



PROFESSIONAL READING

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

Chun, K.S. *The Doolittle Raid 1942: America's First Strike Back at Japan*. Osprey Publishing, UK. 2006. 96 pp. Ill. \$18.95.

A new title in Osprey's Campaign series, this compact, well illustrated look at the raid on Tokyo in April 1942 gives a good summation of America's first offensive after Pearl Harbor. The atmosphere, reasons, theories, and training are all well described, although people familiar with the operation will probably not find too much new information, just a nice, handy package.

Mr. Chun's book includes many familiar photos, probably because there was only a finite number taken of the B-25s, the crews, and their Navy carrier support crews. The book boasts some of the best illustrative work I have seen, either in Osprey's huge inventory or elsewhere. Howard Gerrard's three, two-page paintings are wonderful, offering great detail, especially on the ground showing the terrain and industrial areas that the raiders flew over. One picture shows a compacted view of the destruction of the Japanese picket boat that discovered the task force, requiring the B-25s to launch more than 400 miles farther from their planned takeoff point, setting the scene for the destruction of all but one of the 16 bombers. The illustrations offer us views of important actions that could otherwise not be shown.

My favorite is the illustration showing one B-25 set upon by four Kawasaki Ki.61 Hien fighters, aircraft that

were still undergoing testing at the time of the Doolittle raid. This is a little known engagement and the artist's painting is a real window into the interception and subsequent destruction of two of Japan's newest fighters even before they officially entered service.

A fresh look at the operation, Osprey's latest effort is a great value for the money.

Armstrong, Jim. *From POW to Blue Angel: The Story of Commander Dusty Rhodes*. University of Oklahoma Press, 2800 Venture Dr., Norman, OK 73069. 2006. 297 pp. Ill. \$29.95.

I am especially glad to see this latest World War II biography. Raleigh E. "Dusty" Rhodes may not be a familiar name, but his story is one of courage and a place in Naval Aviation history. Shot down in his first combat mission during the Battle of Santa Cruz on 29 October 1942, Dusty was a member of Jimmy Flatley's Fighter Squadron 10 aboard *Enterprise* (CV 6). Captured by the Japanese, Dusty spent most of the war in several prison camps. He was finally repatriated, rejoined his squadron mates, and continued his Navy career.

Written by a professor of English, the text contains only a few errors in terminology, such as a reference to the activities of Royal Navy "Hurricanes." These are, no doubt, Hawker Sea Furies, given the 5-bladed propellers noted and the fact that by 1948 Sea Hurricanes had long since left active service.

The story of Dusty's internment gives us a rather rare look at conditions in a Japanese POW camp. His treatment ranged from initial classic roughing up and interrogation to what finally settled into a fairly enduring incarceration with a wide variety of Allied fellow prisoners and Japanese guards.

Although the book focuses on the POW experience and its immediate aftermath as Dusty returns home in late 1945, the narrative also deals with his return to active Navy flying. He joined the Navy's new flight demonstration team and soon became the team's leader, taking the Blue Angels through its transition from propeller-driven planes to jets. Despite his traumatic experiences in WW II, he opted to go back into combat, and deployed to Korea flying the F9F Panther with VF-112.



Facing page, with B-25s embarked, *Hornet* (CV 8) steams toward Tokyo in preparation for the Doolittle raid in April 1942. Above, in 1947 LCdr. Dusty Rhodes was a member of the Blue Angels and the next year became the team's skipper.

All in all, this is a very good, highly readable story that has been a long time coming.

Werrell, Kenneth P. *Sabres Over MiG Alley: The F-86 and the Battle for Air Superiority in Korea*. Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD. 2005. 319 pp. Ill. \$29.95.

There have been many books about the air war in Korea, usually focusing on the duels between the North American F-86 Sabre and the Soviet-built MiG-15. This new book goes over much of the same territory. Written by a former Air Force multiengine pilot and Air Force Academy graduate, it is nonetheless a well written, wide-ranging account of the air war overall and all the side shows that influenced the confrontation between U.S. and Russian hardware.

The book is also a detailed biography of North American's seminal second-generation jet fighter, which had a surprising number of problems that affected its overall usefulness in Korea, such as low power, relatively light armament (in comparison to its principal cannon-armed opponent), and the occasionally convoluted supply system that often prevented maintenance of Sabres in the field. A case in point is the lack of vital fuel drop tanks and their accompanying under-wing appendages that allowed the short-range Sabre to fly up to the main area of combat around the Yalu River, engage the enemy, and return to bases in South Korea. The author describes problems that plagued this area of operation throughout the three-year war.

The author floods the text with large amounts of numbers and dissertations, which can make for labor-intensive reading. The reader will have reached page 75 before what the author calls "the main story" begins. And his convention of referring to aerial kills as "credits" than "kills" is annoying. Still, he has given an in-depth background of the F-86 and to a lesser extent, the MiG-15.

An interesting section deals with both sides' attempts to gain flyable examples of their opponents, none of which was completely successful until after the war. Other sections describe the experiences of Navy and Marine Corps exchange pilots, such as John Glenn, who gained kills while flying Air Force Sabres. Some of the details are quite informative and it is plain Werrell has done a lot of research. There is also a brief section on postwar development and use of the naval F-86, namely the highly successful FJ Fury line that made many carrier deployments from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s.

Following the established Naval Institute Press style, the book includes a valuable section of copious notes at the end of the text filled with additional information. The single folio of photos is also a good complement to the text. *Sabres Over MiG Alley* is worth reading.