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# Winged Victory: The Army Air Forces in World War II

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account of the invasion and the reasons for its success.

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Perret, Geoffrey. *Winged Victory: The Army Air Forces in World War II*. New York: Random House, 1993. 549pp. \$30

Finally, we have a balanced and frank account of the United States Army Air Force (USAAF) during World War II—"the big war"—and big the AAF was—fighting in several theaters, with tens of thousands of planes, striking losses, and immense problems. As a naval historian, this reviewer was totally unprepared for the staggering losses sustained by the Army's air arm. In but one example, Perret's description of General Nathan Twining's year-long bombing campaign against the German oil refineries at Ploesti, Romania, catches the irony of the victory—"A model of its kind: a heavy attack on average once a week until Ploesti was knocked out. The price was nearly three hundred heavy bombers and two hundred fighters shot down or wrecked . . . ; more than a thousand lives lost; and hundreds of young men left limbless, sightless, or crazy." The B-17 and B-24 bombers carried, respectively, crews of ten and twelve.

Based on exhaustive research in both primary and secondary sources, including the ULTRA intelligence, Perret's book gains its greatest insights from oral history transcripts, although he tends to accept most of them too uncritically. Inevitably, he focuses on General

"Hap" Arnold, the utterly humorless and "firm but often erratic" leader of the AAF. Typical of prewar Air Corps leadership, he was a do-it-yourselfer who did not use his staff or even delegate authority. Small wonder Arnold suffered no fewer than four heart attacks during the course of the war! However, thanks to his civilian boss, Robert A. Lovett, the Assistant Secretary of War for Air (and a former naval aviator), the AAF ran efficiently. Perret gives high marks to Carl A. Spaatz, James H. Doolittle, Curtis LeMay, George C. Kenney, and Claire Chennault, but reserves his highest praise for many group and wing commanders who directed the battles, often from the cockpit.

Skeptical of many air power claims (especially those of pilots after battle), the author pulls no punches; he rights the wrongs done by those who insisted that strategic bombing represented the future. The aura of Billy Mitchell had led his heirs to place the strategic bombers above all else, denigrating fighters. Only in 1943 did the horrendous losses of bombers force the use of P-47s and P-51s equipped with auxiliary gas tanks as long-range escorts to and from German air space and, in 1945, over Japan.

Perret gives not only the fighters their due but also troop carriers, gliders, and "attack" aviation: the B-25 and B-26 medium bombers redesignated as "light bombardment" to provide close air support. Given its penchant for bombing, the AAF often defined close air support as interdiction, but when its medium bombers did go in close they sometimes dropped on friendly troops. During 1943-1944, Arnold and his

bomber leaders were sidetracked (in their view) into Operation Pointblank to destroy first the German aircraft industries, then the Luftwaffe, so it could not interfere with the Normandy landings, and the V-weapon sites. In doing so, they destroyed the cream of German fighter pilots, leaving too few to man the new jets and only the flak to defend the factories which finally became the bombers' primary targets.

The author writes of the multi-theater air war in a light, breezy style, marred only by cutesy terms unknown during the war. He also uses no Navy sources, neither for the Doolittle Tokyo raid nor discussions of Admiral Ernest J. King; he gives prewar CNO Admiral William V. Pratt the name of naval writer Fletcher Pratt; and he is mistaken in his assertion that the entire crew of the airship *Shenandoah* perished when it crashed. On the other hand, he does discuss each aircraft, as well as bombs, gas tanks, armor plate, radar, bomb-sights, turrets, and the tactics of aerial gunnery. The China-Burma-India and New Guinea fighting are covered well enough, but not the rest of the Pacific: the Central Pacific's Seventh Air Force is mentioned only once, and the key B-29 aerial mining campaign hardly at all. One of Perret's best chapters covers morale. In Europe the best tonic was Major Glenn Miller's AAF orchestra. Nuggets appear on every page—like the B-17 navigator who fashioned and wore an antiflak armor-plated jock-strap.

Excellent maps, photos, and sixty-seven pages of bibliographic notes complement this excellent book. If they can overlook Perret's ignorance of things

naval, every naval officer should read it for a concise and revealing overview of the Air Force's turbulent but quite glorious roots.

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Cowley, Robert, ed. *Experience of War: An Anthology of Articles from MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1992. 574pp. \$35

This book is a fun read. It consists of fifty-one essays by some of the English-speaking world's most capable military historians, including Michael Howard, Geoffrey Parker, Stephen Sears, James McPherson, Stephen Ambrose, and Ronald Spector, as well as such fine writers as Jon Swan, Andrew Ward, and Paul Fussell. The individual essays are arranged chronologically, from Robert O'Connell's investigation of the origins of war to Martin van Creveld's speculations as to its future. The distribution by era is for the most part well balanced, with six treatments of ancient and medieval warfare, five on the American Civil War, and six on the Great War. World War II, however, clearly dominates the collection, with eleven pieces devoted to this watershed event in world history. In "form-critical" terms, there are ten battle or campaign narratives, eight studies of individual leaders, five naval pieces, three assessments each of technological and airpower issues, and two studies focusing on intelligence and deception. Regrettably, there is not a single treatment of that most mundane