



Wings of Gold: The U.S. Naval Air Campaign in World War II

Gerald Astor

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From critically acclaimed military historian Gerald Astor comes *Wings of Gold*, the first account of how the airplane transformed the U.S. Navy and paved the way to victory in the Pacific in World War II. Astor tracks that fateful journey from its humble beginnings in 1910 when Eugene Ely flew the very first plane off the deck of a U.S. Navy ship to the unprecedented air combat missions that helped defeat the Japanese.

Few naval aviators in World War II realized that when they earned their wings of gold they were about to become test pilots for a whole new kind of combat. In their own words, these courageous fliers describe the life-and-death air battles that defined the revolution in naval strategy that rose from the ashes of Pearl Harbor, when fighter pilots watched in horror as Japanese carrier-launched aircraft bombed their planes and airfields into smoking rubble.

While following the pilots' firsthand reports of air strikes and blazing dogfights across the islands and atolls of the Pacific, Astor explores the ways the U.S. Navy began its momentous transformation before the war. Later, the critical role of aircraft carriers in the stunning U.S. victory at Midway sounded the death knell for conventional naval warfare, yet the public, the press, the Army, and even the president's advisors refused to recognize the new reality. In fact, only a few in the Navy understood that a new era had begun that would change the face of war forever.

The young Americans who fought the deadly duels against Imperial Japanese forces high over the Pacific gave everything they had to the war effort, and many made the supreme sacrifice. *Wings of Gold* pays tribute to their courage, daring, and selfless dedication. Vividly told, thoroughly researched, and filled with stirring accounts of the Pacific War's greatest air battles, *Wings of Gold* is an important addition to the annals of World War II aerial combat.

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