



PROFESSIONAL READING

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

Parsons, Dave; Hall, George; and Lawson, Bob.
Grumman F-14 Tomcat: Bye-Bye Baby...!
Zenith Press, Galtier Plaza, Suite 200, 380
Jackson St., St. Paul, MN 55101-5000. 2006.
200 pp. \$40.

There are labors of love, and then there's this book, put together by three experienced, highly motivated individuals, each bringing his own special skills to the project. Retired LCdr. Dave Parsons has more than 2,000 hours as an F-14 radar intercept officer, including combat time in Operation Desert Storm. Retired Senior Chief Photographer's Mate Bob Lawson has a log book full of air time and among his credits he can count shepherding *The Hook* magazine through its early stages. George Hall, a highly respected aerial photographer, died before the book's publication, and this truly tragic loss can only be softened by looking at this fabulous compendium as a tribute to his work.

This book provides some fabulous photography and wonderful memories, all for a very reasonable price. This is not a history of the Tomcat, although going through all the quotations you certainly gain a sense of the F-14's story and contribution. It is a large publication, a true coffee-table book. The concept is elegant in its simplicity: a magnificent collection of color pictures from professional photographers as well as the people who flew or maintained, and clearly loved, the Tomcat during its 35-year career in the fleet. The photos are juxtaposed with poetic memories, short and long, but all highly readable.

There are personalities here, those found only wearing dark blue suits. Case in point, Joe Satrapa, better known as Hoser. (A word to younger aviators, if you missed contact with this earthly spirit, the omission is great. There's a hole in your life's tale that will not be



repaired.) Naturally, the movie “Top Gun” is described, including a humorous recollection from the actor who played Maverick’s doomed RIO, Goose.

There are some design quirks, such as running photo captions in small type and on the vertical, requiring the reader to twist his head 90 degrees and squint. And every page carries huge quote marks above and below the text, which is a very odd convention.

But *Tomcat Bye-Bye...!* is a terrific requiem for one of the modern era’s greatest jet fighters. It will bring several hours of pleasant browsing and reminiscence to operator and enthusiast alike. Great job, baby!

Hunter, Jamie with Holmes, Tony. *Gulf War II, Operation Iraqi Freedom: The Air War*. TomCat Publishing Ltd, 83 The Street, Tongham, Farnham, Surrey, GU10 10D, UK. 2004. 160 pp. Ill. \$29.95.

Although so much has followed the early 2004 cutoff date of this book, it is still a fine presentation of the busy initial actions of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Brought together by two of the best British journalists who know their stuff, this book offers a stunning selection of color photographs depicting

all aspects of the conflict, both ashore and afloat, as well as presenting the records and experiences of many different services and their members.

There are assessments of the Iraqi war machine, what was on paper and what the coalition forces actually encountered, as well as discussions of the new weapons technologies that saw action for the first time, including the F/A-18E and F/A-18F Super Hornet.

With separate chapters on American services, as well as the obligatory appendices of orders of battle, operational statistics, and a gallery of close-ups of colorful paint schemes and markings, this book is a good value. I have yet to see anything like it on this side of the Atlantic.

Facing page, two VF-32 Tomcats from *Harry S. Truman* (CVN 75) patrol the skies over Iraq in 2003. The F-14 was phased out of the fleet following more than 30 years of naval service. Photo by MSgt. Dave Ahlschwede, USAF. Below, Marines board a CH-53E Super Stallion at Camp Al Qaim, Iraq, during offensive operations in Fallujah on 10 November 2004. Photo by LCpl. Christopher G. Graham.

