the two great naval innovations of the Second World War, the amphibious assault; in the carriers he had already learned about the first.

As Wheeler quotes Kinkaid in a letter to his wife in April 1944, "Working in an Army organization is extremely difficult. . . . I try to fit in with their methods and organization but they are a bunch of horse traders and horse thieves and don't know the meaning of

cooperation." Still, he managed to convince MacArthur that the command and control doctrine developed by the Marines and Navy before the war (and that in 1998 is under attack by some Marines)—that the amphibious task force commander was "to remain in command" of all forces afloat and ashore until "the troops were set up to command their own affairs"—was the soundest way to conduct an amphibious operation. In this fashion he defeated one of his most powerful opponents, Lieutenant General Walter Krueger, who under MacArthur commanded the Sixth Army. Wheeler takes no notice of the fact that during the year Kinkaid was a student at Newport fifteen years before, Krueger had been one of the instructors. Too bad.

With almost all the amphibious ships in the Pacific under his command, as well as numerous escort, bombardment, and support ships, when the United States returned to the Philippines in October 1944 Vice Admiral Kinkaid commanded more ships than any other officer of his rank. It was only the Third Fleet's Task Force 38, the carriers and their screens, under his old commander, William F. Halsey, that remained independent of him. We all know about that story: how at Leyte Gulf Kinkaid came to believe that through poor handling of his carriers Halsey had exposed his amphibious force and supporting shipping to destruction. In the fierce conditions of the Guadalcanal campaign in 1942 Halsey and Kinkaid had become friends. Now that friendship, characteristic of each, had turned to bitterness, characteristic of neither. But the bitterness lasted till the end.

In the meantime both played out their roles in the war, prominently on Halsey's part, obscurely on Kinkaid's. Nonetheless, in April 1945 Kinkaid pinned on his fourth star. However, for Kinkaid the big challenges were over, and five years after the war ended, at age sixty-two, so did his naval career.

In deciding to write the life of a man as unlikely as Tom Kinkaid to reach high responsibility in the most dangerous of times, Wheeler took on a risky task—to make interesting the life of a man who was himself not interesting.

The result is a book that is sometimes slow going but that represents fairly Tom Kinkaid. Taken all in all, this account of Kinkaid's unforeseeable growth earns Gerald Wheeler an A.

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Naval War College

Brand, Max. *Fighter Squadron at Guadalcanal*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1996. 213pp. \$25.95

Every once in a while an interesting piece of literary work comes to light, and a new perspective on an event of historical significance is afforded. This is exactly the case with *Fighter Squadron at Guadalcanal*. Written in 1943, this book was literally lost for over fifty years after the author was killed while covering the Italian front for *Harper's* magazine. Through a remarkable series of events, this wartime legacy of men who fought in the Pacific theater during a nine-month