

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

Llinares, Rick and Chuck Lloyd. *Warfighters 2: The Story of the U.S. Marine Corps Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One*. Schiffer Publishing, Ltd., 4880 Lower Valley Rd., Atglen, PA 19310-9717. 1997. 398 pp. Ill. \$59.95.

**T**his big book has many levels of appeal, including some of the finest aerial photography I have seen. Clear, crisp closeups and great reproductions will register with enthusiasts and modelers, as well as discriminating armchair readers. The authors' notes and acknowledgments are truly unique and deeply felt, a pleasure to read. Besides the photos, they also use artwork from such accomplished artists as Colonel Charles Waterhouse.

Oddly, the book's lead-in chapters discuss the grunts of WW II amphibious operations—a glorious history but somewhat strange in a book on Marine aviation. The inclusion of such information expands the size of the volume but it also increases its value. If the book weren't so heavy, I'd recommend it be carried by young officer and enlisted Marines like the *Bluejacket's Manual*.

The publisher has obviously let the authors fend for themselves; there are typical editorial and proofreading errors that mar an otherwise beautiful production. Nevertheless, this second book is first rate in the series by these two enthusiasts-photographers.

Salter, James. *The Hunters*. Counterpoint, Box 65793, Washington, DC 20035-5793. 233 pp. 1997. \$22.

**W**e seldom review fiction, especially if it does not involve Naval Aviation, but this reissue of a 1956 novel is an important exception. The book is by a former F-86 pilot who served in Korea, shooting down a MiG-15. Although superlatives are always dangerous, in this case they are deserved because *The Hunters* is one of the best stories of post-WW II aerial combat I've come across.

Salter's economical, yet lyrical descriptions of men, machines and combat echo Ernest Hemingway. For those who write, or who just enjoy good reading about their chosen subject, Salter is a leader and teacher.

I have a dog-eared Bantam paperback that I bought in 1958, but its taste was too adult for a 13-year-old looking for the traditional blazing-guns, flashing-wings treatment of aerial combat. The author's bitter-sweet prose seldom rides in the cockpit, and strangely never specifies the F-86, yet it details everything about a fighter squadron serving in that cold, forgotten war.

The story is about the conflict of age versus youth. It describes the 100-mission tour of the experienced, guarded flight leader, Captain Cleve Connell (in the original edition, his name was Seville), who struggles to do his job and grab a little glory against the brash, irresponsible Lieutenant Ed Pell, who has the luck and guile to succeed at the expense of his squadronmates.

*The Hunters* ends with one of the simplest, yet most chilling descriptions of death in air-to-air combat I have read. In contrast, see the absolutely terrible movie of the book, starring Robert Mitchum and Robert Wagner. Although the aerial sequences are great (F-84Fs in menacing gray with red stars substitute convincingly for MiG-15s), the scenery, acting and utter departure from Salter's fine novel are too embarrassing to describe.

*The Hunters* is a terrific book, and I am glad to see it reissued in a small, but readable edition by a publisher who obviously recognizes an exceptional story.

Holmes, Tony. *Combat Carriers*. Airline Publishing, with Motorbooks International, 729 Prospect Ave., Osceola, WI 54020. 1998. 143 pp. Ill. \$29.95.

**T**hirty dollars used to be a lot of money for a book. Not anymore. In fact, Tony Holmes' opus represents a good value in today's market. *Combat Carriers* features good color photography and an easy, knowledgeable writing style. The text gives an appealing overview of carrier operations in the late 1990s, with its reduced funding and aging aircraft, still ready and able to go anywhere, anytime to defend U.S. interests.

The photo captions are meaty little paragraphs that describe their adjacent images and greatly enhance the narrative. The selection of squadron patches displayed on each page polishes the visual appeal.

*Constellation* (CV 64) and Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 2, which the author visited to research the book, are well featured. There are several nice aerial views of *Connie*, her flight deck crammed with aircraft. *John F. Kennedy* (CV 67) is also shown, along with CVW-8.

F/A-18 *Hornets*, F-14 *Tomcats*, H-60 *Seahawks*, H-3 *Sea Kings*, E-2C *Hawkeyes*, EA-6B *Prowlers*, ES-3 *Shadows*, C-2 *Greyhounds* and AV-8B *Harrier IIs* all receive coverage. And American readers will get a good look at how the Royal Navy operates, with HMS *Ark Royal* and HMS *Invincible* shown and described to advantage.

All in all, this is a nice effort from an experienced aviation writer and photographer.