

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

Goodspeed, M. Hill, Editor-in-Chief. *U.S. Naval Aviation*. Naval Aviation Museum Foundation with Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, Inc., 1750 Radford Blvd., NAS Pensacola, FL 32508. 2001. 352 pp. Ill. \$75.

The latest in an ambitious, attractive series of oversize books, this volume is perhaps one of the finest treatments of the subject I have seen. It shows what can result from combining a knowledgeable editor with access to experienced writers and an almost inexhaustible source of quality photos and art. The price, which can be bettered by various association offers and book outlets, is still not too high for a work of this caliber. (While I wrote the chapter dealing with U.S. Marine Corps aviation, I will address other authors' efforts and let another reviewer discuss my work. I was pleased to participate in the project after seeing the earlier volumes on the Marines and the Navy. A fourth book on the Army has also appeared.)

The layout is good, with outstanding color and black-and-white photography—a large portion of which I have never seen. The layout artist took advantage of the book's large format in combining the text and graphics, along with many fine examples of past and present aviation art.

All the writers have done excellent jobs describing their areas of interest. Editor-in-Chief Hill Goodspeed, a historian at the National Museum of Naval Aviation, coordinated the chapters, as well as writing or co-writing two of them. The Editor, retired LCdr. Rick Burgess, a past editor of this magazine and now managing editor of the Navy League's *Sea Power*, did fine work in pulling things together besides writing or co-writing two chapters. *NANews* Associate Editor Wendy Leland provided copyediting on this volume.

Articles range from overall views of Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard aviation past, present and future, to specific essays on topics such as flight gear. One of

the book's most unusual chapters chronicles the life-expanding experience of a tour with the *Blue Angels*. While author Capt. (RAdm. select) Pat Walsh tells the history and rigors of flying with the team, he also includes a personal take on what the experience meant to him. He describes not just the glamour of flying with the *Blues*, but also meeting people, including an unexpected, moving encounter with veterans at a VA hospital in Fargo, N.D.

Another fine account is Thomas C. Hone's scholarly treatment of aircraft carrier development. Beginning with *Langley* (CV 1), he writes a succinct, cogent biography of history's most powerful warships. The book is slanted toward tactical carrier aviation, but other communities are not ignored.

The essay by Hill Goodspeed and Rick Burgess on the flight deck and Barrett Tillman's article on the type of person who becomes a Naval Aviator complete a nice "trilogy" on this vibrant, dangerous and highly rewarding career. Retired Coast Guard aviator Tom Beard gives a fine account of the development of the rescue service's aircraft and the people who fly them. *NANews* Art Director Morgan Wilbur describes "A Day in Naval

Aviation," showcasing the different communities in the modern Air Navy, again complimented by fine photos and art. Former fighter pilot VAdm. John Nathman, Commander Naval Air Forces, tops off this *tour de force* with a look at what's ahead.

A terrific example of today's publishing capabilities and what can be presented with expert writers and great photos and illustrations, the latest



volume of this well-received series is the best. Of course, I'm prejudiced!

Miller, Jerry, Vice Admiral, USN (Ret). *Nuclear Weapons and Aircraft Carriers: How the Bomb Saved Naval Aviation*. Smithsonian Institution Press, 750 Ninth St. NW, Suite 4300, Washington, DC 20560-0950. 2001. 296 pp. Ill. \$32.95.

This book is an important treatise on Naval Aviation's nuclear delivery role and its struggle to retain that mission for nearly 50 years. The author is a retired senior aviator, who was well placed to experience and observe many of the situations and strategic developments he describes, and he does so with easy-going authority.

VAdm. Miller begins with a lengthy introduction of prominent Navy "gun clubbers," considered opponents of Naval Aviation. His descriptions from a Navy viewpoint of the two atomic bombings of Japan in August 1945 are informative and precise. He writes, "It made sense to assign the mission of delivering the bomb to the Air Force." Noting the demonstrated long-range capability of the B-29, and the large size of the first A-weapons, it was "logical to concentrate the mission in a proven military force. Unfortunately, the Air Force chose not to settle for that mission alone." And therein is the main theme of the book: Naval Aviation's fight to secure its future and a piece of the budget pie.

Directly following the above comment, the author quotes Brig. Gen. Frank Armstrong, who took the postwar fight directly to members of the naval base at Norfolk, saying, "You gentlemen had better understand that the Army Air Force is tired of being a subordinate outfit. It was a predominant force during the war, and it is going to be a predominant force during the peace . . . and we do not care whether you like it or not. . . ."

Then, there are accounts of the Navy and Marine Corps trying to survive the contentious postwar period as the newly independent Air Force and the Army probed for new missions and areas of influence. Senior naval officers like Dan Gallery, Deak Parsons and Dick Ashworth defended against other services' attacks while trying to develop the new, terrifying nuclear weapon arsenal with which America and its allies hoped to hold the line against the Communist nations in Europe and Asia.

Navy development at this time was centered around the existing bomb's prohibitive size and weight, which prevented it from being carried by contemporary carrier-

based aircraft. New, larger and more powerful aircraft were designed to launch from carriers with nuclear weapons. Planes like the Douglas A3D and A4D, representing the big and small ends of the spectrum; existing types like the heavy hauler AD; as well as disappointing designs like the North American AJ are featured in the book. The North American FJ-4B, which enjoyed some success aboard ship, is also included in the description of the intense testing and development of the 1950s. This last *Fury* has seldom had any in-depth exposure, so these pages are especially welcome. Even Chance Vought's radical and short-lived F7U had a limited nuclear delivery capability.

One interesting account is on the development of the



Above, an A4D Skyhawk looks tiny nestled close to a "Big Sister" A3D Skywarrior in 1954. Opposite, Lt. Zeno Rausa of VFA-122 strides across the flight line at NAS Lemoore, Calif., after returning from a training flight in an F/A-18E Super Hornet—one of the many fine photographs from the U.S. Naval Aviation book.

heavy attack mission and its nuclear focus. The VAH squadrons played a large part in the Navy of the 1950s and 1960s. This mission also created the need for a nonpilot officer, later designated Naval Flight Officer, as well as opening a career path for these crewmen.

The new aircraft also required new carriers, and VAdm. Miller describes the introduction of the *Forrestal* class and subsequent nuclear-powered ships, along with the 27A and 27C modification programs for the WW II *Essex*-class carriers.

The photos, unfortunately, are pedestrian in selection. Many of the specific aircraft discussed in the text are limited to company production views, without the markings and deck scenes that lift aircraft photography away from general shots.

There's a lot here, and the author has done well to compress all he wanted to say in less than 300 pages. Insider information abounds, but the book ends in an odd way. The author notes that the Navy's current and most ubiquitous carrier jet, the F/A-18, has no nuclear delivery abilities. The Navy now finds itself in the same situation it did some 50 years ago. Some would contend that