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TALES OF WAR PILOT (Smithsonian History Of Aviation And Spaceflight)



Synopsis

FROM ONE OF THE NATION'S FIRST ROTOR PILOTS, A BLAZING ACCOUNT OF HIS MOST TOP SECRET, DANGEROUS MISSIONS Richard Kirkland would never have imagined that anything could compare to tangling with Zeros in life-and-death dogfights over the South Pacific—but that was before he traded his fighter-pilot wings for rotors. It was a move he never regretted, and the riveting experiences he chronicles in *War Pilot* provide ample reason why. From the first primitive Sikorsky and the sophisticated choppers of Vietnam to flying medevac choppers and saving countless soldiers from certain death in Korea, Kirkland's firsthand accounts of pilots under fire provide a gripping portrait of not just one American hero, but the many courageous others with whom he flew. . . . --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

Lieutenant Richard C. Kirkland flew Lockheed P-38 Lightnings in New Guinea during World War II and Sikorsky rescue helicopters in Korea. In the course of both wars he met celebrities, war heroes and nuclear scientists, as well as a MASH doctor named Hawkeye, whose antics would later be related in a book, film, and television show. *Tales of a War Pilot* is not a structured chronology. Kirkland just relates the stories he likes to tell. Four of the book's 11 chapters are narratives gleaned from other fliers, such as a downed fighter pilot who survived in the New Guinea jungles that were teeming with malaria and headhunters...*Tales of a War Pilot* is recommended for both the aviation

enthusiast and anyone interested in the early days of the Cold War -- Kevin Hymel, Military History, October, 1999 Richard C. Kirkland admits that he never would have written his military service memoirs if one of his sons hadn't talked him into it. His book, *Tales of a War Pilot*, enriches the genre of military literature. As a fighter pilot in the South Pacific during World War II, Kirkland flew Lightning P-38s against the vaunted Japanese Zero. He also escorted heavy bombers, chalking up 103 missions... For sheer excitement, *Tales of a War Pilot* is unbeatable. -- Associated Press; Norman N. Brown, April 12, 1999

Born in 1923, Richard was raised in a rural community in California during the Great Depression. At the outbreak of WWII he joined the Army Air Corps and served in the famous "Flying Knights" Fighter Squadron with Major Dick Bong, America's all time ace of aces. Lt. Kirkland flew 103 combat missions in P-38 and P-47 fighters dogfighting Japanese Zeros, attacking enemy installations, ships, and flying escort for bombers. After WWII, Lt. Kirkland was assigned to a top secret project of testing atomic bombs in the Marshall Islands. During the Korean War, Captain Kirkland traded his wings for rotors and flew 69 helicopter missions rescuing downed pilots from behind enemy lines and snatching wounded soldiers from the battlefield at the 8055 MASH, home of the infamous "Hawkeye." Major Kirkland was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, five Air Medals, the Air Force Commendation Medal and both the U.S. and Korean Presidential citations for his service in WWII and the Korean War. Richard sketched and painted his surroundings as a boy in California, writing short stories to match his artwork. During his military service he continued, sketching and painting his surroundings, capturing history as it occurred. He used his art for inspiration in his writing. He has written and published numerous magazine short stories and articles, and four books about his experiences. His last book "*Wide Place in the Road*," is historic fiction, based on true historic incidents with real characters that Richard knew and associated with during the span of the book from the Great Depression through WWII. Richard is very active at 89 and speaks regularly at various civic, social, and historic societies. He has been a featured speaker at the National Press Club in Washington D.C., and was interviewed on both the American and Canadian History Channels. He and his wife Maria, who is also an artist, have nine children, sixteen grandchildren and one great grandson. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Richard takes you through his life during WWII right through Korea. His stories will have you wanting to keep reading. I got a lot of great laugh through out the book but one of the best was as he is getting ready to bail out of his aircraft and he has the thought "When was the last time I

checked my survival kit" I can tell you from first hand knowledge that most pilots or aircrewman in general don't give their survival gear a second thought until it comes time when they might need. You see I was a Parachute Rigger while in the Navy. One of my duties was seeing that those Aircrew had the equipment they needed when and if the time came. But as Richard can tell you it was up to them to be sure it was ready on a daily basis.

This is one of the best books I have read in a long time. Not only for the adventures of the author but also his insights when meeting other famous folks such as Charles Lindbergh and Richard Bong.

Our Greatest Generation, thank these men and women everyday for your freedom.

Good product good seller

The billing for this book is very misleading especially the Smithsonian History of Aviation Series title. It is historical fiction and not truly a memoir or a personal account. I don't doubt that the piece is generally accurate. Once fiction is injected, however, the reader never knows what is true and what is not. Nothing is mentioned in the description here or on the book jacket that this is the case. I wish I had my money back.

The first section of the book where the author flies P-38's is pretty interesting. The rest of the book is filled with stories about other people. The few chapters that deal with the author are just boring and pointless. There just isn't enough material about the author to fill a book.

This story is very interesting and gives a lot of insight on the conduct of the air war in the Pacific in WWII. The author, Richard C. Kirkland, was a pilot very early in his life, age 20 or around that age. He is assigned to some very noteworthy units, one the famous Black Sheep Squadron where he was acquainted with Major Richard Bong, the noted ace. He was also fortunate to fly with Lindbergh, the Lone Eagle who first flew the Atlantic alone. He flew the P-38 and other aircraft and was a very good pilot apparently. The story is not strictly his however, he tells a couple of tales about pilots that he has heard about who have survived stressful situations. They are all interesting, but they are not his story. After WWII he serves in the newly formed Air Force and he is picked to transition into helicopters and this is a fine story of his exploits as one of the first chopper pilots in Korea and one

of the first to airlift casualties from battle in a helicopter. This part of his book is superb. I gave this three stars because his tales of WWII in some instances seem contrived. Maybe it is just that he has waited too long to write this, and he does not remember clearly what he writes about. All in all it is a great read of air combat from first hand experience.

I purchased this book out of curiosity as the author's son is a life long friend and recently told me about it. I first purchased a gift copy, to be sent to my father who served with Dick Kirkland, SR. at Stead AFB in the late 50's & early 60's. It was during this time that Dick Jr. and I became friends. Despite a life long friendship with the author's son I never knew of his father's historical adventures until we began discussing this book. I purchased my own copy after my father had read his and highly recommended it. I had no preconceptions when I began reading it, but I must admit I was a bit skeptical about a "first full length effort" at the author's stage of life. I needn't have been. It was an exciting read, very comfortable in its pace with good character development and surprising content. I thoroughly enjoyed the book and would highly recommend it to any reader interested in the military during the 40's & 50's or, for that matter, practically anyone who enjoys a good historical tale, spiced up with interesting characters and personal experience!

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