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Winged Warfare - In World War I



Synopsis

Billy Bishop was the allies top Ace in World War I with 72 Victories. The highest number in the British Empire and second only to the Red Baron. William A. Bishop was from Ontario Canada this is his autobiography.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Great story, written by the Allies top fighter ace (49 confirmed planes shot down) in WWI. Bishop tangled several times with the (in)famous Red Baron. He never shot him down, but the Baron never got him, either! Bishop writes powerfully, and when he jumps a plane, or 5 planes jump him, I actually found myself tensing up, even though I know he made it through alive. He got into flying after seeing how the infantry lived in the mud and trenches. Statistically, the trenches were far safer than the planes they were flying. After all, this was only 12 years or so after the first flight at Kitty Hawk! Pilots had to fly the plane, aim the machine gun (located on the top wing in a swivel mount), fire it, clear the jams when (not if!) the ammunition wouldn't feed, keep track of everything going on around him (like those red planes with the Iron Crosses on them trying to kill him), and the most

sophisticated piece of gear on the plane was the parachute (when it worked!)

This is a first-person WWI history by a leading combat Ace. The details of life in the new emerging world of air-to-air combat are vividly portrayed. Likewise, the worldview of a young man from rural Canada being plunged into the Great War are eloquently expressed. Bishop was a pilot and fighter much more so than a poet, so the writing is perhaps a little light on dealing with the human side of the experience. For an a great book on the same subject matter which leans just the opposite way, see "Winged Victory" by VM Yeates (not the famous poet with the same surname, by the way). So, if you are kid who wants to be a man or an old man who remembers being a young man, or even just a history buff, you will probably like this a lot. I want to give it four stars, but the extra star would just be because I love the vivid portrayal of this time period.

I have read several "Ace" books, both written from the personal view and second person historical. But, here, bishop is direct, to the point and manages to be entertaining. This book was written shortly after Bishop had been taken out of service and working in Washington, D.C. helping bring the U.S. air effort up to speed- basically, giving lectures and talking up the sales of War bonds. Although some of his amazing aerial combat record has been challenged (he was one of the few allied flyers who's kills did not have to be confirmed by ground observers) in modern times, I could find nothing much in his account to see him as an embellisher. However, although his writing seem authentic, I was a little disturbed by the lack of emotion in his writing. He tries to explain this in a few paragraphs salted through the writing, but, it just gave me a kind of feeling he was being overly flippant about the whole ordeal he had experienced. I am a combat veteran of Vietnam era and could not possibly write something about my own experiences with that sort of machine-like objectivity. Perhaps, I am being too critical. It is possible this style if writing about it is a way of protecting himself from feeling too emotional about it all. It had to have been a terrible experience. Bishop is also rather self aggrandizing. There is little humility to his writing. Although, this could simply be his type-A coming out. Most of the Aces of any war on all sides are very self motivated, aggressive types who think about the enemy as prey animals and not as human beings being horribly killed. If they did, they simply could not carry on, I suppose. As for the writing style, I found Bishop to be fairly skilled and somewhat entertaining. Don't expect to be overwhelmed with prose here. This is a matter of fact personal account, written with some clarity and factual story telling, with few words wasted. I honestly enjoyed it and came away feeling much enlightened about WWI aerial combat- which is the main reason I invested my buck and time. It was certainly worth it.

Here's real drama, told by the fellow who lived it. None of the movie land contrivances to keep the reader involved. Major Bishop wrote clearly and concisely about aerial warfare in its formative years. High tech in 1915 meant open cockpits at 10000 feet over France. I've read many memoirs written by soldiers and aviators from EWorld War 1. This is among the best.

Unlike the one other reviewer of this Kindle edition book, I had no problem with obtaining a decent, readable copy. This was a very informative and entertaining account of what it was like to be a Canadian fighter pilot on the Western Front. I have read biographies of most of the WWI and WWII aces and this compared very favorably. It really is a fascinating story; it compares well with the classics by pilots McCudden and Lewis.

Billy Bishop was a great British pilot! The book however is not a great book and is worth reading only after you've the other great books (e.g. No Parachute, etc.). The great majority of the book deals over and over with specific air combat and has no info about the planes he flew (which he refers to as machines), etc. It is incredibly poorly edited. That he was awarded the Victoria Cross is testament to his greatness as a pilot but as I mentioned, read the other books first.

Billy Bishop is a WWI aviation legend among the Royal Flying Corps. Awarded the Victoria Cross for his exploits and nearly four dozen confirmed kills (he had many more), this memoir of his time in the skies over France shows both his aggressive acumen as a fighter and his nearly fatal blunders. The first person account adds insight into life on the front, albeit from the rear echelon aerodromes and high (and low) above the trenches. I recommend the book mostly as an introduction to WWI aviation and by way of meeting up with Major Billy Bishop at his most humble and thoughtful best.

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