

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

Tagaya, Osamu. *Mitsubishi Type 1 Rikko "Betty" Units of World War 2*. Osprey Direct USA, c/o Motorbooks International, 729 Prospect Ave., PO Box 1, Osceola, WI 54020. 2001. 112 pp. Ill. \$17.95.

Number 22 in the highly successful Combat Aircraft series, this new volume is arguably the best so far. The subject is an aircraft known in general terms by most readers interested in the Pacific war. Stemming from the Imperial Japanese Navy's (IJN) desire to have land-based torpedo-bombers that could strike at long range in the coming war with the west, the Type 1's *Rikko* sobriquet was a shortening of a Japanese name meaning land-based attack aircraft. Mitsubishi had also produced an earlier *Rikko*, the twin-tailed Type 96, later called "Nell" by the Allies, which saw considerable service through late 1942.

The "Betty" first saw action over China in mid-1941, and flew throughout the war. Some of the war's last missions were flown by Type 1s—carrying the Ohka rocket-powered kamikaze flying bomb and initial Japanese peace envoys after the mid-August 1945 cease-fire.

This book carries the typical portfolio of color profiles, general-arrangement line drawings and one of the series' best cover illustrations by Irish artist Iain Wyllie. The artist portrays the attack on the British Royal Navy's Force Z on 10 December 1941, which resulted in the sinking of the battlecruiser *Repulse* and battleship *Prince of Wales* off Malaya by Type 1 and Type 96 bombers based near Saigon.

Tagaya's account of the Type 1 *Rikko*'s career not only describes the IJN's most successful and, conversely, most vulnerable aircraft, but also opens a window into Japanese wartime operations and philosophies. This information remains virtually unavailable more than 50 years after the events.

The book's photos are OK, though often soft and grainy, but the accompanying captions include interesting details. All in all, this is a fine effort.

Rausa, Rosario. *Skyraider: The Douglas A-1 "Flying Dump Truck"*. Nautical and Aviation Publishing Co. of America, 1250 Fairmont Ave., Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464. 1982, 2001. 239 pp. Ill. \$28.95.

This new printing is a reissue giving readers another chance to enjoy one of the best biographies of the "Spad," written by someone who flew the aircraft in the war. "Zip" Rausa is well known as an accomplished writer and editor. He was editor of this magazine from 1973 to 1980, and is the current editor of the Association of Naval Aviation's Wings of Gold. He is also the 2000 recipient of the Naval Aviation Museum Foundation's Arthur B. Radford Award for Excellence in Naval Aviation History and Literature. This well-

illustrated book has many anecdotes and technical details that should satisfy any level of enthusiast.

Piet, Stand and Al Raithel. *Martin P6M Seamaster*. Martineer Press, 808 N. Shamrock Rd., Bel Air, MD 21014. 2001. 224 pp. Ill. \$35.

Grace and beauty seldom describe the ponderous flying boat, but if these terms ever applied, it was to Martin's *Seamaster*. One of the most attractive aircraft ever produced, Martin's P6M incorporated waterborne innovations but was overcome by land leapfrogging technology. It remains the pinnacle of its genre, making this nicely produced softbound book chronicling Martin's jet-powered flying boat of the 1950s a welcome edition. Both authors are deeply familiar with Martin products, and are well qualified to write this unusual, unexpected groundbreaking story.

The book contains an impressive photo collection, including many color views giving details on the P6M's markings and colors. Revell offered a model of the *Seamaster* in the 1950s, and anyone with that kit could really build a showpiece with this book.

Developed from a Navy requirement for a high-speed mine-layer aircraft, the P6M made its first flight in July 1955. Photos portray the design team and production line, giving good closeup details of the large, blue flying boat as it took shape in Martin's factory, including the P6M-2's redesigned cockpit canopy for enhanced visibility.

Obviously a labor of love, this book describes an aircraft that offered tremendous innovation for its time.

Polmar, Norman, Editor. *The Naval Institute Guide to the Ships and Aircraft of the U.S. Fleet, 17th Edition*. Naval Institute Press, 291 Wood Rd., Annapolis, MD 21402. 2001. 672 pp. Ill. \$85.

This is one of the best editions of this triannual regular, a useful ready reference of naval hardware. One thing that sets this book apart is its introductory chapters on programs and organization. The sections describe in detail individual classes and types of ships and aircraft within the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, as well as related civilian platforms. The photos are well reproduced, and the book's large format shows them off. In addition, Naval Aviation is described in two lengthy, in-depth chapters describing each service's mission, organization and aircraft.

The 17th edition is a fine reference for anyone's library.