

THE PYRAMIDIERS; THE STORY OF THE 98TH 1942-1945.

Author: George Baroni

“THE PYRAMIDIERS” is precisely what the title says it is- the World War II story of the 98th. It was written and published as a private endeavor by the author. The book was printed as a leather-bound limited edition and has been out of print for many years. It is difficult to locate and will be quite pricey if one is found.

Reviewed by: Herb Harper.

Edited by: Bill Seals, January 2013.

Editor's comments: Herb's review is spot on. My copy of the book is the most costly one I have, but I would not take any amount for it. It is truly a collector's volume and has reproductions of original documents and photos that may be found in any number of other books dealing with the subjects, but they are not of the same quality because they were copied from this volume. For example, it has reproductions of the orders that transferred a significant number of personnel from the 44th Bomb Group to the 98th to form the nucleus of the group, and lists of the crewmembers that flew the aircraft on the group's deployment to Palestine. If they were printed on the standard Army paper of the early forties, you could post them on the unit's bulletin board.

To order a copy: Herb Harper has two copies of this rare book for sale for \$200/each, which is considerably below the price you will find elsewhere. Contact Herb at herbharper@aol.com.

FORCE FOR FREEDOM: THE LEGACY OF THE 98TH

Published by: The 98th Bomb Group (H) Veterans Association

“FORCE FOR FREEDOM” is a two-volume history of the 98th from 1942 to 1992. Volume I is a general history of the 98th group and wing, and includes a chronology of WWII, maps, and photos of significant events. Volume II consists largely photos of: the combat crews, individuals, and events. Captions are provided for each photo, which allows the reader to understand and appreciate the subject shown. These books are no longer in print and copies of the original printing will be difficult to locate. However, the publisher (Turner Publishing) is in the process of converting the books into a digital format and they may be available from them in the near future.

Reviewed by: Herb Harper.

Edited by: Bill Seals, January 2013

MATERNITY WARD

By: Marguerita Aronowitz

“MATERNITY WARD” was a B-24 lost on the 1 August 1943 “Tidal Wave” mission. The story is mainly taken from the dairy of waist gunner, S/SGT William J. Fay.

Reviewed by: Herb Harper

WORLD WAR II MEMOIRS

Author: Robert Travis Rutledge

“WORLD WAR II MEMOIRS” is a wonderful book! It takes a young boy from Tennessee and follows him from induction into the Army Air Corps through the duration of WWII. It shows first-hand the evolution from boy to hero (all of the boys who fought this war were, indeed heroes). It shows the extremes of war from the boredom between missions, to the terror of the bombs runs themselves- flying through flak, being shot down over enemy territory and the sorrow and grief felt when friends and other crew were lost. Anyone who is interested in how it really was and what these guys went through needs to read this book. It is incredible!

Reviewed by: Joan Hensel, proud daughter of 98th Bomb Group Veteran T/Sgt Charles Hensel who was assigned to the 344th Bomb Squadron as a B-24, Liberator, Radio Operator/Gunner.

BURNING HITLER’S BLACK GOLD

Authors: Frank Way and Major Robert W. Sternfels

“BURNING HITLER’S BLACK GOLD” relates the attack on the oil refineries at Ploesti, Romania on August 1, 1943 to cut off Hitler’s main source of high octane gasoline for his Luftwaffe plus other petroleum products for his army. The unusual method of using four-engine heavy bombers, B-24’s, at tree top level to bomb the refineries makes this the most controversial air raid during World War II. Only the Doolittle raid on Japan from an air craft carrier in the Pacific was as daring as the Ploesti raid. The sixth edition of the book was printed as a commemorative issue for the 60th anniversary of the low level mission. This edition contains the most authoritative account of what really happen when the lead group turned too early, and why the bomber stream became separated. A must read for any student of the raid.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals

To order an autographed copy: Contact Robert W. Sternfels, Las Palamas / 24962 Calle Aragon, #B305, Laguna Woods, CA 92637. Telephone: 310-425-5259. E-mail: rwsternfels@me.com

BOOSTER MCKEESTER AND OTHER EXPENDABLES

Author: Wilson Chapman

“BOOSTER MCKEESTER AND OTHER EXPENDABLES ” is the story of the early days of the 98th Bomb Group, their training and deployment to the Middle East, and the personal experiences of Willie Chapman.

Reviewed by: Herb Harper

B-24 LIBERATOR UNITS OF THE PACIFIC

Author: Robert Dorr

“B-24 Liberator Units of the Pacific” is the story of the Liberator in the Pacific Theater during WWII. Ever present in the Pacific from Pearl Harbor to Victory over Japan the B-24 proved to be the staple heavy bomber in the campaign. From its ignominious beginnings in the Allied rout in the Philippines and Dutch East Indies, the bomber weathered the Japanese storm with a handful of bomb groups to play a crucial role in checking the enemy’s progress in New Guinea, and then actively participating in the island hopping campaign through the South West Pacific.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, January 2013

UNBROKEN.

Author: Laura Hillenbrand.

“UNBROKEN” is the story of Olympic distance runner Louis Zamperini, a navigator on a B-24 that crashed in the central Pacific. Louis (Louie) and two other survivors found a raft among the wreckage and waited for rescue. Instead of rescue they drifted two thousand miles in forty-seven days. Their only food: two shark livers and three raw albatross. Their only fresh water: sporadic rainfall. Zamperini, close to death, was captured by the Japanese on the fourth-seventh day. More than two years of brutal torture and total humiliation as a prisoner of war followed. Louie survived and returned home a hero, only to sink into the depths of alcoholic rage and despair. It took years, but eventually with the love of his wife and the discovery of faith, he was able to overcome the drinking and lay to rest the ghosts of war. [Editor note: Our older daughter has a master’s degree in English and reads voraciously considers Laura’s book “Seabiscuit” to be the best written book she has read. “Unbroken” is equally well written, but a word of warning to readers who shy away from scenes they abhor. Laura’s description of Zamperini’s treatment as a POW is extremely graphic.]

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, February 2013

FINISH FORTY AND HOME.

Author: Phil Searce.

“FINISH FORTY AND HOME” is the [largely] untold World War II story of B-24’s in the Pacific. “Phil Searce’s “Finish Forty and Home’ is a triumph of intimate history, following the author’s seventeen-year-old airman father as he goes to war in a forgotten but fiercely contested corner of World War II. Through meticulous research and lyrical prose, Searce captures the grim grind of the Pacific war, life and death in a battered bomb squadron, and the tumultuous experiences of a B-24 radioman and his crew.”

Laura Hillenbrand, author of “Unbroken” and “Seabiscuit.” This is not just another book about the personal experiences of one individual—it captures the true sense of what it was like to fly 40 missions in the Pacific air campaign during World War II.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, February 2013

OPERACE (correct spelling) ARGUMENT

Authors: Karel Foud, Jiri Klouch, Valadislav Kratsky, and Jan Vladar

“OPERACE ARGUMENT” is a Czech language book about American bombers and crews in operation in Slovakia in February 1944, known and referred to as the “Big Week”. Many of the 98th’s B-24’s participated in the missions and suffered some losses. Much of the research for this book was done by Herb Harper, our association historian. An English translation is planned.

Reviewed by: Herb Harper

ALI SPEZZATE

Authors: Sergio Costagli and Gerardo Uina

“ALI SPEZZATE” is an Italian language book and has one chapter detailing the last mission of the 98th Bomb Group’s B-24 named “YANKEE DOODLE DANDY”. This aircraft was shot down on November 11, 1943. Four of the crew was killed. Six crewmembers were able to evade the Germans, and escaped with the help of the Italian Partisans. Some of the Partisans were still alive as of November 1999. Much of the research on the crew and their relatives was done with the help of Herb Harper, Historian of our association.

Reviewed by: Herb Harper

THE LAST MISSION

Author: William Kollar

“THE LAST MISSION” is the story of the last mission of MAGGIE’S DRAWERS, aka. HEAVENS DEVILS, A B-24 Liberator, serial number 42-73077, assigned to the 415th Bomb Squadron and flown by Fredrick Striescher’s crew. Bill Kollar relates his experiences of being shot down and the fate of his fellow crew members. Bill is alive and well, and a member of our association.

Reviewed by: Herb Harper

OUT OF THE DESERT: A STORY OF PALESTINE, PLOESTI AND BEYOND

Author: John E. Blundell

“OUT OF THE DESERT” is the story of the author’s experiences while assigned to the 98th Bomb Group’s Photo Section, and covers the groups many moves from Palestine, to North Africa, to Italy. Much of the book is about the planning, preparation and training that occurred prior to the “Tidal Wave” mission, the low level attack on the Ploesti refineries on August 1, 1943. Of particular interest to many is Blundell’s description of how the cameras were mounted and operated on the mission. His description of the hardships and humor of life in the different locations should be enjoyed by all. The book is out of print and there are no plans to reprint it, but see the comments regarding the publisher’s plans in the review of “Force For Freedom” above.

Reviewed By: Herb Harper

Edited by: Bill Seals, January 2013

LIBERATOR

Author: Philippe Castellano

“LIBERATOR” is a French language book that deals with 15 Air Force bomber operations in Northern Italy and Southern France in WWII. A quote in the book states that the 98th Bomb Group was “THE PREMIER” group in 15AF.

Reviewed by: Herb Harper

B-29 SUPERFORTRESS UNITS OF THE KOREAN WAR

Author: Robert F. Dorr

“B-29 SUPERFORTRESS UNITS OF THE KOREAN WAR” chronicles the story of the B-29, a four-engine propeller driven bomber flying combat missions against sleek, nimble jet fighters of the new jet age, the Soviet MIG-15. This very heavy bomber of WW II had been redesigned as a medium bomber by the time the North Koreans attacked its southern neighbor in 1950. Many of its crewmembers had fought their war and settled down to raise families and begin careers-only to be recalled to fight another war on a distant Asian peninsula. An irreverent bunch, they painted their B-29s in elaborate color schemes, and tended to disregard some of the rules of military behavior. Historians have long been intrigued by the unique war they fought, pitting their big vulnerable bomber against a fleet of MIG-15s. Crammed full of first-hand accounts, prolific artwork and action photographs, this book graphically details the war they fought in the deadly skies over North Korea, both during daylight and at night.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, January 2013

B-47 STRATOJET, BOEING’S BRILLIANT BOMBER

Author: Jan Tegler

“B-47 STRATOJET, BOEING’S BRILLIANT BOMBER” is one volume in the “Walter J. Boyne Military Aircraft Series.” The book features comprehensive coverage in words and photographs of the B-47 from its earliest test flights through its decade plus years of service in the Strategic Air Command. From performance data to a complete listing of models and modifications this volume is essential reading for anyone seeking factual information on the bomber. The 98th Bomb Wing at Lincoln AFB, Nebraska flew the Aircraft from 1954 to 1965. [The reviewer logged a 1,000 hours of flight time in the nose of the bomber in the mid to late 1950’s.]

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, January 2013

LUFTWAFFE TEST PILOT

Author: Nans-Werner Lerche

“LUFTWAFFE TEST PILOT” is the account of test pilot Lerche’s experiences in testing and flying captured Allied aircraft during WWII. Interestingly, two of the aircraft were B-24s lost by the 98th Bomb Group.

Reviewed by: Herb Harper

Z SQUARE 7

By: Frank Grube

“Z SQUARE 7” is a true story about Eugene Thomas’s crew flying B-29s in World War II. Lt. Thomas was on his second combat tour, flying B-29s in the Pacific, having already completed a tour with the 98th Bomb Group in the Middle East Theater.

Reviewed by: Herb Harper

To order a copy; send \$23.00 to: Frank L. Grube, 800 Sleater-Kinny Road SE, Lacey, WA 98503.

BROTHER BOB’S WAR

Author: Ralph W. Ekwall

“BROTHER BOB’S WAR” is a story about “that other airplane”--the B-17. The book contains many comparisons with the B-24 regarding performance and other aspects. One chapter is devoted to ACES, which compares bomber gunners to fighter pilot aces. I think this is the first time I have seen this subject presented this way. This book should be of particular interest to all gunners.

Reviewed by: Herb Harper

To order the book: contact Willard’s Books, P.O. Box 45804, Omaha, NE 68145-0804. Hardcover \$17.95 / softcover \$11.95. Prices include postage.

INTO THE FIRE

Author: Duane Schultz

“INTO THE FIRE” tells story of the Ploesti low-level raid, which the author calls “the most fateful mission of World War II.” There are some errors in what exactly happened, but the book is written in an easy to read style and relates some personal stories that add feeling to the narrative. For the casual reader this is a good book to get the “big picture” from.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, January 2013

BLACK SUNDAY PLOESTI

Author: Michael Hill

“BLACK SUNDAY PLOESTI” is the story of the legendary low level raid on Ploesti, Romania by the 376th, 93rd, 98th, 44th, and 389th Bomb Groups. This 50th Anniversary book is printed in a large format and contains many never before published photos from the mission, some of which are from the original negatives. Also included is a complete listing of the aircraft and crews that flew the mission.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, January 2013

FORTRESS PLOESTI: THE CAMPAIGN TO DESTROY HITLER'S OIL

Author: Jay A. Stout

“FORTRESS PLOESTI” is an account of the sustained bombing campaign against the Nazi’s Romanian oil refinery complex at Ploesti. About one half of the book is devoted to an account of the low level mission, and the remainder has excellent coverage of the other 23 missions flown against Ploesti. Information and data on the later raids is rather difficult to find, and this book provides it in sufficient depth to give the reader a good working knowledge of those missions. An Appendix lists all of the missions flown by 15th Air Force units during 1944. Written by a Marine Corps fighter pilot and veteran of 37 combat missions, the book grabs your attention and holds it.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, February 2013

PLOESTI: THE GREAT GROUND–AIR BATTLE OF 1 AUGUST 1943

Authors: JAMES DUGAN AND CARROLL STEWART

This is an early (1962) account of the low level raid on the Ploesti refineries. A contemporary review described the book as, “First-rate battle log... the authors generate an almost excruciating dramatic tension even before the onset of the fiery 27-minute battle” Newsweek. The book is that and more. It is carefully documented, and illustrated with useful maps and photos. Perhaps due to the fact that an official USAAF report on the mission was never produced, the book contains certain facts and conclusions that were later proven false. However, the book is one of the few written on the raid that tells what the enemy knew, when they knew it and how they reacted. On balance - an excellent account of the raid.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, February 2013

THE LIBERANDOS

Author: James W. Walker

“THE LIBERANDOS” is the history of the 376th Bombardment Group and its founding units. Its parent was HALPRO, a secret select B-24 unit with hand- picked crews whose original mission was to bomb Tokyo from Chinese bases. [A little known fact is that many of the crews came from the 98th, which was ready to deploy overseas.] The full story of HALPRO is detailed in the book for the first time. The book includes tables listing all 451 combat missions flown by the group, and analyses of each mission. It contains over 500 pictures, and presents the complete story of “Lady Be Good” an ill-fated B-24 lost in the Sahara Desert for 16 years. A superbly researched and fully documented source for historians - a must have volume for World War II aviation buffs.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, February 2013

BOMBER PILOT

Author: Philip Ardery

“BOMBER PILOT” is a memoir of Ardery’s service in World War II. Assigned to the 389th Bomb Group, which deployed to the U. K. in June of 1943, he flew a combat tour in the B-24 while serving as a squadron commander. Following his tour, he was assigned to the 2nd Bomb Wing as the operations officer and returned to the U. S. in July of 1944. Of special interest to 98th Veterans Association members will be the ten missions Ardery flew from North Africa—including the low level raid on Ploesti. Reviewed by: Bill Seals, February 2013

Miss Fortune’s Last Mission: Discovering Its Legacy of Love & Loss

Authors: Bill Boyce, John Torrison

Twenty-five years after his death, I wanted to know the things my father would not discuss about his time as a 19-year-old waist gunner in a B-24 bomber. I found the man who could tell me. He was Ray Noury, who flew with my father over Europe in late 1943; saved my father’s life; and, after my wounded father was shipped home, became the lone survivor of a doomed crew that was shot down in February 1944. When I met Ray in 2013, only five months before his own death at age 90, he told me the story of a B-24 nicknamed Miss Fortune. Ray talked about Miss Fortune’s crew members, their families, and a village that continues to honor the crew’s sacrifice seven decades later. Ray’s revelations took me across the country and over the Atlantic; through stacks of letters and pictures; and back to the confusion I felt as a child wondering why my father still was so wounded so many years after the surgeons repaired his shattered leg. Ray introduced me to his friend John Torrison, whose years of research honored John’s uncle and the other crewmembers who flew on Miss Fortune’s last mission. Ray and John answered the questions that went unasked while my father was alive. It turns out that knowing one man required me to know eleven others. They flew with and in place of my father as 1943 turned into 1944. Decades after their last mission, the members of Miss Fortune’s crew remained with my father. They still live today in the memories of people on two continents.

Prisoner of War Der Luftwaffe

Author: Frank Farnsley

This is a moving, first hand account of humor and horror, the torture and deprivations experienced by bombing crews shot down and captured over Nazi-occupied Europe in the closing days of WWII. It is a subject much overlooked by students of WWII and the daily trials and tribulations are painstakingly detailed by the author over fifty-years later in a short, simple but gripping narrative rarely spoken about by the men who lived through it.

Editor’s note: *The books listed above are largely focused on subjects that relate to the 98th in some manner. Their subjects are: the 98th, sister units, aircraft flown by the 98th, or the theater of action the 98th flew in. There are, of course, books that cover the much wider war and books that focus on other geographic areas. In recognition of the fact that*

association members may have less interest in some of the books in the list that follows, some of the reviews are limited. If you desire more information on a specific book, please contact me at: colbillyseals@hotmail.com

WORLD WAR II IN GENERAL

INFERNO; THE WORLD AT WAR, 1939-1945

Author: Max Hastings

From one of our finest military historians, a monumental work that shows at once the truly global reach of World War II and its deeply personal consequences. Max Hastings is a highly respected historian and is the author of numerous books. This recent history captures a lot of the previously over looked, or unknown, documents and takes advantage of the many years of research by Hastings and others. This is an excellent book for both those who are new to the subject, and to those who are serious students of the war.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, February 2013

THE STORM OF WAR; A NEW HISTORY OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Author: Andrew Roberts

“Andrew Roberts achieves a marvel of concision in producing a splendidly written, comprehensive new history of the greatest conflict in history. ‘The Storm of War’ is particularly good in its insights into Axis strategy.”

Ian Kershaw, The Guardian.

Roberts’ new history has been acclaimed as the finest single-volume account of the most costly conflict in human history. The war lasted 2,174 days, cost \$1.5 trillion, and cost the lives of more than 50 million people. Therefore, trying to detail the entire sweep of the war from Europe to the Baltic to the Far East in a single book is a monumental task which Roberts does a masterful job of accomplishing. If you only intend to read one history of the war, this would be an excellent choice.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, February 2013

THE EUROPEAN THEATER

DIARY OF AN AIR WAR

Author: Gerrit Zijlstra

“DIARY OF AN AIR WAR” is the story of the U.S. Air Force’s activities throughout the air war in Europe, reported on a daily basis. Beginning with the early days of the American entry into the war, this Diary describes the formation of the first units to operate from England, continuing through the huge build-up for the invasion, the activities of the various bomber and fighter group leading up to and following D-day, the colossal bombing raids over the German home land, to the final few missions prior to Victory in Europe. The book also presents the small events, the sketches of the experiences of those untold thousands of men who toiled, bled, and died for the success of this

tremendous undertaking. This book is a useful addition to the libraries of U.S. Air Force buffs.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, January 2013

MASTERS AND COMMANDERS

Author: Andrew Roberts

“MASTERS AND COMMANDERS” is the story of how four titans won the war in the west. The “titans” were President Franklin D. Roosevelt, U.S. Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and British Chief of Staff General Sir Allan Brooke. “Fascinating...By mining previously unavailable diaries and oral histories...this book brings vividly to life the personal interactions and impressions of those involved. Roberts has a keen eye for the telling anecdote, and he gives a vivid sense of the extreme strains generated by a struggle fought not in the field but in the committee rooms and offices.”

Mark Mazower, The Guardian.

If I may borrow Mazower’s opening word; fascinating would be the word I would chose to describe this book. Great reading.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, February 2013

PARTNERS IN COMMAND

Author: Mark Perry

“PARTNERS IN COMMAND” is the story of Generals George Marshall and Dwight Eisenhower in war and peace. “History is not clinical; it is the story of men and women struggling to survive the storms of their times. Mark Perry has given us a vivid tale of two of the giants of the American Century, Marshall and Eisenhower, and he deftly charts the vicissitudes of their relationship in years when everything—truly everything—hung is the balance.”

Jon Meacham, Author of “American Gospel” and “Franklin and Winston.”

Much has been written about the Generals and their roles during the world war. This book also details the roles they played before the war and in the peace that followed. This is a thoroughly enjoyable book for anyone with an interest in American history.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, February 2013

THE MIGHTY EIGHTH

Author: Roger A. Freeman

“THE MIGHTY EIGHTH” is a history of the units, men and machines if the U.S. 8th Air Force. This book is one of the best-known aviation histories of the Second World War. It is perhaps the most authoritative record of the 8th AF, from its formation in 1942 to VE Day. This is the book that named the Eighth “The Mighty Eighth.” It is as close to an “official” history of the Eighth Air Force as one is likely to find.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, January 2013

ANZIO

Author: Lloyd Clark

“ANZIO” is the story of the war in Italy and the battle for Rome in 1944. “Lloyd Clark’s lucid, elegantly written book is well over due. Long neglected, the Allie’s war in Italy, particularly the setback’s at Anzio, deserve to be reexamined without prejudice. Clark has succeeded in producing a fast, enjoyable narrative that undermines several myths and sets the record straight. Absolutely first-class.” Alex Kershaw, New York Times best-selling author of the “Longest Winter” and “The Few.”

The invasions described in this book led to the Allies securing the “Boot Heel” of Italy where the 98th was based from mid-November 1943 until April 1945. I had heard conflicting opinions of General Mark Clark and didn’t know which was correct. This book resolved that conflict.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, December 2008

ITALY’S SORROW

Author: James Holland

“ITALY’S SORROW: A YEAR OF WAR, 1944-1945” is the story of one year of the war in Italy. This is a sad and depressing book in many ways. But, it is also the story of an area that was indeed a stepchild of the Secord World War. The very invasion of the country was more politically motivated than it was a military strategy. As a result, neither side ever had the full, all out support that other combat theaters enjoyed. The book presents a detailed history of the war in Italy from the fall of Rome until the end of the war in Europe in May 1945. It details the interactions of the leaders of the various forces on both sides of the battle in a factual manner. It also tells the story of individual soldiers, airmen, and the Italians who were caught up in the war. It is not an easy book to read. I was motivated to read and try to comprehend its message because my wife had a cousin who was part of the battle. The cousin was a corpsman in the 5th Army from Anzio till the end of the war. The fact that he survived and returned to his family largely unchanged (at least outwardly) is a testament to the human spirit.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, June 2009

D-DAY

Author: Stephen E. Ambrose

“D-DAY’ is a history of the Allied invasion of France on June 6, 1944 which has been called the climactic battle of World War II. Ambrose portrays the faces of courage, heroism, fear and determination that General Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander, called the “fury of an aroused democracy.” It is the story of men at the most demanding moment of the lives, when the horrors, complexities, and triumphs of life are laid bare. The author reveals how the original plans for the invasion had to be abandoned, and how enlisted men and junior officers acted on their own initiative when they realized nothing was as they were told. D-Day is the definitive account of one of the most important days in history.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, April 2010

THE PACIFIC THEATER

THE PACIFIC WAR

Author: Douglas Ford

“THE PACIFIC WAR” is a recently published history of the war in the Pacific during the Second World War. This concise, well-researched and written book covers the entire spectrum of the war between the Japanese and the Allies. Outraged by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the war, which was largely an American War was fought with no quarter asked, and none given. The book begins with an examination of the emergence of Japan as a Great Power, then traces the genesis of Japan’s territorial ambitions, continuing with a narrative of the war on land and at sea. Douglas Ford concludes the book with an explanation of why Japan was forced to submit to a humiliating and unconditional surrender.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, August 2012

SEA OF THUNDER

Author: Evan Thomas

“SEA OF THUNDER” is the story of four commanders and the last great naval campaign—1941-1945. “Whenever Evan Thomas turns on his smarts and energy, history makes more sense. Here he looks at the Pacific War from Guadalcanal to Tokyo Harbor and brings his vivid insights to the world’s greatest naval campaign.”

Ben Bradlee, former editor, the Washington Post, naval officer, the South Pacific, 1942-45.

My thoughts about the book, which I wrote into the book when I’d finished reading it were, “I liked this book very much. Great insights to the main players and very well written.” Whatever the level of your knowledge of the Pacific War, you will feel rewarded after reading this book.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, April 2006

SHATTERED SWORD

Author: Jonathan Parshall and Anthony Tully

“SHATTERED SWORD” is the untold story of the Battle of Midway. The battle that turned the tide of the Pacific War is without question one of the most famous naval battles in history. For the first time in decades this book brings a myth-busting new interpretation of the great battle. The authors made extensive use of untapped Japanese sources, including Imperial Navy operational records never before used by Western historians to reconstruct the actual sequence of events of June 4, 1942. Parshall and Tully looked afresh at the decisions of the American and Japanese commanders, and placed them within the seldom-understood context of the Imperial Navy’s doctrine and technology. The book is compellingly readable and filled with sharp insights and deep reassessments of the Battle of Midway.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, October 2006

WAR IN THE PACIFIC, VOLUME I AND II

Author: Jerome T. Hagen

“WAR IN THE PACIFIC” is a two-volume history of the people, places and events of the war in the Pacific Theater during World War II. Our youngest daughter, Nancy, purchased the books as a gift to me in the fall of 2004. When I received the autographed books the author’s name struck a bell—Brigadier General Jerome T. Hagen, USMC, Retired and I were classmates at the Air Command and Staff College, class of 1967. I didn’t get to know Jerry, as he was called, very well as we did not have a seminar group together. However, as one of the few Marine Corps officers in the class he “stood out” a bit, and I was around him sufficiently to form a general impression of him. I found him to be intelligent, diplomatic, reserved, and unlike some fighter pilots I’ve known, he didn’t “hit you in the face” with that fact. I liked him immediately. These two books reflect the discipline of a career military officer. They are factual, straight forward presentations of the events of that era. I can’t think of a better means to convey the feelings the books are capable of raising that to quote a letter from someone who knows.

“Your book is the most accurate story of the events in the Pacific War that I have read. I was there. I was a POW of 42 months during World War II. My ship, “USS Houston,” was sunk in the Sundra Straits, and I was forced to build the Death railroad in Burma and Siam (Thailand). Your book describes events as they were. ‘Thank you.’”

Wilber Smith, Walla Walla. (This particular letter was in response to Volume I. Volume II drew similar responses.)

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, January, 2005

GENERAL OF THE ARMY GEORGE C. MARSHALL, SOLDIER AND STATESMAN

Author: Ed Cray

“General of the Army George C. Marshall, Soldier and Statesman” is a well researched, highly readable, and authoritative biography that does evenhanded justice to a great man and his achievements. The book goes well beyond General Marshall’s role as Army Chief of Staff and architect of the European Recovery Program, and becomes a valuable survey of a large piece of twentieth-century history. I am sure one could make a case for the selection of several men as the “Greatest American of the Twentieth Century.” My choice is General George Catlin Marshall, but this is not the place to defend my choice. So I’ll simply repeat what I wrote in the book when I had finished reading it. “This is a great book about an even greater man. General Marshall was not only the greatest general of the 20th Century; I think he was the Greatest American of the century.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, Spring 2009

RETRIBUTION

Author: Max Hastings

“RETRIBUTION” is a history of the war to defeat Japan during the Second World War. When this reviewer tried to write a review of this book, he was unable to write anything that came close to describing the book's content. Perhaps this was due to the fact that it is folly for one to try to outdo the author's description of the work. Therefore, Max Hastings' explanation of his purpose in writing the book and the focus of the book is reproduced here.

“‘Retributive justice’ is among the dictionary definitions of nemesis. Readers must judge for themselves whether the fate that befell Japan in 1945 merits that description, as I believe it does. The war in the Far East extended across an even wider canvas than the struggle of Europe: China, Burma, India, and the Philippines, together with a vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean. Its courses were directed by one of the most extraordinary galaxies of leaders, military and political, the world has ever seen: Japan's emperor, general and admiral; Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong; Churchill, Roosevelt, Truman, Stalin; MacArthur and Nimitz; LeMay, Slim, Mountbatten, Stilwell—and the men who built the bomb. My purpose, as in ‘Armageddon,’ is to portray a massive and terrible human experience, set within a chronological framework, rather than to revisit the detailed narrative of campaigns many authors have described that, and which anyway could not be contained within a single volume. This book focuses upon how and why things were done, what it was like to do them, and what manner of men and women did them.” This is a rather “heavy” history and may appeal more to the serious student of the subject, but anyone who reads the book will gain a sense of this terrible human struggle.

Reviewed by: Bill Seals, July 2009

Editor's Note: *The following books are only listed by title and author because they are not histories, but rather are books about individuals and events that may be of interest to our members.*

FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS

Authors: James Bradley with Ron Powers

SERENADE TP THE BIG BIRD

Author: Bert Stiles

DEVIL AT MY HEELS

Author: Louis Zamperini

GOD IS MY CO-PILOT

Author: Robert L. Scott, Jr.

PASSAGE TO VALHALLA

Author: William J. Fili

WILD BILL DONOVAN

Author: Douglas Waller

FDR GOES TO WAR

Authors: Burton W. Folsom, Jr. & Anita Folsom

THE LAST LIBERATOR

Author: Jerry Yulsman

nevada city and beyond

Author: Richard E. Tuttle

A Hero In Our House

Author: Darlene and Art Palmer

Prisoner of War Der Luftwaffe"

Author: Frank Farnsley

The Girls of Atomic City
Author: Denise Kieman

The incredible story of the young women of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, who unwittingly played a crucial role in one of the most significant moments in U.S. history. The Tennessee town of Oak Ridge was created from scratch in 1942. One of the Manhattan Project's secret cities, it didn't appear on any maps until 1949, and yet at the height of World War II it was using more electricity than New York City and was home to more than 75,000 people, many of them young women recruited from small towns across the South. Their jobs were shrouded in mystery, but they were buoyed by a sense of shared purpose, close friendships--and a surplus of handsome scientists and Army men!

But against this vibrant wartime backdrop, a darker story was unfolding. The penalty for talking about their work--even the most innocuous details--was job loss and eviction. One woman was recruited to spy on her coworkers. They all knew *something* big was happening at Oak Ridge, but few could piece together the true nature of their work until the bomb "Little Boy" was dropped over Hiroshima, Japan, and the secret was out. The shocking revelation: the residents of Oak Ridge were enriching uranium for the atomic bomb.

Though the young women originally believed they would leave Oak Ridge after the war, many met husbands there, made lifelong friends, and still call the seventy-year-old town home. The reverberations from their work there--work they didn't fully understand at the time--are still being felt today. In *The Girls of Atomic City*, Denise Kiernan traces the astonishing story of these unsung WWII workers through interviews with dozens of surviving women and other Oak Ridge residents. This is history and science made fresh and vibrant--a beautifully told, deeply researched story that unfolds in a suspenseful and exciting way.