

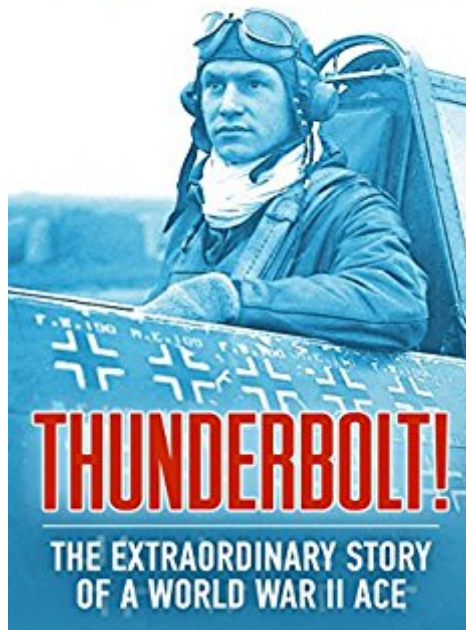


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Thunderbolt!: The Extraordinary Story Of A World War II Ace

ROBERT S. JOHNSON WITH MARTIN CAIDIN



Synopsis

Thunderbolt!, first published in 1958, is the memoir of Robert S. Johnson, one of the leading fighter pilot aces of the U.S. Army Air Force in World War II. Flying the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt, Johnson is credited with 28 enemy kills, and was the first pilot in the European theater to surpass Eddie Rickenbacker's World War I tally of 26 enemy planes destroyed. The book puts the reader squarely in the cockpit of the Thunderbolt as Johnson describes his many missions, encounters with German pilots, and close-calls, and remains a classic account of wartime aviation.

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Customer Reviews

I have read a number of similar books on WW2 pilots exploits & this one is the first that I have rated as 5 stars. An excellent description of a young boy whose first introduction to aircraft inspired to become an airman. When war began many young men who had been able to accumulate many hours of flying seemed to have an distinct advantage for the feel of an aircraft in flight. All trainee pilots were trained methodically almost robotic like to ensure that their plane was Ok to fly by routine examination of their instrument panel both before take off & their eventual return to a safe

touchdown. The young men with pre war flying experience seemed to have that extra feel for their aircraft in flight. In this book you are introduced to the exhilaration & anticipation of the pilot flying into battle for the 1st time & each flight thereafter. You feel the increase of his confidence in his own skill the longer he continues to fly. Description of flying tactics especially during escort duties & then the ultimate dogfights are excellently depicted. The sadness at the loss of fellow pilots within the squadron & the admiration for the pilots of flying the larger bomber aircraft stoically flew through unbelievable flak & fighter attacks & not having the evasive capability of a P-47. Once again the one word that relates to all the books I have read is "luck" & the part it played in allowing some to return home, this was graphically described in this book in an incident that you will recognise during your read. A fine tribute to a great airman & human being. T.Breasley

If you like the military history of WW2, if you like flying, if you like aerial dogfights, you will love this book. It is very well written and hard to put down. When aerial dogfights are described you feel like you are in the cockpit.

This was an excellent book when I first read it twenty years ago. It is an excellent book today and worthy of a five star rating. Strongly recommended, one of the very best both in content and presentation. Read it, you will enjoy Thunderbolt.

I first read this book back about 1960 as a teenager and loved it. I just re-read it - and it was great! This is a well written description of a WW II fighter ace - from childhood to ace. It is well written and puts you in the time and place. I felt like I was flying upside down myself a couple of times. If you don't know some of the terminology for various airplane maneuvers you may find yourself having to look up some words. That actually made the book more interesting. A great read for anyone with interest in WW II fighter aces and the role of the Thunderbolt!

A really gifted pilot paired with terrific war plane. If you are an aviation buff, you will really enjoy it. I am probably prejudiced because way back when, I had the opportunity to spend time in Lawton/Ft. Still.

As a kid, in an era when I was already dog-eared my copy of Ray Wagner's "American Combat Planes" and other titles indispensable to a young aviation history enthusiast, I read this book in a borrowed paperback. I recently discovered the Kindle edition as an accident and decided to relive this slice of my early education. Briefly as to the Kindle-ization of the original: This version is a fairly

good transcription, with only a few of the typos, mainly hyphenation issues, that seem to be part of the genre. They won't be in your way. The text is quite clean overall. Now as to the book itself: I notice things now that I didn't see thirty-five years ago. This is clearly a book from a far more innocent time, laced with comic-book prose, a straightforward and automatic patriotism, lots of exclamation points, and a chirpy let's-go-get-em enthusiasm for tearing into huge formations of enemy fighters piloted by confident veterans. A mission missed by dint of a mechanical problem brings not secret relief but great disappointment, as if Johnson were the school's star quarterback hoping to shine on homecoming night; and friends who go down in action elicit a gosh-darn-it curse and a gritted-teeth resolution to get the better of Jerry next time. Martin Caidin, the hired-gun wordsmith, was a competent author of many books; I have to think he was transcribing Johnson's notes and perhaps verbal stories as faithfully as he could. It really was a more innocent time, after all. But Johnson really flew the missions, he really did bring back a Thunderbolt absolutely shot to hell, his bloody face swollen by spraying hydraulic fluid, and he really did go right back in to become an ace five times over and beyond -- and all this in an early period of the war, when the USAAF wasn't necessarily winning. Johnson was one of the pioneers of the 8th Air Force fighter presence in England, when the Thunderbolt was untried, numbers were pathetically small, and tactics were trial-and-error; in fact the entire Air Force was green, overconfident, and vulnerable -- and losses were high. His book may read like Captain America, but his physical courage, moral dedication, and sustained combat record are facts. He puts us in mind of another of Martin Caidin's "customers," the Japanese ace Saburo Sakai: In both cases, the written story may or may not be freighted with purple prose and artistic license, but we are certainly reading history, not fiction. What's more, between the exclamation points, the man and the story ring true. Some reviewers may be put off by Johnson's game-day enthusiasm for deadly combat, but there is surely no such thing as a successful fighter pilot who isn't stupendously aggressive, hyper-confident, and activated by a superhuman competitive instinct. If anything, Johnson comes across as a modest and humble example of the breed, giving every possible credit to his leaders, his teammates, and, frankly, to God. As to technical details, his descriptions of the Thunderbolt's strengths and weaknesses, of how to survive and win against enemy airplanes having wholly different characteristics, are entirely sensible and plausible, not gratuitous. There is more than enough detail to assure the enthusiast that these were real combats, flown this way. If the reader is not a student of military aviation, the story is still worthwhile; but if he is, it is still better.

P-47 Thunderbolts. I wish now I'd asked dad more about them and his time flying out of England in

one. This is such a great book, wished I'd read it before dad took his final flight (like a homesick angel)

One of the best book I have read in a long time. You feel as if you are in the cockpit. Really captures the emotion of what these men felt. All of them true heroes. God bless.

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