

[BOOKS]

The Firestorm That Ended the War

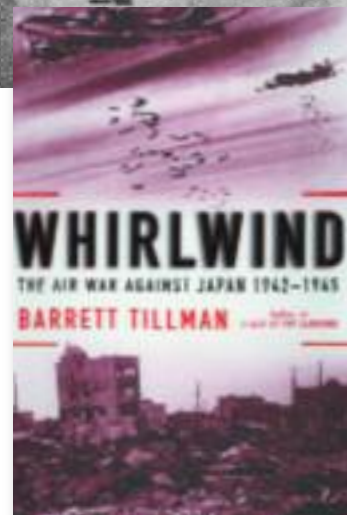
Nearly seven square miles of the Japanese port city Yokohama were destroyed in a single firebombing raid on May 29, 1945.



USAF

WHIRLWIND
The Air War Against Japan 1942–1945
 By Barrett Tillman. 336 pp.
 Simon & Schuster, 2010. \$28.

In 1944 and 1945, Japan faced the most relentless air assault in history. Formations of the world's most technologically advanced bomber, the B-29 Superfortress, firebombed its cities one by one. Swarms of United States Navy carrier aircraft pummeled its harbors and coastal regions. A sustained aerial mine-laying campaign choked off what remained of its maritime commerce after the navy's aggressive submarine campaign had taken its toll, and long-range fighters from Iwo Jima roved across its territory. While several worthy books have covered aspects of this air effort, none offers the comprehensive inter-service and international perspective of this concise account by a prolific naval and air power historian.



Whirlwind, though deceptively short, offers an impressive 360-degree look at the air offensive against Japan's home islands. All of the story's major elements are here, as well as some frequently omitted—the contributions of the British Pacific Fleet carriers in the last months of the war, the long-distance U.S. raids against the Kuril Islands from fog-bound bases in the Aleutians, and the efforts of the air-sea rescue organizations. There

are many small narrative gems, such as an account of how members of a P-51 unit based on Iwo Jima amended their lack of amenities by building a sauna. These are drawn from a mixture of official histories, new scholarship, and many firsthand accounts from veterans.

The material on the Japanese defenses is noteworthy. Tillman provides a detailed portrait of the Japanese military and civilian leadership's catastrophic inability to defend home airspace and protect the population. Using infrequently cited postwar studies, intelligence reports, and interviews, he documents how Japanese aviators struggled to combat the B-29 and naval air assaults. Though their successes were rare, Tillman has uncovered a few cases where individual Japanese pilots and units managed to land punches. That said, he assesses Japanese air defense as a comprehensive failure with many fathers. The account of the lack of Japanese firefight-

ing capability is especially poignant. Even the largest cities possessed few modern fire engines; most boasted the capacity of a medium-sized American municipal fire department circa 1890.

Whirlwind is much more than a simple narrative history. Tillman weighs in on most of the major controversies surrounding the bombing of Japan. His analyses of Japanese and Allied strategy and operational decision-making are concise and on the whole persuasive. He tends to dismiss many of the postwar moral criticisms of Allied actions, such as Curtis LeMay's firebombing and the use of atomic bombs, and he argues that LeMay was perhaps the most effective air commander of any age. Yet Tillman is no whitewasher; the inter-service battles that caused needless casualties and wasted effort come in for harsh criticism. All things considered, his brief, punchy account is a welcome addition to the growing literature of the air war in the Pacific. —Richard R. Muller

HERO OF THE PACIFIC
The Life of Marine Legend
John Basilone

By James Brady. 272 pp.
 Wiley, 2010. \$25.95.

In October 1942, marine Sgt. John Basilone earned the Medal of Honor on Guadalcanal by defeating a massive Japanese attack with his machine gun sections. The handsome young man of proud Italian descent became arguably the most famous American enlisted man of the war, and to this day remains a revered figure in Marine Corps history.

This book is easily the best Basilone biography. The late journalist James Brady applied his own background as a Korean War combat marine officer and his professional skills shrewdly and successfully to Basilone the man. He sifts through the miasma of mythology about Basilone, honestly admitting at many junctures where the truth is now impossible to verify.

What shines through Brady's account



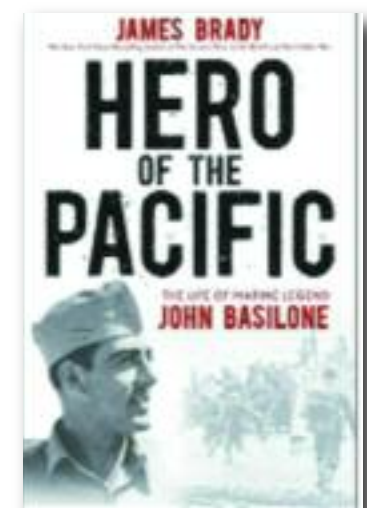
BOB BRUCE/NEW JERSEY STAR-LEDGER

After earning the Medal of Honor on Guadalcanal, Sgt. John Basilone (left) reunited in 1944 with his brother George, also a marine stationed in the Pacific.

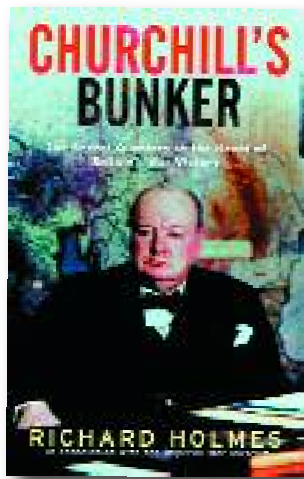
is that the essence of Basilone's legendary life is real. Manila John's extraordinary heroism on that October night was genuine. He was painfully conflicted about returning home and promoting war bond sales while his buddies remained in the Pacific. But as Brady observes, the American people "recognized [Basilone] for the real thing, and when he spoke and cracked that lopsided Italian smile, the crowd understood that this wasn't just a practiced performer. This was a genuine American legend..." Basilone insisted on returning to combat, a decision that cost him his life. On Iwo Jima, he demonstrated the same extraordinary professionalism and valor he displayed on Guadalcanal. But Brady's Basilone is not a plaster saint: he exhibited large appetites for liquor, gambling, and women. The most poignant sections of the book tell the story of Basilone finding and marrying his equally remarkable love match—marine Sgt. Lena Riggi. Despite their union's brevity, she never married again.

However, when Brady moves the focus from Basilone to the larger picture, he perpetuates around a score or so of factual errors. Perhaps most

inexplicable are his confused statements about the weight of the Browning machine gun Basilone personally wielded to famous effect on Guadalcanal. He also restates the now-discredited legend that Basilone was killed by mortar fire. But overall, this book's importance is best summed up by Brady's conclusion: Basilone has been ill served by those who invented fanciful embellishments about his life rather than letting the facts speak for themselves. —Richard Frank



BOOK BRIEFS



Churchill's Bunker

By Richard Holmes. 256 pp. Yale University Press, 2010. \$27.50. The Führerbunker is infamous, but the storage basement situated between Parliament and 10 Downing Street housed Churchill and his planners in total secrecy as they fended off near-certain defeat during the London Blitz. Fresh research, including new eyewitness accounts, makes it a must-read.

In the Footsteps of the Band of Brothers: A Return to Easy Company's Battlefields with Sgt. Forrest Guth

By Wilson A. Heefner. 392 pp. University of Missouri, 2010. \$34.95. Best-selling author joins Easy Company veteran to revisit the 101st Airborne's training camps in England and their bloody continental battlefields, filling in history and back stories for each site.

Dogface Soldier: The Life of General Lucian K. Truscott, Jr.

By Larry Alexander. 336 pp. NAL, 2010. \$24.95. One of the war's finest combat generals, Truscott remade Third Division into a powerhouse while earning the respect of officers and GIs alike, then became a key post-war figure in divided Germany—first as military governor, then CIA representative.

Travels in the Third Reich 1933–1945: Foreign Authors Report from Germany

Edited by Oliver Lubrich. 336 pp. University of Chicago Press, 2010. \$30. Three dozen writers including William Shirer, Virginia Woolf, Samuel Beckett, W.E.B. DuBois, Howard K. Smith, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Jean Genet chronicle their sometimes naïve, often acute impressions of Nazidom.

No Need to Die: American Flyers in RAF Bomber Command

By Gordon Thorburn. 256 pp. Zenith Press, 2010. \$34.95. Crisply follows 21 Yank volunteers, 15 of whom died in action.

Fire from the Sky: Surviving the Kamikaze Threat

By Robert C. Stern. 400 pp. Naval Institute Press, 2010. \$49.95. Grittily detailed and intelligently argued as it thoroughly reopens the kamikaze discussion, including its cultural place in Japanese history.

Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews

By Peter Longerich. 608 pp. Oxford University Press, 2010. \$34.95. Revised and updated, this seminal, respected account, first published in 1998 in Europe, indelibly underlines how anti-Semitism was central to the overall Nazi project, not simply a correlative prejudice or a distraction for the masses.

Demobbed: Coming Home After the Second World War

By Alan Allport. 288 pp. Yale University Press, 2010. \$38. What exactly happened when war-weary British vets finally returned to their exhausted, impoverished country? Here, in dark, gripping detail, are some answers.

Surviving the Reich: The World War II Saga of a Jewish-American GI

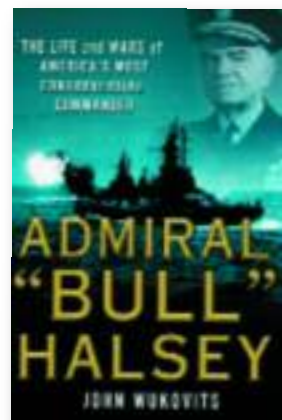
By Ivan Goldstein. 240 pp. Zenith Press, 2010. \$26. His battered tank stands as a monument in Bastogne's McAuliffe town square; he was captured, interrogated, and ordered executed, but luck helped him live until liberation.

Spectator in Hell: A British Soldier's Story of Imprisonment in Auschwitz

By Colin Rushton. 272 pp. Pelican, 2010. \$18.95. Recounts the amazing story (aired in the BBC's *Auschwitz: The Forgotten Witness*) of Arthur Dodd, Royal Army Service Corps volunteer, taken prisoner in 1942 and sent to Auschwitz, where he survived 14 months while engaging in sabotage and helping partisans and Jews.

Admiral "Bull" Halsey: The Life and Wars of America's Most Controversial Commander

By John Wukovits. 304 pp. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. \$27. Leading Pacific War historian tackles the complex enigma, giving the impetuous, aggressive commander beloved by press and public full props for early leadership. But he explains judiciously that by 1944, the war—and its demands on commanders—had changed drastically, leaving Halsey "blinded by his obsession to engage enemy carriers." —Gene Santoro



[VIDEO GAME BRIEF]

Silent Hunter 5: BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

Silent Hunter 5 is the latest entry in the acclaimed submarine series, and debuts an ambitious feature: the ability to control a German sub from the captain's view.

As with other games in the series, hunting and battling enemy ships is fun and exciting. You can stealthily take on vessels with your deck gun or torpedoes, then dive when their destroyers show up. Unfortunately, as a whole *Silent Hunter 5* feels hastily slapped together. For example, sprinting around the ship to issue orders, particularly in a hectic combat situation, gets tiresome. Where are the voice tubes of real U-boats?

Also, the game's digital rights management copy protection requires players to



stay online to ensure they are using a legal copy, so those without trusty, high speed Internet connections are not advised to buy this game. Further, if the game's servers go down, it will be unplayable. You also can't resell the game once it's installed.

The game has too many bugs for me to

recommend it, but hopefully other game makers will build off its ambitious goals and fix its weaknesses. —Ryan Burke

For the full review, visit WorldWarII.com

WWII Rating (out of five stars):

★★★

Silent Hunter 5: Battle of the Atlantic

Released 2010
 Rated: 'T' for Teens
 Genre: WWII-era Submarine Simulation
 Publisher: Ubisoft
 Developer: Ubisoft Romania
 MSRP: \$49.99
 Format: PC/Windows
 Modes: Single player, four-person versus/co-op multiplayer

[MODEL KIT]

Japanese Type 97 Chi-Ha Tank

The Type 97 was Japan's standard medium tank during World War II. It first saw action against Russian forces at Nomonhan in 1939, and continued service throughout the war. When the Type 97 found itself outclassed by Allied tanks later in the war; it became more often deployed in bunker and pillbox fortifications rather than as a field tank.

Fine Molds' 1/35-scale kit represents the early version Type 97 Chi-Ha with additional front and turret armor and a 57mm cannon. A redesigned version of the Type 97, equipped with a new turret and high-velocity 47mm cannon was introduced in 1943.

The project follows the usual modeling path, instructing modelers to begin with the wheels, then the suspension, and working up to the hull and turret. Kit highlights include basic engine and air-duct detail, interior and exterior hatch details, and an outstanding set of photo-etched muffler covers. Modelers can choose markings for vehicles stationed in Manchuria, Saipan, or



RICK LAWLER

Jeju Island, Korea.

Issues of fit occurred while mating the upper and lower hulls; it appears that the top is a couple of millimeters too short. The fix was fairly simple: adding a small strip of Evergreen styrene to the front hull will bridge the gap. Also, the fit of the wheels are not as snug as one would expect, which can lead to alignment issues with the suspension. The kit-supplied vinyl tracks offer adequate detail, but do not provide for the accurate sag so often seen in period photographs.

Overall, the Fine Molds Type 97 Chi-Ha is a nice, basic kit that makes for a perfect weekend project. —Rick Lawler

WWII Rating (out of five stars):

Japanese Type 97 Chi-Ha Medium Tank
Released 2009

Overall ★★★
Ease of Construction ★★★★★
Accuracy and Details ★★★

Maker/Kit Number:
Fine Molds FM27

MSRP: \$59

[DVD BRIEFS]

Churchill's Deadly Decision

Time: 60 minutes. Color/B&W. \$24.99.

This episode of the PBS series *Secrets of the Dead*, which aired in late spring, chronicles what some French people still refer to as "our Pearl Harbor"—the bombing of the French fleet by the British. After June 1940, Britain was the lone major power still fighting the Axis and facing, with its virtually unarmed forces salvaged from Dunkirk, a very likely German invasion. In that dire setting, all Churchill & Co. had by way of insurance that the French fleet—then one of the world's largest—



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

This Type 97 was caught on a sandbar and destroyed during combat on Guadalcanal.

would not fall into German hands was the pledge of the new Vichy government, which they judged a weak reed to rest such desperately pressing hopes upon. Via judicious but unsparing revisiting of the historical record, this program examines what some still call a war crime though others, including most Brits and Americans, see as necessary ruthlessness in a struggle for survival. Decide for yourself.

Everyman's War

Time: 104 minutes. Color. \$24.99.

This copped the 2009 GI Film Festival award for Best Narrative Feature, with reason. Director Thad Smith revisits the lesser-known tale of the 94th Infantry Division's role in the Battle of the Bulge, anchoring his 104-minute movie with his father, Staff Sgt. Don Smith (Cole Carson). Unarmed and wounded after the famed "Ghost Division" overran his unit's isolated position, Smith made his way under enemy fire back to the command post to warn of the imminent, unsuspected danger. That won him the Croix de Guerre and a Purple Heart. The non-battle scenes can smack of cliché. But once the fighting starts, the vivid you-are-there surround sound and disorienting visuals create a strong and very effective presentation. Now available on DVD. —Gene Santoro

[ON THE TUBE]

The World at War

Time: 22 hours, 37 minutes. B&W.

This summer on the Military History Channel

The classic documentary, narrated by Laurence Olivier, has been revived and digitally remastered nearly four decades after its original broadcast. Its breathtaking, brilliantly edited video footage (drawn from the newsreels, propaganda, home movies, and archives

of 11 countries) set a high bar for the documentaries that followed. With beautifully written, carefully researched narration, *The World at War* offers a peerless, cogent presentation tracing the twists and turns of World War II's unprecedented global reach, noting virtually all its political, social, and geographical nuances and tangles. Epic in its reach and tone, yet remarkably

specific in its data, this acute, insightful, award-winning series runs for 22-plus hours. Besides recurrent broadcasts on the Military History Channel this summer, the full series is available as a Collector's Edition DVD (\$49.99); the 11 disc set adds 8 hours of bonus footage, as well as a gallery of photos from the Imperial War Museum. —Gene Santoro