
FLIGHT DECK III

A Pictorial Essay of a Day in the Life of an Airdale

WITH FIRST-PERSON COMMENTS BY EDWARD ATKINS

Since I am and was, literally, the only one involved in the creation of all aspects of this book, other than the fine work done by Kathleen Dyson designing its text-pages, I alone am responsible for any and all errors and gaffs such as misapplying words (“Brevity is the sole of wit” instead of “Brevity is the soul of wit”; a “grate injustice” instead of a “great injustice”, etc.). Depending as I do on a magnifying glass makes difficult my picking up these foolish phonic errors. Also, it’s an oxymoron to say a proofreading author: the book would never be completed. That being said, I hope and trust that this necessarily one-man volume will nevertheless be of beneficial effect to one and all. Now let’s see how it goes.

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ISBN 9780971013438

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Ship-n-Planes Publishing Company
13705 Lakewood Court
Rockville, MD 20850

Printed in the United States of America

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PROLOGUE

It's an axiom that with increased learning there's a commensurate increase in (earned) self-esteem. There then follows the axiom that what with earned self-esteem there is less (need to) bullying (where the contemptible scourge of bullying is the last refuge of the coward. [Not all cowards are bullies but all bullies are cowards. Who has ever heard of someone who has earned self-esteem being anti-social?]) Yes, those who have respect for others are those who have the self-respect derived from knowing the joy of learning.

How then to engender and encourage this joy of learning? This joy of meeting and overcoming a legitimate challenge? It's been my firm conviction that lacking a genuine, abiding interest in a subject there will be little real, useful learning and all else will be but moot. The paraphernalia of education will be essentially for naught and good money will be thrown after bad money.

Therefore, how stimulate this genuine interest? This thirst for knowledge? One way would be to instill in the thought-processes the importance of a given subject. In my personal case I was "consumed" with the beauty and utter utility and usefulness of electronic equipment. For others it will be something else that catches and stimulates one's imagination. The "trick" here is to spread this exhilaration into many different paths (don't be a "Johnny one-

note"). With the above in mind I have assembled mini-discussions of many and diverse subjects with a view of striking a spark in the consciousness of the reader that will blossom into full-blown academics and a thirst for knowledge. [Athletes don't get a pass here. As a matter of fact, their work-ethic gives them a leg-up in this endeavor.] It would be a veritable victory if a teacher could inspire a fascination in students in the subject at hand. To me that is the sine qua non, or a reasonable facsimile of, what a teacher should provide. Perhaps each class of instruction should begin with a brief but hard-hitting resume of the attributes of a given subject thus giving the student the "justification" for expending one's efforts on the road to knowledge. It would be, it should be, a brief but hard-hitting "pep-talk". Hopefully the following "resumes" will be the impetus for this (joyful) journey and the initial push to a satisfying and useful life (in engineering, overcoming inertia and friction represent a real barrier but once in motion much less energy is required to maintain that motion. I believe the same applies to learning). With this, let's roll up our sleeves and begin (after pointing out that this book, as well as Volumes 1 and 2, is dedicated to those brave men of the U.S. Navy who faced up to the furies of the enemy; why then cannot you show some bravery yourself in facing up to the challenges of acquiring academic knowledge that will benefit not only you but also society?).

PREFACE

In the large scheme of things, these three volumes of the “Flight Deck” trilogy concern a very small part of this country’s military heritage. The point to be made is that it is the sum total of events that make up our common national heritage. And it is this heritage that should not be left to the fragility of an uninterested memory. To allow our common heritage to languish and then disappear in the the dustbin of unattended history is to do harm to that which binds us together as a great nation. Thus it shall be that this three-volume trilogy will do its minuscule bit to prevent part of our mutual heritage to all but perish from our mutual consciousness. This I believe would a sad situation for a proud country. Hopefully these three volumes will add to our mutual and beneficial edification. And further, we should cherish that which was good while trying to understand that which was demonstrably bad. (Here we have an intellectual exercise to differentiate the good from the bad as well as mediate what went on in between.) Finally, let’s diligently try to conserve that “good” that preceded us. These find their expressions in such traditional examples such as George Washington’s guiding hand and declining the authoritarian’s mantel, Thomas Jefferson’s eloquent call for freedom in the Declaration of Independence, James Madison’s grand design of the U.S. Constitution, Thomas Paine’s inspiring “give me liberty or give me death”, Alexander Hamilton’s promotion of capital creation and

the means of production (where Jefferson was a proponent of agrarianism), or Benjamin Franklin’s espousal of common sense found in his Almanac. These are but some highlights examples of the start of the heritage of our nation that has become the fulfillment of many of the best of ideals. We are patriots all who contribute to the continuing success of this grand country “from sea to shining sea”. (In my own personal ancestry I’m proud of having as my great grandfather Paul Moody who, history has it, was the first person in this country to develop and integrate a factory with the machines of production to produce cotton fabrics. He was, by all accounts, the instigator of the industrial revolution in this country. (Little wonder that I am captivated by the operation of a factory floor full of automatic machine tools. Paul Moody has been enshrined in Lowell, Massachusetts, the site of his endeavors. Further along, my grandfather Edward Atkins was one of the first in the field of the nascent automobile industry by forming an electric car business. Next, my father Paul Moody Atkins was a Phi Beta Kappa from Yale and earned a PhD in economics from the University of Chicago while my mother, born in France (Charmonix and Paris), earned a Masters Degree from the University of Syracuse. Moving along, did I “drop the ball”? I sadly bow my head in the affirmation, especially since my father told me at age twelve that I should do twice as much as anyone else. Why,

he didn't say.) We owe a great deal of debt to people of stature that form an important part of our heritage.

Our heritage, let us honor, cherish and conserve that which is good as so deemed over time and let us learn from that which is not. Surely it is the heredity of this country of which we can be proud that binds us together "as one nation, under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all". Our heredity should help us define that which is good and beneficial while also giving us a useful guide and vision of the future. While we cannot expunge the past, we can certainly learn from it. (To paraphrase, those who forget the past are doomed to relive it.) A learned society is the bedrock of the solid society. It must be asked, "How can a democracy long last bereft of a citizenry that is knowledgeable?" Such a democracy fraught with ineptitude will certainly not flourish as is our want for

our heirs. Would that everyone were proud of our nation's heritage. This respect for our heritage encourages us to strive for the best (where the striving and learning is an affirmation of life writ large.) To reiterate, since no democracy will long survive bereft of that solid foundation of an informed citizenry, and since informed choice depends on valid knowledge, I will attempt to "salt" this volume with the concept that to learn is to prosper and enjoy, and in some cases to be overjoyed. This might be a shock to those who believe that the only real enjoyment is to be found primarily in the realm of the physical senses. However, the nonpareil of a satisfactorily functional society is the in the world of our mental attributes. Heritage and learning, learning and heritage, two of the pillars that made this country great. Though very, very small, this trilogy addresses part of our heritage in pictures that represent a very restricted segment of that heritage.

INTRODUCTION

The order of presentation of the pictures of this third volume is semi-random so as to presumably generate a sense of continuing curiosity as to what follows and a feeling of alertness not found so much as when the material is ordered into chapters as was done in volumes one and two (which was necessary to establish the discrete functions occurring on an active flight deck). This curiosity will hopefully enhance one's interest, the bedrock of the will to learn, the *raison d'être* of these volumes. I've been told that these three volumes cover a subject that is new to 99 out of 100 readers. If "newness" is a synonym for "interest" then "newness" will be a powerful stimulus in the generating the desire to learn. If I were to paraphrase the purpose of this trilogy, it would be "To Learn". To learn is to live; not to learn is to

The pictures of these three volumes are basically of three types: photographic, soft-edged, and "painted". To my way of thinking, all are attractive in their own right and deserve equal time for perusal and also cogitation. While the text is useful for understanding the contents of a picture, it is to the readers' benefit to "place themselves in the picture", immersing themselves both emotionally and intellectually in the action or inaction. In this way one will gain a fuller appreciation of that moment in time seen in the picture. For instance, it's not just an aircraft ready to launch, but it's also the

deafening roar of the full-powered engine as its propeller lashes the air into a frenzy of overpowering wind-blasts as the aircraft vibrates "straining at its leash". Mix all those elements together at one time and we have an intellectual picture of what's happening. Now add the varying range of emotions involved in this moment in time and we have a clearer but limited understanding of what the picture should tell us. The question arises: we see, but do we comprehend? Perhaps, yet only partially at best. They say that a picture is worth a thousand words.. Are even a thousand sufficient necessarily? (Parenthetically, with 1170 pictures in these three volumes we have 1,170,000 words with which to contend, plus another 450,000 words of text. Let's be frank though, it's not the number of words brought to the table but the attitude that the reader brings. Furthermore, this approach to looking at pictures should apply to any worthwhile pictures.) Sometimes the details of a picture are of most interest, but usually it's the entire presentation bereft of the details that is the most satisfying and edifying. One reason for this is that each picture can represent a story within a story within a story. Thus should we savor a picture rather than just regard a picture, especially if they portray a dynamic situation. Yet, who cares about the pictures in these volumes? Those who respect our country's most crucial, and critical, history, that's who. Is that you and you and you?

Well, let's consider why anyone should care about these pictures in these three volumes. First, following this section will be a recounting of the wartime exploits of one of our carriers, the U.S.S. Lexington (chosen partly because it was the site of many of the pictures in these volumes, as taken by the photographer Captain Steichen and his crew).* The Lexington was named after one of the first military encounters in behalf of the creation of this country during Revolutionary times. Still, this begs the question as to why these volumes would attract anyone beyond their obvious historic content. For one thing, they are new to most everyone which makes them of immediate interest which interest in turn kindles the desire to LEARN. I'm not going to proselytize the merits of knowing the history of WWII. This should be self-evident to all but the self-absorbed. However, I will say that it's thought to be important to convey to as many people as possible the huge ongoing effort involving several million combatants over the expansive Pacific Ocean. And

whose events changed the world irreversibly. These pictures, and the text, might throw a new light, a new perspective, on this part of our nation's history. Being new it will presumably be interesting which interest will stimulate learning, the Rosetta Stone of living. (Not the least of reasons for the impetus to learn is that a knowledgeable society is a requirement for the upgrade that the tenuousness of a democracy always needs. It is this lack of appreciation, and the attendant lack of interest, in the world around us that is disturbing. How can we take for granted the wealth of interesting things that surround us daily? In a way this lack of interest is a travesty on life itself. This statement should be a wake-up call for those who take everything for granted. Why fritter away your time in trivial pursuits? And your intelligent enough to know what they are. If these books can do one thing, it is hoped that they will elicit and arouse a true sense of interest in the world around them leading to a real desire to learn. If this comes to pass, it will certainly be a happy outcome.

*The U.S.S. Lexington (CV-16) was one of thirteen Essex-class carriers to participate actively in WWII. Its record of action will be very briefly enumerated here to provide a sense of its contribution to the arduous task of rolling back the tide of enemy encroachment on a freedom-loving world in the Pacific arena. The Lexington arrived at Pearl Harbor on August 8, 1943. The dates of enemy action at various locations now follow: September 18, 1943 (Tarawa), October 5-6, 1943 (Wake Island), November 19, 1943 (Tarawa-Makin), December 4, 1943 (Kwajalein). On December 4, the Lexington was struck by a Japanese air-launched torpedo. It returned to Pearl Harbor for temporary repairs followed by permanent repairs at Bremerton, WA. It returned to action on March 18, 1944 (Mille-Wotje), then March 30, 1944 (Palau), April 1, 1944 (Woleai), April 21-25, 1944 (Hollandia), April 28-30, 1944 (Truk, the Japanese Pearl Harbor), May 1, 1944 (Pomape), June 11-30, 1944 in an ongoing large engagement at Saipan-Tinian), June 19-29, 1944 (Japanese Fleet was trying to deny these islands from the U.S. because the B-29 bombers could reach Japan from there), June 25, 1944 (Guam, adjacent to Saipan-Tinian), June 26, 1944 (Pagan), July 2-5, 1944 (Guam again), July 14, 1944 to November 8, 1944 (Central/Western Pacific), July 18-24, 1944 (Guam), July 26-27, 1944 (Palau), August 5, 1944 (Bonin Islands), September 6-7, 1944 (Palau), September 9, 1944 (Mindanao/Philippines), September 12, 1944 (Cebu-Lette/Philippines), September 12-18 (Palau), September 22-23, 1944 (Luzon/Philippines), October 10, 1944 (Nansei Shoto), October 13-14, 1944 (Formosa (Taiwan)), October 24-25, 1944 (Japanese Fleet) November 5-8, 1944

(Manila/Philippines). On November 4, 1944 the Lexington sustained a hit on the island superstructure by a Kamikaze suicide plane and soon after retired to Ulithi Atoll for repairs. December 11, 1944-January 6, 1945 (Western Pacific). December 14-17, 1944 (Luzon/Philippines), January 3-5, 1945 (Formosa (Taiwan)), January 6-7, 1945 (Luzon-Manila/Philippines), January 9, 1945 (Formosa), January 12, 1945 (Indo-China (Vietnam)), January 15, 1945 (Pescadore Islands), January 16, 1945 (Hong Kong), January 21, 1945 (Formosa), January 23, 1945 (Nansei Shoto) February 10, 1945-March 4, 1945 (Western Pacific) February 16-17, 1945 (Tokyo), February 19, 1945 (Iwo Jima), February 21-22, 1945 (Iwo Jima), February 25, 1945 (Tokyo), March 1, 1945 (Nansei Shoto). On March 2, 1945 Lexington returned to Ulithi on its way to the Bremerton Naval Shipyard for routine overhaul. June 13, 1945 (Iwo Jima/Philippines & Wake Island), June 26, 1945 (San Pedro Bay/Philippines), July 19, 1945 (Tokyo), July 15, 1945 (Kamaishi/Japan & Hokkaido/Japan), July 16, 1945 (Tokyo), July 18, 1945 (Yokosuka/Japan), July 24, 1945 (Kobe/Japan & Kure Naval Base/Japan), July 28, 1945 (Kure Naval Base & Nagoya/Japan), August 9, 1945 (Honshu/Japan), August 13, 1945 (Tokyo), August 14, 1945 (Hyakurigahara/Japan), August 15, 1945 (Japan surrenders — at long last!)

The other carriers had similar “resumes” reflecting that long and arduous period in our nation’s history. This was history spelled with a capital “H”. The U.S.S. Lexington (CV-16) now is a museum ship (Corpus Christi, TX) as are the U.S.S. Intrepid (CV-10) in New York City, the U.S.S. Yorktown (CV-11) in Charleston, SC and the U.S.S. Hornet (CV-12) located in the San Francisco Bay area. The Lexington was kept in service the longest and so is the most modern of the four carriers. However, all of them had received major renovations after the war to such an extent that I would not feel “at home” on any of them. First, the flight deck was modified such that aircraft could be launched and landed at the same time by means of an angled deck at 12 degrees (the Antietam was the first U.S. ship to receive this modification). Then the deck edge elevator was moved to accommodate this change. Next, all the guns of all calibers were removed because of their ineffectiveness in the age of guided missiles. This change radically changed the island superstructure configuration, The interior of the pilothouse was widened and the radar/communication arrays in the superstructure were all but eliminated (also because of technological advances and tactical capabilities of the computer-driven AEGIS system. All interior spaces were upgraded to such an extent that I wouldn’t recognize anything. The living spaces were “plush” comparatively speaking since fewer personnel were on board. Yes, the Lexington is a different ship from the WWII Essex-class carriers and their memory will only be satisfactorily retained through pictures such as provided in these three volumes. This is why I spent time and effort at the National Archives to gather part of our for all posterity. (the people at the Archives were all very helpful and courteous, for sure). One intense year of my life was spent on the “Flight Deck” and I wanted to retain those memories. While no one else could care about these images as I do, if they care even a little, that will be well and history will be served.