

# PROFESSIONAL READING

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

Elward, Brad and Peter Davies. *U.S. Navy F-4 Phantom II MiG Killers 1972-73*. Osprey (UK). Distributed in the U.S. by MBI Publishing, 729 Prospect Ave., PO Box 1, Osceola, WI 54020. 2002. 96 pp. Ill. \$18.95.

The second volume in a detailed examination of aerial action during the Vietnam War, No. 30 in the Osprey Combat Aircraft series, describes engagements during the last year of combat. This period also came after the start of the Navy's Top Gun program that sought to reverse the declining trend in kill-loss ratios experienced by American Navy flight crews in the first half of the war. Many of the late-war MiG killers credited their victories to the intense training they received before going on deployment.

The new book includes photos and color profiles of many of the F-4 MiG killers. The collection of color and black-and-white photos show the men and machines well, and Jim Laurier's artwork is outstanding.

The accounts are in chronological order, with a large section given to the encounters of 10 May 1972 that eventually yielded 11 American kills, including eight by Navy crews. The three-kill mission by VF-96's team of Cunningham and Driscoll is featured, but there are other aviators whose missions on that busy day are also described.

It is fascinating to consider that all but three of these crews shot down only one MiG. (A fourth RIO, Kevin Moore of VF-114, has the unique distinction of being the only Navy back-seater to achieve victories over two types of MiGs with two different pilots.) Yet, the lore of the period and the aviators involved has lifted their exploits out of the simple history of the air war. In other conflicts, a single kill was relatively unimportant.

Volume 2 completes an interesting set of references and descriptions of some of the most intense engagements involving jet aircraft. This series and other related books by this prolific publisher continue to offer great value for the money.

Goss, Chris, with Bernd Rauchbach. *Luftwaffe Seaplanes 1939-1945*. Crecy Publishing (UK). Distributed in the U.S. by Naval Institute Press, 291 Wood Rd., Annapolis, MD 21402-5034. 2002. 200 pp. Ill. \$29.95.

This photo album gives a detailed look at one of the most overlooked subjects in WW II aviation. Nazi Germany fielded an active maritime air force equipped with a wide array of floatplanes and flying boats. This book collection includes black-and-white and a few color views of such aircraft as the Arado 196, one of the war's most capable floatplanes, the Blohm & Voss BV 138 maritime patrol flying boat, and the huge BV 222 Viking.

The Heinkel series of large floatplanes, such as the He. 115 and He. 59, as well as the Dornier parasol-wing flying boats are also featured.

There are people pictures, but the short captions leave the reader wanting more details. Often, the photo reproduction is muddy, while at other times the details show up better. When a book is designed as a photo album, high-quality paper and printing are essential.

Crecy enjoys a well-deserved reputation in Europe for exploring many of the lesser known areas of aviation publishing, but he is little known in the United States.

All in all, this book is a fascinating assembly of images.

Shores, Christopher. *British and Empire Aces of World War I*. Osprey (UK). Distributed in the U.S. by MBI Publishing, 729 Prospect Ave., PO Box 1, Osceola, WI 54020. 2002. Ill. 96 pp. \$18.95.

Chris Shores is no stranger to aviation literature, especially dealing with aces. This new book is a fine overview of the first air war and the aviators of the British air services. Besides the well-known aces of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC), Royal Naval Air Service and Royal Air Force, he has included less famous but equally successful aces. For instance, he notes India's only air ace who flew with the RFC. Keith Woodcock's cover painting illustrates Major William Barker's epic battle against a horde of German Fokkers in October 1918, in which he was wounded three times and received the Victoria Cross.

The folio of side views is especially good in this volume because it doesn't concentrate on one or two main types, but features a wide variety of British fighters not often displayed in such fashion, including six Spad VII and six Nieuport profiles.

Following chapters that describe the air war chronologically, the author discusses how kills were credited, then offers A-Z biographies of the aces. Credit for WW I kills has caused historians problems over the years. Shores gives an ace's overall score, but then refines it into single-credit kills, shared and out-of-control, a unique category that often boosted a pilot's total. For example, if we use only the single-credit kill as a measure of where a pilot stood in the rankings, Major Mick Mannock's accepted score of 73 drops to 61, lowering him to the third spot on the list of British aces.

Naval pilots and their experiences are well described, including the highly successful Sopwith Triplane pilots whose skills and maneuverable little fighter so stunned the Germans that they copied the layout for their Fokker DR.1 triplane.

This new volume is an excellent reference from an acknowledged authority.



PHC Spike Call

## Lady Lex Earns New Title

The aircraft carrier *Lexington* (CV/CVA/CVS/CVT/AVT 16), now a floating museum moored at Corpus Christi, Texas, was designated a National Historic Landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior. This is the highest recognition accorded to historic properties. Of the four surviving WW II *Essex*-class carriers, *Lexington* had the longest service record—from 1943 to 1991.



Scores of Naval Aviators, such as the TA-4 Skyhawk pilots shown above, participated in carrier qualifications aboard *Lexington* during her many years of service.

An F-14 Tomcat of Fighter Squadron 154 departs NAF Atsugi, Japan, on 24 September, as the squadron transfers to NAS Lemoore, Calif.

## WW II Online Registry

A WW II registry went online in July to document the names of those who participated in the war. It is accessible on the website of the National World War II Memorial at [www.wwiimemorial.com](http://www.wwiimemorial.com). Any American who served in the armed forces or contributed to the war effort on the home front, whether in factories and shipyards or farms and neighborhoods, is eligible. There is no charge for enrollment.

Individuals can register through the website or call the memorial's toll-free number, 800-639-4992. The memorial is under construction and scheduled for an official dedication ceremony on Saturday, 29 May 2004. The registry will be accessible at

the memorial site on the National Mall when the memorial is opened to the public.

## Corrections to Jul-Aug 03

Page 6: the Maverick missile is designated **AGM-65E** vice AGM-63E.

Page 8: top caption, the photo shows *Nimitz* (CVN 68) in sea trials not PCU *Ronald Reagan* (CVN 76); bottom caption, the TA-4 Skyhawk is on permanent loan to and displayed at the **Palms Springs Air Museum, Calif.**

Page 21: HC-2 was initially the Circuit **Riders** not Raiders.

Page 29: add 1 March entry: Space shuttle *Columbia* launched, rendezvoused and grappled the Hubble Space Telescope, then conducted five days of spacewalks to remove and replace parts and to add new equipment. The STS 109 mission was commanded by Naval Aviator Capt. Scott Altman.

Page 30: caption, the F/A-18C Hornet on the deck is from **VFA-25** vice VFA-125.