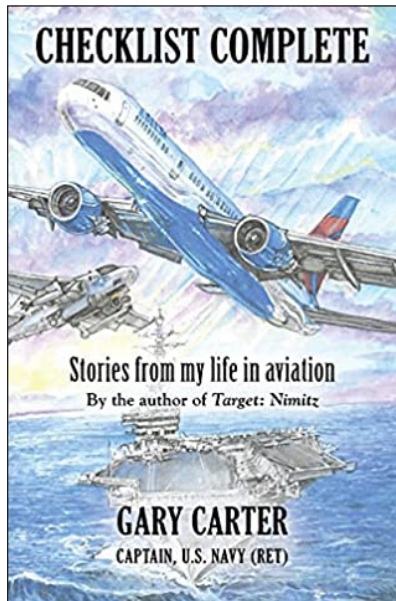


Ready Room Reading

Book Reviews

“Checklist Complete: Stories From My Life In Aviation” by Captain Gary Carter, USN (Retired)

review courtesy Dan Barnett, Butte College



Orland resident Gary Carter, retired Navy Captain and former Delta Air Lines pilot, has a tale to tell. Actually, about fourteen of them, stories from his career in the military and his years in commercial aviation, all contained in a new memoir.

Over a long career, he would chart more than 16,000 flying hours. In that regard he wryly notes: “As is often said about aviation, experience is a hard teacher. First comes the test, then the lesson.”

One story he relates is from when he was a Midshipman Fourth Class (a “Plebe”) in 1970, aware of the hierarchy when groups gather for meals at the U.S. Naval Academy, where Plebes are “society’s lowest form of existence” and answerable to pretty much anyone else.

When it came to passing food, up the chain it went with Plebes getting the remains. Until one night Carter “took a scoop of applesauce, for some tragic and unexplainable reason, and then started to hand the bowl to my classmate beside me.” A little infraction of cultural norms? Hardly. As Carter details, “The heavens parted, the world erupted, fire and brimstone engulfed me.”

Carter lived to tell the story, and many more besides, such as how a starter problem in the S-3 Viking was

solved with a bent paperclip; being chewed out with unrelenting profanity (not spelled out in the book) by his two military bosses when a message Carter sent went astray; a lunch that cost \$3,000; and his brief encounter with Vin Scully when he piloted for Delta.

One colorful image from the book is a publicity shot taken in 1980 of four S-3 jets in a diamond formation flying by Mount Rushmore, with the author on the left wing, taken when CAPT Carter was a pilot trainer in the Navy’s S-3A Viking Fleet Readiness Squadron, located at Naval Air Station North Island in San Diego, CA.

Full of self-deprecating humor and technical talk (with acronyms explained), the book fittingly concludes with some of Carter’s “lifetime maxims,” including: “Never be out of airspeed, altitude, and ideas at the same time.”

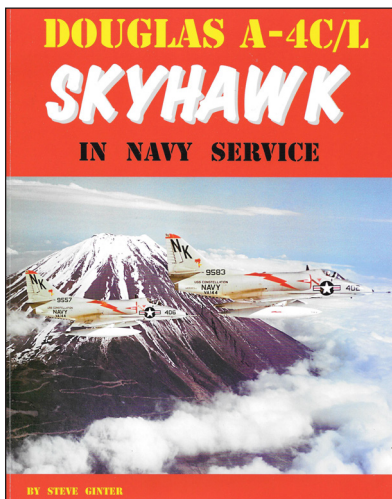
“Checklist Complete: Stories From My Life In Aviation” is available at in paperback from booklocker.com/books/11 (\$16.95) with a PDF version also available.

Reviewer Dan Barnett teaches philosophy at Butte College and can be reached at dbarnett99@me.com, with columns archived at <https://dielbee.blo9spot.com>

Ready Room Reading

Steve Ginter. Douglas A-4C/L Skyhawk in Navy Service. Simi Valley, CA. 2019. 193 pages. Ill. \$39.95.

review courtesy CDR Peter Mersky, USNR (Ret)



Right down our alley, Number 109 in the successful, open-ended Naval Fighter series, and the sixth covering the various models of the Douglas/McDonnell Douglas Skyhawk, this is the long-awaited volume on the A-4 Charlie that so many of our members flew in Vietnam. One more book remains, that of A-4Cs in Marine Corps service, which the author-publisher assures will be coming at a future date.

Following the long-established format of basic design and discussion of the Skyhawk, there are many photos of the A-4's individual areas such as armament stations, cockpit details, landing gear, and other points of interest. A lengthy section of squadron biographies that contain photos of their markings, squadron patches, as well as synopses of each squadron's service. These squadron capsules include fleet and reserve squadrons that flew the A-4L, an upgrade of the A-4C that flew so many Vietnam sorties. Besides the black-and-white photos, a nice collection of photos follows, as well as the traditional discussion of scale model kits of the A-4C/L.

As our specific group knows, the A-4C bore the brunt the first years of Rolling Thunder, flying daily Alpha Strikes against targets in South Vietnam and North Vietnam, and shouldering a major portion of losses of aircraft and their pilots, who quickly filled the enemy prisons. While certainly a few squadrons flew the A-4B and the A-4E, it was the Charlies and their pilots that took the war to the North Vietnamese and faced the growing assemblies of antiaircraft guns and SAMS, not to mention the early appearances of MiGs over Hanoi and Haiphong and other enemy cities.

The Charlies flew from every Navy flight deck, large and small, and for a time were clad in some of the most colorful markings of the period. A few of them even sported the experimental olive drab green in the mid-war period. The JOs who would become captains and admirals, skippers and CAGs, honed their teeth on these dangerous missions.

While we may have become familiar with the Ginter style and format, spending time browsing through this book will bring back many memories.

Ready Room Reading

Pavelec, Sterling Michael. Airpower Over Gallipoli, 1915-1916. U.S. Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD. 2020. 215 pp. Ill. \$40.

review courtesy CDR Peter Mersky, USNR (Ret)



The Gallipoli Campaign of World War I is probably one of the so-called Great War's least remembered, or at best seldom-discussed events. And yet, upon closer examination, it is definitely worthy of consideration when describing just how monumental this four-year conflict really was. The duration of the battle, the horrific casualty count on both sides, the uniqueness of

various aspects and if nothing else, the overall effect it had on the physique of the people of Australia and New Zealand, who until then might have been said to have been outside the realm of most world conflicts and national considerations. Indeed, one might be surprised to find how many songs have been written about Gallipoli and involvement and terrible body count of Australian troops under the guns of their Turkish (or more correctly Ottoman) opponents. His phrase "that hell they called Suvla Bay" stays with you after you hear songwriter Eric Bogle's 1971 ode to Gallipoli, "The Band Played Waltzing Matilda."

For such a small book, it is full of deeply researched historical facts, geography and political setups that will probably be new to most readers. With a very small, but interesting folio of period photos and only two maps when another such graphic would have greatly enhanced or complemented the text, it is still a good, though brief examination of this lengthy battle that cost so many lives but served to introduce airpower to a more strategic role.

The book explores the beginning understanding of the use of airpower with the early formation of small squadrons equipped with only a few simple aircraft of

fragile construction whose small engines gave them limited performance and were flown by men with singular capabilities. Indeed, the planes' speeds would be considered today comparable to city speed for today's automobiles.

It is amazing how complicated this brief war within a war was planned and fought by the participants. The role of early military aviation using land-based and water-based aircraft was mainly that of reconnaissance and light attack. The author has obviously conducted major research to gather information with which to write this unusual account.

Gallipoli was not an easy campaign for either side, most especially the Allies, namely France and England, who much like their counterparts in the future war in the Falklands with Argentina in 1982, had to stretch their supply lines very thin to adequately fight no less determined enemy, the Ottoman Turks.

Chapter five describes the early problems of coordination between the fleets and new but important developments involving aviation seem to appear during the Gallipoli campaign beginning in April and May of 1915. As the campaign comes to an end, the exhausted combatants take stock. The Allies—the British French, and the ANZAC (Australia, New Zealand Army Corps)—pull their troops, ships and aircraft—out of the bloody combat zone while the equally tired Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey) also relieve their troops.

The Gallipoli fighting saw the beginning of national awareness that Australia and New Zealand had rarely considered. Each of these countries, as well as the Irish who were still fighting for their Independence for the British Empire had suffered grievous losses. Many young men were killed or were maimed and returned home to live out their lives remembering the terrible time and personal losses.

The author is a professor of airpower history at the Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama, and has written four earlier books and other articles on various aviation-oriented subjects.

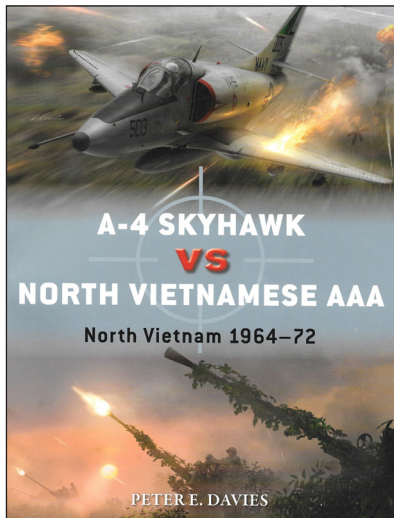
Airpower Over Gallipoli is an original look at this "modern" war of a century ago that we have forgotten but which deserves to be recalled and studied in today's new arena of conflict.

Ready Room Reading

Book Review

Davies, Peter E. A-4 Skyhawk vs North Vietnamese AAA, North Vietnam 1964-72. Osprey Publishing, 2020. Oxford, UK. 80 pp. Ill. \$22.

review courtesy CDR Peter Mersky, USNR (Ret



No. 104 in Osprey's highly successful Duel series, this new book from prolific author Peter Davies is definitely one of his best. It showcases his ability to research and absorb history and facts, figures and first-person impressions into a highly readable history of its subject that could serve as one of the growing number of books on aviation during the Vietnam War. It is also one of the most technically complicated of this series' books

The book describes how the North Vietnamese used their array of various anti-aircraft guns, their development and dispersal around the North Vietnamese landscape. Included is how various U.S. Navy and Marine Corps A-4 squadrons and their pilots defended themselves against these dangerous ground-to-air weapons at the height of the long war.

While the other defenders, namely the vaunted SA-2 and SA-3 surface-to-air missiles and the squadrons of MiGs, accounted for their share of losses of all Allied aircraft and crews, the various flak guns presented what was arguably the most consistently "productive" of the curtain of defense devised by the North Vietnamese, assisted by their Russian and Chinese advisors and sponsors.

Davies account goes inside the North Vietnamese organizations, getting unique first-person information on what it was like to confront an incoming raid

of Navy Skyhawks, often preceded by Iron Hand A-4s armed with Shrike missiles and ECM-equipped EKA-3s, that also functioned as aerial tankers standing by to help struggling A-4 pilots low on fuel exiting the target area. And early on, EA-1F Spads that contributed their own valuable brand of ECM. So many different aircraft and their brave crews were part of the overall Skyhawk story over Vietnam. Many authors have tried to tell this story, including so much of the wide-ranging activities of all the communities, aircraft, ships and different personalities that fought this long-lasting conflict that in many ways, affected how we fight the same wars today.

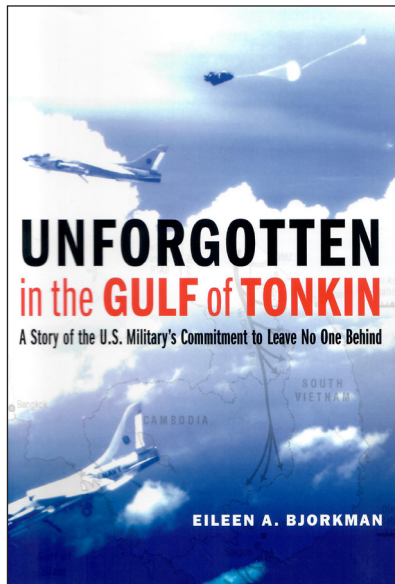
As he usually does, Mr. Davies has done a fine job pulling all of these threads together to weave that story into one multi-colored fabric supported by fine graphics and photos that have become so much of the traditional product we have come to expect from Osprey, again ably supported by the series creator and editor, Mr. Tony Holmes who actually designed Osprey's Duel, Aircraft of the Aces and Combat Aircraft series, which have sold thousands of copies world-wide and have gone to great lengths to tell the stories of these aircraft and their people ranging from the early years of aviation to the present day.

Ready Room Reading

Book Review

Unforgotten in the Gulf of Tonkin: A Story of the U.S. Military's Commitment to Leave No One Behind by Eileen Bjorkman

summary courtesy <http://eileenbjorkman.com>



On November 18, 1965, U.S. Navy pilot Willie Sharp ejected from his F-8 fighter after being hit over a target in North Vietnam. With a cloud layer beneath him, he did not know if he was over land—where he would most certainly be captured or killed by the North Vietnamese—or over the Gulf of Tonkin. As he ejected, both Navy and Air Force aircraft were already heading toward him to help.

What followed was a dramatic rescue made by pilots and other airmen with little or no training or experience in combat search and rescue. Told by a former military flight test engineer, Eileen A. Bjorkman, this story includes nail-biting descriptions of air combat, flight, and rescue. Bjorkman places

Sharp's story in the larger context of the U.S. military's bedrock credo—No Man Left Behind—and calls attention to the more than eighty thousand Americans still missing from conflicts since World War I. She also explores the devastating aftershocks of the Vietnam War as Sharp struggled with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Woven into this gripping tale is a fascinating history of Combat Search-and-Rescue missions that officially began in World War II. Combining the cockiness and camaraderie of Top Gun with the heroics of Sully, is a riveting tale of combat rescue and an unforgettable story about the U.S. military's commitment to leave no man behind.

from Potomac Books, available at Amazon.com